

History of Borrisokane ,Co.Tipperary.

'Introduction'

What better way to begin an account of a Tipperary town than by referring to the following words of a poem called 'Tipperary'. In these lines, the poet 'Eva of the Nation' who was one of the Kellys of Killeen, Portumna, wrote:

'O come for a while among us, and give us a friendly hand,
And you'll see that old Tipperary is a loving and gladsome land;
From Upper to Lower Ormond bright welcome and smiles will spring,
On the plains of Tipperary, the stranger is like a king?

Yes, I think the words ring true, I'm sure, for us and about us, natives of this part of Irish soil. It is about one particular spot 'on the plains of Tipperary' that I wish to write, namely my home parish of Borrisokane? So I turn again to verse, which so often suggests things that mere prose cannot. In a book of poetry, 'The Spirit of Tipperary' published many years ago by the Nenagh Guardian, we find a poem by Dermot F Gleeson who for many years was District Justice in Nenagh. He wrote under the pen-name 'Mac Liag'. He writes as if from the top of Lisgorrif Hill looking down on the broad expanse of the two Ormonds with Lough Derg bordering them to the left. The poem is simply called,

'The place where I was born'

'O'er hill and mountain, vale and town,
My gaze now wanders up and down,
Anon my heart is filled with pride,
Anon with memory's gentler tide '
Of sorrow, until through them all
The twilight whispers softly call
From upland green and golden corn

‘It is the place where you were born’.

This poem is about the place on God’s good earth that many of us first remember, where we first experienced light and darkness, and felt the sunshine and the rain. This in itself is one good reason for writing about one’s native place, quite apart from the intrinsic interest of the history to be found in every Irish town or village. In the introduction to Gleeson’s poem quoted above, the Editors of the book remark:

‘It was from Lower Ormond, in the 14th. century that the O’Kennedys and the Carrolls drove the Normans from Terryglass and Borres Clanna Cein’.

It is about this vista then that I wish to write, ‘the place where I was born.’

Borrisokane or ‘Borres Clanna Cein’.

Incidentally I am indebted to a book by Gleeson’s uncle, Fr. John Gleeson who was PP of Lorrha for many details about the area to be found in his ‘History of Ely O’Carroll Territory.’ Dermot F. Gleeson also wrote an account of the O’Kennedys called the ‘The Last Lords of Ormond’ which I also found very useful, as well as his ‘History of Diocese of Killaloe’.

I would like to preface my account of Borrisokane with the following extract from an old book called ‘Rambles in Eirinn’. It was written by William Bulfin who hailed from Birr, Co. Offaly. Any native of Lower Ormond will empathise with Bulfin’s remarks on this lovely part of Tipperary. He writes:

‘To the children in the country of the O’Carrolls the far-away mountains below Nenagh mark the southern limit of the world. All through my childhood the dim peaks of the Silvermines and the Keepers seemed to be infinitely distant, and when as a boy I learned that there were other countries between me and the horizon I often longed to see them, and often wondered if it would ever be my fate to travel to the regions beyond the guardian hills of the homeland.’

Bulfin then reminisces about a boy he met in the north of Ireland who could not be drawn on what lay beyond horizon. All he would say is it is 'beyond'! 'But', he continues, 'When I fell in with a party of school children on the road south of Borrisokane, and asked them what lay beyond the Keepers, they could tell me that it was Limerick....They were children of the plains, and from the time they could walk they had been questioning the mountains. "I am going to the other side of the Silvermines and beyond the Keepers", I said, "and maybe any of you would like to come.?"' There was silence for a few seconds and then a brown-haired lad asked shyly, as he made crosses with his toes in the dust: "Are you going as far as Limerick? 'I am and much farther,' I said, 'miles and miles, farther even than the west coast of Ireland, going over the sea. Will you come.?"' He shook his head and smiled....It was my own boyhood back again: the same dumb questioning - the same inarticulate longings - the same subconscious desire to learn what is out there beyond the blue and purple, and see it, and feel upon your cheek and hear in your ears the breath and voice of the world.'

To this I would attach an addendum of my own – my earliest impressions of nature?

Echoes.

Beautiful nature how I have loved you
Breaking your oneness
In shivering particles of creation.

In memory I live again
My light-filled youth
When first I wondered
At the charm of your changing face.

I hear again the cry of wild-fowl
Skimming above the woodbrake
On dipped wings.

I remember the flowing river,(1)
Troutflecked and singing,
Snaking its way over broken stones
And holding it healing balm
To my lacerated soul.

Memories push and jostle each other for notice
Like little dogs crowding around someone
Who holds aloft a bone.
I recall the soft bog,
The tufted callow
And overhead the cry of the wild curlew
Like the screech of the lost or the dying.
And my spirit follows once more those wild things
On their fruitless wanderings.

Then I failed to see these lost glimpses,
Sounds and feelings for what they were:
Minor chords in a life`s music,
That never comes to an abrupt halt
But fades and dies away
Like an abandoned campfire
When the merrymakers have trailed away.

These notes again recur
Sweeter and more haunting

Than when first I heard them,
For they are now part of things
Both known and loved
That come to visit and commune,
Not just to dazzle and pass by.

Today the lonely cry of the winter bird
Sings its way into my heart
And rings across
The withered fields of my world.
Cold snows and night frosts
Fall on blighted soil
That has felt their icy touch before.
But when spring comes,
Renewing, soothing, cheering,
It traps the fading sunbeams
Thrilling them to wonder
And blends light and music together
In deeper and richer tones.

And as I behold the morning sun
Pour its gold
Into the upturned cup of the crocus,
I feel the power of all this freshness
To strike fire from flint-like hearts.

As we grow and learn
And slowly turn
To the rhythm of the world,
We veer at times to the heat of the Tropic

Or are drawn to the cold of the Pole.

Each new day in the mounting years
Adds another movement to the score;
And always the music rises like a spring
To the surface of life.
And beauty fights to express itself
And love strives to unite them all.

In the end a life`s sympathy
Is written
And the strains die away
In the chill air
Of some nameless day.

(1) This was known as the Ballyfinboy river which flowed through our farm? It divided the parishes of Borrisokane and Kilbarron-Terryglass?

Chapter 1 - Early Times.

The parish of Borrisokane is a place of some antiquity being connected with the coming of the Normans to North Tipperary in the person of Theobald Fitzwalter, the ancestor of the great family of Butlers..He was a nephew of St.Thomas a Becket and the grant of lands in Ireland to members of his family by Henry 11 has been seen as the king's way of ingratiating himself with the Pope because of his complicity in the murder of the Archbishop in the cathedral of Canterbury.Theobald was of Norman stock and he came to Ireland from Lancashire with Prince John in 1185 and eventually settled in Nenagh Here he built a great castle containing the famed round tower,the Ormond Keep, the finest of its kind in Ireland. The castle was built around the year 1215.Very little else remains of the castle apart from sections of the wall.The rest has disappeared in the vicissitudes of history and perhaps some of .the stone is incorporated in the modern town!

The coming of the Normans meant that Borrisokane has always lain in the shadow of Nenagh and the Butlers.From then on the Marquis of Ormond controlled and owned much of the land in the vicinity of Borrisokane right down to the 19th.Century..When things became too difficult for them in Nenagh, due to the opposition of O'Kennedys and others, the Butlers moved to Gowran in Kilkenny.They also built castles in Carrick-on-Suir and Kilcash in the south of the county.The present representative of the Butler family is a Catholic member of the House of Lords, the 9th.Earl of Carrick, or Baron Butler in the U.K.He is Brian Stuart Theobald Somerset Caher Butler.It would appear that the title 'Carrick' here does not indicate the south Tipperary town but rather Carrick in Roscrea where the Butlers built their second major castle after Nenagh.It is known as the 'Square Castle' and has now been beautifully restored. Perhaps the Ormond Keep will also be similarly restored before very long. During his historic visit to Ireland in 1963,President John F.Kennedy was presented with a copy of a treaty signed between Roderic O'Kennedy and Earl Butler in Nenagh Castle. “

Bulfin refers to the 'country of the O'Carrolls'. The name 'Borres Clanna Cein', the old version of the name, suggests that the O'Carrolls of Ely owned the parish of Borrisokane. The name Kian, ancestor of the O'Carrolls, is very ancient, perhaps going back to the third century A.D. The O'Carrolls, together with the O'Kennedys were the main ruling families in this area from early times. It has been sometimes wrongly suggested that an O'Kane family was connected with the town but there is no evidence whatever to suggest this. Therefore the Irish version 'O'Cathain' is also incorrect. The Ordnance Survey map gives the version 'Buirios Ui Chein' which is the most satisfactory. The first part of the name is fairly common - Borrisoleigh, Borrisfarney etc. It denotes a Norman defended settlement and is related to the name 'Borough', 'Burgess' and 'Burgage'. There is also a parish of Burgess in Ormond as well as a family of that name. There are a number of indications of early habitation here also in names involving 'rath' or 'fort'. These have been thought to be associated with Danish occupation. Rathmore House was on the right of the Ballinderry road, near the bridge and Shanbally at the top of the town was called 'Maryfort' for a time. Shanbally was the oldest part of the town as the name implies. There is also a place called Fort Nesbit, once the home of a clergyman named Nesbit. On a smaller scale I was familiar from boyhood with an earthwork in what we referred to as the 'fort field' in Kyle Park. This part of Tipperary, known as Lower Ormond was, as stated, a stronghold of the O'Kennedy clan. The castles at Ballyfinboy and Tombricane, among others, belonged to the O'Kennedys. 'Tombricane' means the 'tumulus of Brican', suggesting very early habitation in this spot. Breogain is an ancient Gaelic name connected with the Muscraige Thire tribe. The Romans referred to them as the 'Brigantes', from which we derive the name 'brigands' and they also inhabited the north of England. The widow of an O'Kennedy, Dorothy from Tombricane, who was one of the Lee family from Kildare, was a restored freeholder in 1641 and was given land in Killcourane and Curramore, near Finnoe. The adjacent area of Kyle Park became part of the official townland so that the whole area was known as Kyle-Tombricane. 'Kyle Park' was in fact my home address where I grew up.

The castle of Ballyrickard in the vicinity of Borrisokane was “founded by Richard de Marisco a name which later became known “as the Morres family. The modern version of the name is Morris or Morrisey. One of this family of Morres known as ‘Black James’ commanded a regiment of cavalry for James the 11 and fought at the Battle of Aughrim in 1691 where his son Hervey was killed.

At the beginning of the 19th. century a colourful member of the O’Carroll family lived in his castle at Kilfada, near Borrisokane. He was reputed to have been a great swordsman in his day. Towards the end of his life a neighbour called Kelly from Eglishe brought him a doctor. He is reported to have reached for his sword, gone through the drill routines and remarked, ‘there was a time when, if death came to me I would cut him to pieces.’ He promptly sat down in his arm-chair and died! Around the year 1580 we also find a Mac An Gowan family listed in Borrisokane. These belonged to an old family of historians and poets who were patronised by the O’Kennedys. Another important family were the O’Mearas, and one Donald or Daniel O’Meara of Lissiniskey (Muri Aquae), took mortgages on land in Borrisokane in the year 1578 and 1585. The first patten for a Wednesday market in Borrisokane was given to Dermot Meara around the year 1600. When writing about Borrisokane one cannot forget historic family of O’Hogan who occur so often in the history of North Tipperary. One John O’Hogan was a Prior of Lorrha who was murdered. The O’Hogans also held extensive lands from their base in Ardcroney and Lissiniskey. The latter became Beechwood after it was taken over by the Graham-Toler family, of whom Lord Norbury was a member. The Hogan family, like Ryan, is very much associated with Tipperary. Back home we recall the musical accomplishments of the Hogan brothers from Tower Hill, the late Brendan and the late Jimmy Hogan. Both were former leaders of the Ballinakill Ceili Band.

When we think of the tragic history of Ireland the many heroes from the pages of our history books spring to mind. After the disastrous Battle of Kinsale in 1601 the Irish families were brutally treated by the conquerors Mountjoy and

Carew. Donal O'Sullivan Beare decided to march north with all his retinue to the relative safety of his kinsman O'Rourke of Breffni. He set out on December 30th 1602 in the depths of Winter with 1,000 people but by the time he reached the north there were only 35 of the band left. Some stragglers had settled along the way apparently. He was attacked on all sides by English and Irish alike. The latter joined battle because it had been made clear to them that they would be penalised and lose their lands if they did not challenge him. He headed north from Cork, reached the famed and secluded Glen of Aherlow and marched over the Galtees and the Silvermines. He then proceeded onwards passing near Borrisokane his way to cross the Shannon at the ford in Redwood near Lorrha. O'Sullivan hid in the extensive woods nearby and made plans to cross the swollen River Shannon. Things might be easier across the river on the Galway side but there was still one challenge left, that by Donogh McEgan from Redwood castle who was High Sherriff of Tipperary. While fighting off McEgan's challenge, O'Sullivan killed some of his horses and perhaps those of McEgan as well. He made currachs from the skins and attached them to rib cages of hazel and willow from the woods. With these makeshift boats the company crossed the swollen Shannon. The place is still known as Poll na gCappal, the grave of the horses. McEgan himself lost his life in the encounter. As we look back over the years we well might wonder what were the feelings of the Borrisokane people as they heard news of the straggling band march through the area. Perhaps they were a symbol of Ireland's recurrent tragedies - the debacle of Kinsale which, through petty rivalries and the incompetence of the Spanish General Del Aquila, turned into a shambles. Instead it might have been a glorious episode breaking the power of the invader. Here indeed was Ireland on retreat - but a retreat of heroic proportions like Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. O'Sullivan's march on a scaled down scenario needed no less courage and endurance and has understandably inspired poets to tell the tale in song and story. O'Sullivan's retreat calls to mind too, the march of Red Hugh O'Donnell on his way to join Hugh O'Neill for the same doomed battle in November 1601. This army did not come as near to Borrisokane as O'Sullivan because they were heading for: Holycross Abbey to receive the blessing of the

True Cross venerated there. O'Neill went by way of Roscrea where he remained for three weeks and from there the expedition embarked on a heroic march over the Slieve Phelims in the depth of winter. The enemy were outwitted as they had not anticipated such a march and Carew afterwards acknowledged that it was one of the greatest marches in history. As you view the upstart graves of O'Neill and O'Donnell near the sanctuary of a small Church on the Janiculum Hill in Rome, these heroic exploits come to mind and all that is summed up in the Flight of the Earls and later in the story of the Wild Geese.

The forces which O'Sullivan, with the help of O'Neill and O'Donnell had challenged in his native Cork but had heroically failed to dislodge, had been putting down deep roots also in the rich soil of Munster including Tipperary. During the Cromwellian plantations of the 17th century, Arthur, Earl of Anglesey received a grant of land in Borrisokane as well as large grants in other parts of Ireland. The holding was sited on part of the McEgan lands in Crotta. There is a story told that in later years another Lord Anglesey, Lord Lieutenant, got lost in thick fog while hunting near Kilcommon. He went to the parochial house where a Fr. Walsh entertained him. He was so grateful that he asked the priest if he could do anything for him. Fr. Walsh asked him to build a road. Anglesey decided to build no less than two roads! The Thurles to Newport road, the 'Anglesey Line', was completed in 1830 at a cost of 9,857 pounds. The Nenagh to Tipperary road was completed the following year.

Likewise the Boyle family, Earls of Cork and Orrery and the Earl of Arran, one of the Butler family, received land in the area. The place name 'Arran Hill' suggests his presence. Lord Dungan, Earl of Limerick, and the king's favourite, in addition to the Abbey lands of Lorrha, received other grants in the vicinity of Borrisokane. Another grantee of land here was Sir Nicholas White of Leixlip, himself a Catholic who held many government posts during his career. White received allotments in Ballyhaden, Crotta and in the area adjoining Feemore which belonged to the O'Kennedys. The names of Boyle and White are still in the region. Another Cromwellian, Captain James Stopford who received a grant of land remarked that the

area had been made into 'a pretty English settlement', although he never appears to have lived there himself. He received the land of John Grace in Feemore, and the property of Richard Butler, Thomas Meara, and others in Feebeg, Rathmore, Kilea, Ballyhaden and Liskinlawn. Richard Butler originated in the southern Tipperary estate at Kilcash near Slievenamon and that branch of the family remained Catholic throughout the Reformation. Kilcash was the subject of a great Irish poem,

'What shall we do for timber

The last of the woods is down`.

The son of the Williamite chronicler Storey referred to above was killed in an encounter with the Raparee Galloping O'Hogan and his men at Corolanty, Shinrone. Galloping O'Hogan's memory is forever linked to Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan, as his guide on the famous ride to blow up the siege train at Ballyneety in 1690. Part of the route took him over the Silvermines and the Slieve Phelims. There is a story that Sarsfield put the shoes back to front on his horses to confuse the enemy. Songs like 'The Wild Rapparee' recall the exploits of O'Hogan.

In the year 1666 we find a certain Richard Hease at Rathmore where the Hobbs family resided many years later. The following names occur also - John and George Eggers, Daniel Menlow, Thomas Wardington, and Thomas Fox. The local bakers were Ed. Binnie and Thom. Woolford. Of these as far as I know, only the family of Fox have survived. None of the other names have occurred for over a hundred years.

The Butlers, like other Normans founded monasteries in their territories. In those early days at the beginning of the 13th. century, the parish of Borrisokane was a rectory of the Cistercian abbey of Owney at Abington near Limerick, which was founded by the Butlers. O'Neill and his army rested here after their march over the Slieve Phelims. The Royal Book of Visitation tells us that the non-resident Vicar of 'Borres' was Peter Butler. There would have been traditional Church and glebe lands also which were situated near the town. These would have gone to the Church of Ireland after the Reformation. There were also foundations of the

Augustinian Friars or Canons Regular, as they were called, at Cloughprior, Carney and at Killodiernan, or 'the church of the O'Tiernans'. From here the friars would have tended to the spiritual needs of the people in Puckane, Finnoe, Borrisokane and elsewhere. There is no trace left of the ancient church at Finnoe. The modern Church of Ireland later built on the site of the ancient church is now dilapidated. After the Reformation the Abbey lands were given to the Grace family from Kilkenny so we had estates like Prior Park in that area.

Environs - Chapter two

The land around Borrisokane is a light soil but rich in limestone and is of course fine farming country particularly suitable for tillage. It would have always been a desirable place in which to settle. The village of Carney near Borrisokane has some claim on being the birthplace of St. Cronan the founder of the famous monastery in Roscrea and adjoining Monaincha. The latter was a great place of pilgrimage in medieval times. Known as 'Insula Viventium' or 'Island of the Living', it is mentioned by the Norman writer Giraldus Cambrensis or Gilbert of Wales, as a kind of 'wonder of the world' in his time contemporary with the arrival of the Normans. Gilbert actually accompanied King John to Ireland. In the Latin 'Vita' or 'Life' of St. Cronan his birthplace in 'Eile O'Carroll territory' is given as 'Carnath Maighe'. According to D.F. Gleeson this could well be Carney, but of course this cannot be substantiated. Carney also has the remains of a castle, which though taken by the Cromwellians in 1651 it was later repurchased by the Grace family and used as a residence. From this 'pleasant plain', as the area has been called, you have a view of the surrounding hills stretching away into the distance, 'the guardian hills of the homeland' to use Bulfinch's phrase. The ancient fairy hill of Knockshegowna possibly referred to by Spenser in his 'Faerie Queene' is near Ballingarry.

The name literally means 'the hill of Fairy Una.' 'Una' was the guardian spirit of the O'Carrolls. John Augustus O'Shea from Nenagh once said disparagingly about W.B. Yeats' interest in the 'little people'. 'There are more fairies on a square foot of Knockshegowna than in the whole of Sligo'!

On a personal note I include below some lines on my family burial ground?

Ballingarry Churchyard

Here in this confined space
So much of our past lies buried:
Sketched against distant skyline,
Victorious cross surmounts
Ancient Fairy Hill
Above Ballingarry.
Lonely church of stone
Rises mutely over the dead,
Pointing us to the beyond.

Around this acre of green,
Pitted with shapeless weathered stones,
Long memories linger:
Morning and evening sun,
Welcome or unwelcome rain,
Soft rustle of wind in yew trees
Playing a ghostly dirge.

Here, we reason, is no stillborn peace
No fitful sleep;
For out of deep commotion
Has this rest been won.
Not as stray showers in early Summer
Does this peace fall,
But like persistent Autumn rains
Falling on golden leaves.

This Churchyard once lived
In our youthful minds
But is now part
Of all life`s loves and mysteries;
It leaves us indeed our memories
But takes all else besides.`

Beyond Knockshegowna on the far side of Roscrea you have the Slieve Bloom range of hills.(Ballingarry was at one time part of Borrisokane parish,together with Uskane and Aglishclohane or Eglisli.From the year 1825-1836 the parish priest was Daniel Kennedy.He was buried in the south transept of the old church in Ballingarry. In earlier times of course all four were separate parishes,Borrisokane itself being the smallest in area. Looking south from Borrisokane towards Nenagh you have a fine view of the Silvermine Mountains with the famous summit of Keeper Hill or Ciamalta dominating the skyline. Adjoining these are the hills overlooking the Shannon, the Ara Mountains with the ‘Graves of the Leinstermen.’ (The name ‘Ara’ denotes Tipperary itself originating in what was called the ‘well of Aran’ or ‘Tiobraid Aran’ outside Tipperary town).From the top of these hills on a clear day the vista over the Lough Derg and down the Shannon towards Limerick is magnificent.Towards the east, in the direction of Templemore,the Barnane gap appears with the legendary Devil’s Bit nearby, ‘Bearnan Eile’, connoting the territory of the O’Carrolls. Looking west from Borrisokane you first of all see the rolling Kilbarron hills and further away across Lough Derg are the low, rugged and mystic hills of Clare,including the Slieve Aughty Mountains. Borrisokane lies on the N.52 road, a national secondary route at the present time.This road runs from Nenagh to Dundalk, taking in the towns of Tullamore and Mullingar and others along the way.It leads in fact past the ancient captial of Tara.There are two intersections in Borrisokane,one at the bridge with the road from Ballinderry to Ballingarry and the other at the top of Main Street where the road runs on the one hand to Cloughjordan and the other towards Finnoe and Kilbarron.In ancient days all roads led

to Tara or Teamhair the seat of the High Kings of Ireland. Roscrea gets its name from 'Cre', the wife of Dala. Bealach Mor (great way) Muighe Dala was an old name for the Sli Dala which is now the main Dublin road running close to the restored castle of the appropriately named Ballaghmore. Keating in his 'Foras Feasa' called it the 'Bealach Mor Osraighe'. It was a branch of this road which led from Borrisokane, Terryglass and Portumna. As you approach the town along the road from the north, or coming west from Roscrea or travelling east over the bridge at Portumna you are entering the Lough Derg region of the great River Shannon. From this approach Borrisokane is the gateway to the Shannon Region. The townspeople have a fine lakeside recreation centre on their doorstep along the shore of the lake in places like Luska, Coolbawn, Coolbawn Quay, Kilgarvan, Ballinderry and Terryglass. Like Nenagh the town is about five miles from the nearest point of the Shannon. For many years, it has been the shopping, banking and business centre for the surrounding parishes and rural communities of Terryglass, Ardcroney, Kilbarron, Ballingarry, Carney, and other surrounding villages. Two small hotels in the past catered for the commercial traveller or passer by. In the last century the proprietor of the Commercial Hotel established in 1840 was a Mrs Maria Dunne and in more recent times the Central Hotel was owned by Clearys. About a century ago there was an active mill owned by Thomas Humphries on the Ballyfinboy river which flows through the town. Borrisokane was one of the important milling centres in Tipperary especially for milling of wheat. There seems to have been a Brewery also on the spot, the lane along the river bank being known as Brewery Lane. There were mills also in Kilfada, Clooninaha (a tuck mill), and Hogan's mill in Ballinderry the latter also incorporating a distillery, the ruins of which are still to be seen. Ballinderry mill is about 200 years old. The first owners were Egans and later the Hogan family bought it from a Slattery family. The fairs and market days in Borrisokane were always great social events before the advent of the modern Mart. It needs no imagination to appreciate the hardship of a drover's lot, rising before four a.m and covering the slow miles with their unruly charges and receiving scant reward both by way of food or remuneration. There were other markets also on a more regular basis where farmers or their wives traded pigs or poultry or eggs and so on. The pig market was on the day previous to the fair. So this

centre for local trade and exchange was once the head of a Rural District where Councillors met every regularly.

Chapter 3 – Notable Buildings

Along the bank of the river from the bridge on the Ballingarry road we find the former Catholic Church, now closed. It is a well built structure of cut limestone on a fine site and was built in 1837. The altar was of Caen stone with the Last Supper in relief. This altar commemorated the parish Priest Rev. Peter Nolan who died on 23 March 1877. On the east wall there is a stone commemorating a Borrisokane woman who emigrated to America to escape the famine. There her two sons grew up and prospered. The stone was put in place by one of the sons. The inscription is anonymous!

In December 1848

When she was a widow without money or friends, in an American city,
She covered her two small sons with a Feather Bed she brought from Ireland,
While she did sentry all night to keep from freezing.
Under her training, one of her sons gave his life for his Country,
The other became a well-loved employer to thousands of men.

It is thought that one of these two sons, the 'well-loved employer' was William Gleason who invented the Bevel Gear Planer which eventually became an enormous success in the oil industry. Henry Ford placed it in his museum in Michigan where it can still be seen.

The family of Wall were of long standing in Borrisokane. At that time Patrick Wall was a merchant and agent for the 'boat to America'. A ticket to the States from Queenstown (Cobh) in those days cost 15 guineas. The Wall family donated three stained glass windows to the church, one of which was over the entrance of the church in the old choir together with two others in the body of the church.

We know from the Ordnance Survey of 1840 that this church was built on the site of the previous Catholic church which would have catered for Catholics in the 1700's, the terrible Penal days. Like other churches at that time, it would probably have been a thatched structure. I do not know how long this site had been in use as a place of worship by the Catholic community, but it would have been built after 1782. There is evidence that an earlier church stood on the opposite side of the road which lasted for 45 years. This was probably the church to which the Pieta of Kilcormac was brought by Fr. Lynam and which created such a stir at the time. I will quote from an account of this episode further on. We know that there was no chapel in Borrisokane in the year 1750, but people attended Mass in Courthill about two miles distant. The Moran family lived at Courthill in the year 1890. It is likely that before the Reformation Catholics worshipped in a church where the present Church of Ireland now stands. At least this is what happened in Finnoe, Terryglass, Lorrha and more noticeably in Ballingarry and Modreeny where remains of previous churches are visible. The surrounding churchyard of Borrisokane C o I, opposite the Fairgreen, has some old graves and over the years has been used by members of all denominations. (My grandmother Mary Kennedy, nee Browne of the Island is buried here). This church has a high pinnacled tower and was built in 1812. It has recently been refurbished and the grounds are now well maintained. Inside there are wall monuments commemorating the Stoney family. There were extensive Church lands or glebe lands as they were called in the town area, which we can see on an old map of the parish. In 1775 Morgan Kennedy recanted in Borrisokane Parish Church. The new Catholic Church of St. Peter and St. Paul is situated further up on the left of the Nenagh road. It was opened on November 11th 1973, Canon Patrick Cahill was the Parish Priest at the time. The Architects were McMahon, McMahon and Hickey, Limerick and the main contractor was Tom Hayes, Ltd Killaloe, whose foreman was Joe Murphy from Courthill. The Methodist Church in Main Street was built about 1870.

Chapter 4 - Unusual Event.

There is a lovely Pieta in the Catholic Church in Kilcormac, Co. Offaly. Here there was a former Carmelite Church, to which Order the present writer belongs. There was a famous illuminated Carmelite Missal from here also, the Kilcormac Missal, the remains of which are preserved in the British Museum. The following account of the history of the Pieta can be found in the church porch.

'Delicately carved from a solid block of oak 5' x 3"', this beautiful Pieta is the only one of its kind to survive the ravages of the Penal times in Ireland. Experts say it is a 16th. century continental work and is probably of Spanish origin. Tradition says it was brought from abroad by a local lady and presented to the Carmelite church in Kilcormac, where it soon became an object of widespread loving reverence. When the English invaded this area, suppressed and burned the monastery (1568), a bloody but victorious battle was fought in the church grounds by the local people against the foreigners, to save their statue from destruction. Then it was put in Ballyboy parish church, where it remained until 1650, when, as the history records, a Cromwellian army was sent from Kilkenny into the midlands by way of Cadamstown. Tradition says this approach was by way of Knockhill and two women named McRedmond rushed down to the church, removed the statue and hid it outside in a heap of rubbish. The Cromwellians stabled their horses in the church, but in the dead of night five or six men carried the statue across the river and fields and buried it in the bog of Ballybracken. They bound themselves to secrecy and they all died with their secret intact except the last, who when nearly gone revealed it on his deathbed. His name was Coady and he had to be carried to the bog on a stretcher to point out the exact spot, marked by a bush, and near the eastern end of Derryboy where it had lain hidden for over sixty years. They found it six feet down and gave it for safe keeping to Fr. Lynam, the priest in charge of the parish. (Fr. Lynam was probably a Franciscan) registered in 1704 as popish

priest of Eglis, Ballyboy and Drumcullen, aged 46 and living in Lisduff.) but he, regarding it as a gift, took it to Borrisokane on leaving the district. The news caused consternation in Ballyboy and a party of armed horsemen was quickly arranged to retrieve it, even by force if necessary, and led by Rigney and Molloy and accompanied by Naylor from Killoughy with a cart, they set out for Borrisokane. They found the gates of the church locked but met with no further opposition, and having taken possession of the statue, they returned home in triumph. Tradition says they received a tremendous ovation from the crowds awaiting their arrival in Kilcormac, where, with the horsemen forming a guard of honour in the chapel yard, their beloved Pieta was placed in the parish church a small thatched chapel built by Fr. Lynam in 1704, on the site of old St. Cormac's to take the place of St. Mary's Ballyboy, built by the Catholics in 1650 and that same site, though now on the third church, the pieta has been venerated until the present day'.

The Pieta is still venerated in Kilcormac church which is half way between Birr and Tullamore. ‘

Having referred in the above account to Fr. Lynam's unhappy experience regarding the Pieta, it is interesting to survey the list of priests in the Borrisokane region in the past. In the 1600's there was a Denis Tierney who was parish Priest of Uskane. We also find the following names in a list of 'Mass Priests' registered at Nenagh in the General Quarter Sessions of the 11th. July 1704: Fr. Anthony Kennedy of Kilduain, aged 60, Parish Priest of Uskane, Borrisokane and Ballingarry. Ordained at Dublin in 1679 by Dr. Patrick Plunkett, Bishop of Meath. Father Denis Kennedy of Gurteene, aged 27, Parish Priest of Finnoe. Ordained at Cork in by Dr. James Slyne, Bishop of Cork. The latter is probably buried in the old churchyard surrounding the ruins of Kilbarron church under a stone inscribed: 'Denis Kennedy, Priest, died 11 October 1706.' We do not know how long Fr. Lynam remained in Borrisokane. He probably succeeded the last mentioned Denis Kennedy. There is a grave in Ballingarry churchyard where there is a priest of the O'Mearas buried. This is the same 'plot' where the Grandparents, the father and other relatives of the present writer are buried. This priest was related to the Tierneys. On the tombstone there is a Latin inscription which translated runs:

'The Venerable William O'Meara, Priest, died in the Lord on 17th. December, 1748. Aged 82 years.'

We do not know where this priest ministered. In those times in any case he would have been on the run. There is a small Church on this site which is used by the Church of Ireland congregation. Nearby there was a pre Reformation Church, the gable end of which has been turned into a burial vault for the Sadleir and Trench families from Sopwell Hall, the former Kilnahalagh of the McEgans. According to Fr. Ignatius Murphy there was a Fr. Hogan Parish Priest of Borrisokane for 60 years from the late 1760's to 1824 and he was noted for his hellfire sermons!

Chapter 5 - More Background.

Borrisokane is more fortunate than many Irish towns in its location. It is right in the centre of the great plain of Lower Ormond and built near the Ballyfinboy river. The river rises near Moneygall and for a short distance marks the boundary between Tipperary and Offaly. It flows through Borrisokane and Ballinderry entering the Shannon at Drominagh after passing under a notable bridge there which was built in the eighteenth century. In Borrisokane the wide and spacious Main Street runs from the bridge to the Cloughjordan road. The houses on either side are well built and many go back to the early part of the last century or further. The town itself was laid out in the 17th. century which compares more than favourably with neighbouring Nenagh in those days. One writer reported that Nenagh at the time was a collection of '60 thatched houses'! In Borrisokane there is a great sense of space and openness about the town, an openness and welcome which is perhaps reflected in its inhabitants!

Many descendants of business families in Borrisokane in the last century are still active in the town. There were some characters among them. Francis Guilfoyle, Seed and Manure merchant had a catchphrase, 'Guana, none but Peruvian left.' Margaret Guilfoyle, a member of the same family ran the town Post Office for many years. Borrisokane people were always adept at hitting on an appropriate nickname or cant phrase. Perhaps it was a self deprecating native of the town who coined the phrase, 'nothing for nothing in Borrisokane!' In our own times another businessman of great acumen, W.J Lalor was never known to admit he didn't have a requested item in stock. He invariably promised 'it will be in the post dear'. One would be customer maintained he got this reply when he

asked for a 'sock' for a plough! Lawlor's hardware business is still carried on by the Flannery family - Martin himself died some years ago. Families such as Henans, Clearys, Crawfords, Egans, Ryans, Slevins, McKennas, Reddans, D'Arcys, Chadwick s O'Mearas, Kellys, Flynns, Whelans, Phelans, Brennans and others are still in various businesses in the town. The mother of the Hollywood actor Charlie Sheen was a Phelan from Borrisokane. Bridie a member of Brennan family became housekeeper to Bing Crosby. Bing honoured the town with a visit in the 1960's. Other former Borrisokane names run successful businesses in neighbouring towns. Many of us will remember the developing technological age when Ned Slevin supplied the Tannoy amplification for any major events in the town. He was particularly busy during election periods. It was the centre for radios and gramophones, the forerunner of Hi Fi in those days. His son Eamon carries on the business while another son, Gerry, is a former Editor of the Nenagh Guardian. A cousin of the Heenan family who lived in the former Kent premises in Main Street, Bishop Brian Heenan is the present Bishop of Rockhampton in Queensland, Australia.

In earlier times Bishop James McGolrick a native of Borrisokane became Bishop of Duluth, Minneapolis in the USA. The family lived in Main St. in the house now owned by Clarkes. On a visit to Borrisokane in 1891 he laid the foundation stone of Aglish church. He died in the year 1918. Two of his brothers, Henry and William also became priests and ministered in Minneapolis. It was Henry who transported a black polished stone piscina for holy water from the ruins of the Priory in Lorrha and set it up in his Church of the Immaculate Conception in Minneapolis with this inscription: 'From the banks of the Shannon to the banks of the Mississippi. Christ yesterday, today and the same forever.' It would not be so easy to do that nowadays thanks to the vigilance of the Ancients Monuments authority! Two of Bishop MacGolrick's sisters, Bridget and Elizabeth joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in St. Paul, brought there by the Bishop. His sister Susan married a Dennis Darcy one of a wellknown local family. (I am indebted to Liam Doran of the 'Guardian' and to Dermot Gleeson for these details.) What we fail to realise sometimes is the sheer number of people who lived here and in other similar Irish towns in the last century before the Famine. In his Topographical Dictionary

of 1837, Lewis reports that there were 2,635 inhabitants in the parish. In our own days this number has been drastically reduced by emigration and the earlier famine.

Chapter 6. - Sports and other Facilities

Borrisokane has an excellent sports ground and park convenient to the town. In 1916 a town park was acquired from the Irish Land Commission. It formed 23 acres of the Higginbottom Estate running from east of Main Street and parallel to the river. A section of the park was set up for the national games of hurling and football which were then being promoted by the relatively recent Gaelic Athletic Association. In 1930 new trustees were appointed: Seamus Gardiner, W.J. Lawlor, G. Kelly, T. Guilfoyle, P.J. Cleary, Michael Heenan and John Heenan. The Committee had the pitch levelled and enclosed and erected sideline seating. Since the year 1966 the property has been vested in GAA trustees with two local representatives. Further improvements were made to the grounds, dressing rooms installed and other facilities provided. It was officially opened as the 'Seamus Gardiner Memorial Park' on 14th. May 1978. Seamus Gardiner was the head of the local boys school for many years. He was a past President of the GAA and an outstanding sportsman in his youth. Before coming to Borrisokane he taught in a school at Killeenadeema near Loughrea. His son Denis succeeded him in Borrisokane School. Another son Seamus is Parish Priest of Portroe. It must be said that while great hurling success has always eluded Borrisokane, this was not from lack of enthusiasm or for want of trying. Hurling has always been a standard topic of conversation among Borrisokane people, especially following the fortunes of the Blue and Gold. The McKenna family are a case in point as we recall Paul McKenna of the Thirties. In the more recent past, none were more notable than John 'Mackey' McKenna who was one of the best forwards in the country in the great era of the 60's. With his brother in law, Donie Nealon

he provided the cutting edge for the Tipperary attack in those years, winning no less than five all Ireland medals. Not surprising that a new generation of McKennas and Nealon's are keeping the hurling tradition alive in these families. The Mc Kenna family have always been sports people. Mackey's brother Ger has been the leading greyhound trainer in Ireland for many years. The trophies he won are too numerous to mention. Many Borrisokane people will recall the exploits of Prince of Bermuda in the 'fifties, the Borrisokane Master McGrath! Ger's successes have been chronicled in a book by a national sportswriter. It is appropriate that the headquarters of the Irish Coursing Club is based in Tipperary in the capital Clonmel. Coursing events were held at Finnoe in the 1950's and some people will remember that it was an exciting diversion in those days, partaking somewhat of a carnival atmosphere. Small planes sometimes attended offering to give people a bird's eye view of the locality for a small fee. McKennas housed their greyhounds in the environs of the old Kyle Park National School. Many past pupils like myself will recall the trepidation with which we tried to retrieve a ball which, through less than accurate shooting, ended up in the greyhounds enclosure. We considered them the fifties equivalent of the Rottweiler!

Thomas George Stoney (1808-1886) donated twelve acres of land for a National School at Kyle Park which opened in 1834, known as Kyle Park Agricultural School. This was one of the first such schools in Ireland or Britain. The design for the school won Stoney a silver medal from the Royal Agricultural Society in 1843. It was also mainly financed by Thomas Stoney of Kyle Park. This was the Primary school I myself attended with my sisters from 1947 until 1954. The school was replaced in the same year (1954) by a new school built by Canon Patrick Cahill on a site purchased from my father.

.Over the years children attended the school from a wide area Kilbarron, Ballinderry and even Borrisokane, many of them on foot. A new school was opened in 1954 on a site purchased from my father John Tierney.

Among other things Canon Cahill was an avid builder. He instigated the new Church in Borrisokane and in addition to Kyle Park school, he built a new Primary School for boys in the town as well as developing the Convent school and Aglish School. Born in Nenagh, he came to Borrisokane from Ennis in 1945 in succession to Fr. James Clune. He made an outstanding contribution to the Diocese over the years. He founded and edited

the diocesan magazine Molua for twenty six years, thus giving us a vast resource of historical and otherwise interesting material about the Killaloe Diocese. Bishop Harty recognised his achievements in 1970 appointing him Dean of the Diocese. He died in Mt. Carmel Nursing Home, Roscrea at the advanced age of 95.

Races meetings were mentioned above in the context of 'faction fighting'

Kylenagoona. Races were established at Borrisokane in the year 1863. The racecourse was situated near John Reddan's farm and he was one of the promoters together with some business people from the town. The facilities were good and there was a Stand on the site. In the year 1888 one of the stewards was the famous hammer thrower Dr. J.C. Daly who ran the Dispensary in the town. The stewards would have looked resplendent in their scarlet coats. The Hon. Secretary was M. Costello from Kyle Park, probably the property later occupied by the McCarthy family of Garrane. There was a prize of 30 sovereigns for the Borrisokane Plate. All in all there would have been a great atmosphere on Race Day as we know for instance from similar race meetings of the time at Norwood in Nenagh.

Chapter 7 - Surroundings.

There have been several 'Big Houses' houses in the Borrisokane area in the past, many of them, like Slevoir, built along the shore of Lough Derg. Drominagh House was another house built near the lake shore, the home of the Esmonde family. Eugene Esmonde gained a posthumous V.C in World War Two for his exploits particularly in helping to sink the Bismarck. He gets honorary mention in Sir Winston Churchill's History of the War. He carried out a suicide mission on the German destroyer the 'Bismarck' in 1942. Esmonde was educated at a Mill Hill College near Liverpool. His brother Sir Anthony Esmonde was Fine Gael for Wexford at one time. Another Tipperary man also received the VC in the first World War, Private Martin O'Meara from Lorrha, one of a wellknown family in Ormond. He was a member of an Australian regiment and is buried in Perth. The Hickies of Slevoir and the Esmondies of Drominagh were Catholic families. The Hickies distinguished themselves in both World Wars, namely General Sir William Hickie and Brigadier Shamus Hickie. It was the Hickie family who built the Church in Terryglass. For some years the Salesian Sisters had a convent in the former Hickie home

in Slevoir. Drominagh House had a castle on the site and was originally thought to have been built by the O'Maddens but was later taken over by an O'Kennedy. Redmond Burke spent some time here during the rebellion after Kinsale. Next door to Drominagh is another fine house called Gortnalougha. For many years it belonged to Alan and Jean Hilgarth. Alan was a writer who used the pen name 'Alan Garth'. They were friends of the famous Jesuit writer Bernard Bassett, who sometimes spent a holiday with them there. In his book called 'We Neurotics', Bassett expresses his thanks to the Hilgarths for allowing him to finish 'by the quiet waters of the Shannon what was begun in the delightful Cornish setting of St. Ives.' The place was later a Guest House and is certainly in idyllic surroundings. Most recently it has been purchased by members of the Getty family of oil fame and fortune.

Near the town too was the residence of the Stoney family at Arran Hill. A former Ormond property, their interest was sold about 1816. The name originates with the Duke's second son, Earl of Arran. In 1841 the house was occupied by a man named Shelly who was a steward of G. Walpole. Thomas Stoney from Arran Hill was Deputy Governor of County Tipperary. He was the second son of George Stoney from Greyford. He married Ruth Falkiner of Mount Falcon, Borrisokane and died in 1826 at the age of 78. The Stoney family also lived in adjoining estates stretching from the Four Roads and comprising all the land between the Ballyfinboy river and the Borrisokane/ Ballinderry road. The original house at Arran Hill featured a flight of steps to the main door rising over a basement. It was built at the end of a long avenue, facing south towards the river. This house has long since been in ruins, having been badly damaged on the night of the Big Wind, January 6th, 1839. Another structure which had been built within the confines of the original house is also now a ruin. In latter years it was owned by Mrs Hogan and later by the Loughnane family. The first member of the Stoney family in Borrisokane was Thomas Stoney who was born in Rilston, Yorkshire in England in 1677. His wife was Sarah Robinson from Knockshegowna and he died in 1726. The Stoney family eventually had several properties in North Tipperary, including Emmell Castle and Portland House as well as an estate in Gortlandroe, Nenagh. Col. George Stoney who may have lived in Greyford House, commanded the Borrisokane Volunteers in the year 1779.

On the Borrisokane to Nenagh road, Mount Falcon, formerly known as 'Kilocany', belonged to the Falkiner family. Mt. Falcon would have been appropriate for the surname 'Falkiner'. However Dermot Gleeson in his 'History of the Diocese of Killaloe' quotes a passage from the Annals of the Four Masters in which he maintains that the reference to 'ordnance' gives us the origin of 'Mt Falcon'. The word is 'fabcuin' in Gaelic, which is translated as 'faucon' and it means 'firearms'. He tells us furthermore that this is the first reference to the use of firearms in the history of Ormond. The name Richard ran in the family. The first Richard was from Dublin. His son Richard built Mount Falcon in 1730. It was described by the Georgian Society as 'a small house with cut limestone front and good early doorway and staircase of Jacobean type in two flights.' His grandson Richard was a clergyman and his grandson in turn, another Richard, lived into the present century, dying in 1907. Like many of the gentry Richard Falkiner engaged in sporting pursuits and kept a set of prize Blenheim spaniels at his home. In earlier times Mount Falcon had a pack of private foxhounds. He married Ellen Saunders from nearby Ballinderry Park. Falkiner was instrumental in getting a school built in the Congar area. His first effort was unsuccessful as the Marquis of Ormond refused a lease on this land in Ballyrickard, the projected site for the school in 1823. Five years later he himself gave a site near the entrance to Mount Falcon for a nominal rent and offered his gate lodge as a residence for the teacher. The school house had a pillared front and was quite prominent along the side of the main road. There were no Scripture classes held in deference to the Catholic Church. The school was not a success however as the parish priest, Fr. Dunne, would not cooperate. Falkiner complained that he had offered him a day on which he could give religious instruction to his flock but the priest refused. Falkiner was a JP, Chairman and ex-officio member of the Borrisokane Board of Guardians which ran the old Workhouse situated on the Ballingarry road. A fever hospital was based here also and Borrisokane was the head of a Poor Union which was founded there in the year 1850. It is interesting to note that there was a field just inside the wall of this estate which was marked as 'Priests Park' on the Ordnance Sheet of 1840. This is a puzzling reference. There is no trace of St. Mary's Well which was also marked on the Sheet. Borrisokane Community College on the site of the old Workhouse is an example of a successful venture in rural Ireland on the part of dedicated people. In 1942 it opened as

a Technical school and in 1966 it began an Intermediate Certificate Course. The first leaving Certificate examinations were completed in 1973. So for many years now it has been a school for second level education being fed from the surrounding parishes. It has indeed ensured that secondary education (thus leading to University) is available to many young people who might not have travelled as far afield as Nenagh or who were not in a position to go to boarding school. The first Head of the School was Dermot Dunne. He supervised a major and costly building development completed in 1980. The school complex adjoins the old Courthouse also where Petty Sessions were held fortnightly and where Borrisokane District Court used to meet.

The landlord of Borrisokane in the nineteenth century was David Clarke who lived at Bushy Park. There was a famous tree here called the Billow Tree from the word 'bile' meaning tree. Clarke was born in Macclesfield in Cheshire. The Clarke Memorial Hall on Church road was erected in his memory. There was another hall on the Fair Green owned by George Brereton, the local blacksmith. In the 40's and 50's many local people were given access to the Hollywood dream machine in this battered old hall. Films were laid on by the Shannon Mobile Cinema.

A Convent of Mercy School was established on a site of five acres given 'forever' for the building of the Mercy Convent which was completed in 1886. The Sisters of Mercy have been in the parish ever since dedicated to educating the girls of the town and surrounds. Many people will remember the annual Corpus Christi procession from the Chapel to the Convent meadow led by the then Canon Cahill.

The name Clarke still survives in Borrisokane.

Another fine property was Finnoe House in which lived John Francis Waller, the author of the famous song, 'The Spinning Wheel'. Another of his songs recalls the nearby Shannon, 'By the green banks of Shannon I woo'd thee, dear Mary.'

The centenary of Waller's death occurred on 19th January 1994. He is buried in the town cemetery in Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire in the UK. He had been editor to the London publishing firm Cassell and Co. Waller was a noted lawyer and was the General Editor of a monumental work called the 'Dictionary of Universal Biography.' and other works. After Waller's another occupant of Finnoe House, Sir Henry Burgess became a well-known figure. He was Chief of British Rail during the First World War. He was

knighted by King George V. Another son of George Burgess of Finnoe owned the then Pier hotel in Dromineer later known as the Sail Inn , now Dromineer Bay Hotel.His son John owned the 'Lafayette' photography business in Dublin.Finnoe House adjoins the old Church of Ireland which is now disused and in a bad state of repair.It was built on the site of an ancient church of which no trace remains. Nearby is a residence called 'Ormonde Cottage'. Other residences worthy of mention were Merton Hall near a spa well,the residence of a family named Hall and also Ballinderry Park, as well as Kyle Park House,part of the Stoney estates where the O'Donoghue family have resided for many years.Just outside the town is the ruins of Killavalla House.Formerly a Stoney residence also,it was for a time owned by the Corcoran family.It later became a guest house and sadly was burnt down many years ago, thus losing another of these houses of character and antiquity in the area.Frank Corcoran who now resides in Germany is one of Ireland's outstanding musical composers at the present day.

However the finest house by far in the area is Sopwell Hall near Ballingarry.This was an ancient seat of the MacEgan family and the estate carries the ruins of an old castle of the MacEgans.In ancient times it was known as Kilnahalagh, but when the Cromwellian family of Sadleir took over, it became known as Sopwell Hall.Sadleir passed the property on to the Trench family.

At Modreeny adjoining Borrisokane parish there was a big estate, Modreeny House.It was the headquarters of the Ormond Hunt,the hounds being kennelled there.The Ormond Hunt was one of the oldest established in the country.In recent years a restaurant,perhaps inappropriately, called 'The Fox's Den', was opened here by the Swan family.A member of this family,Charlie Swan has been a champion jockey in recent years with many fine wins to his credit. Opposite the main gate of the house is Modreeny Church of Ireland.There was an old church on this site dedicated to St.Kieran of which only the West gable remains.It was a famous place of pilgrimage in the 17th.century,having been mentioned among nine holy places in Ireland in a Brief of Pope Paul IV (1605 1621). The present Church of Ireland was built at the other end of the old church incorporating a small section of the ancient church but shorter than the original.Modreeny was the site of a famous ambush of the Black and Tans during 'The Troubles'.

Prior Park House in Carney, originally part of confiscated Abbey lands in the area was another fine residence which was owned by the Waller family who came from Castle Waller, Newport. It is now a guest house.

These Big Houses usually had fine parks surrounding the approach avenue and planted with tall trees. There was often a lodge house which provided free accommodation for a family in return for the gates being opened and closed at all times of the day and night.

Chapter 8. - Stirring Events.

In the year 1829, the same year as Catholic Emancipation, two tragic events took place in the town of Borrisokane. In the first incident a man named Denis Whelan from the town and Thomas Smith from Kilbarron were shot by a Constable St. Leger on the evening of a fair day, Friday, June 25th. during a riot. The Riot Act had twice been read by Captain Dobbyn, the officer in charge. Whelan was shot in Nolan's yard. Twenty one other people were seriously injured. We do not know if these events were the result of 'faction fighting' which was common on fair days in those times. Faction fights were mainly in Tipperary, Limerick, Clare and Waterford. It was known in the Newport area. It was remarked about a faction fight in Carrick on Suir that, although it was bad, it was not as bad as the rest of Tipperary! In the incident in Borrisokane one of the deceased, Thomas Smith, had been taken to the chapel in Borrisokane and on Sunday this funeral set off up Tower hill on the Portumna road. A man named John Leger lived along the route and he, together with three friends called, George and Robert Lambert and Samuel Read opened fire on the cortege as it passed. Four people were shot dead Daniel Hawkins, John Hogan, John Farrell and Denis Mealy. In the ensuing melee Leger's house was set on fire by the crowd. After a trial the defendants in both cases were acquitted of murder. There is also a report of a Faction Fight in Borrisokane around the year 1876. It involved the Mulcahys of Lorrha and the Reddans of Borrisokane. The fight took place at Kyleneagoona races.

Some years previous to this there was another shooting incident involving Borrisokane. The Munster and Leinster Bank had a branch in Borrisokane served from Nenagh. Two Nenagh bankers were returning home after their day's work when they were held up near Ardcroney at what was known as Robber's Bush. The victims of the hold up were John Walsh and George Tydd. They had reached Ardcroney travelling on the post car on December 21st. 1871 when they were fired on by two gunmen. Tydd was hit first and then Walsh who was more seriously injured. However the cash box was saved. Captain Saunders from Ballinderry Park travelled with them to the entrance of his home and heard shots as he walked up his avenue. Two men were quickly arrested for the crime, William Palmer was found in a pub in Borrisokane and Timothy Donoghue was arrested in his home. Another man name Edward Kirwan, an ex policeman, was also arrested and eventually Palmer and Kirwan were tried for the crime. They were both convicted, Palmer receiving twenty years penal servitude and Kirwan ten. The crime caused consternation in Borrisokane and a public meeting was called on Christmas Day chaired by David Fortune from Deer Park, Kyle. A reward for information was announced and generous subscriptions were made. David Fortune's son Bert ran the family farm at Deer Park until the 70's.

Another shooting took place outside Borrisokane police barracks during the 'Troubles'. Michael O'Kennedy, uncle of the former Government minister was shot dead here in June 1922. He is buried in the old Kilbarron cemetery. There is now a plaque on the wall of the Garda Baracks to commemorate his memory. In past ages there was usually a set of 'stocks' in each town where petty offenders were chained up for a period of time. This could be the origin of the phrase, 'becoming a laughing stock'. There is a record from the year 1800 about Ben Falkiner from the second Falkiner residence opposite Mt. Falcon known as Bell Park. He paid a certain Samuel Abbot the sum of €5.00 to provide stocks in the town. The stocks in Borrisokane have long since disappeared. In many English towns and villages they are still preserved as a curious memento of bygone days.

The village of Ardcroney, between Borrisokane and Nenagh appears to have been one of the earliest inhabited places in North Tipperary. There is a beautiful gold torc in Dublin

National Museum which was found in Ardcroney in the last century. It is an outstanding example of delicate Celtic craftsmanship. A gold fibula was also found near Keeper Hill and a gold diadem was unearthed at Borrisnoe. These finds in the area remind us of our Celtic ancestors who traversed our home ground centuries ago but of whom so few traces now remain.