

Samuel Lewis - Mallow circa 1837

From the book "MALLOW, COUNTY CORK IN LEWIS TOPOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF IRELAND 1837"

by Samuel Lewis

MALLOW, a borough, market-town, and parish, partly in the barony of Dufallow, but chiefly in that of Fermoy, county of Cork, and province of Munster, 17 miles (N.) from Cork, and 127 1/8 (W.) from Dublin; containing 9804 inhabitants, of which number, 7099 are within the limits of the borough, including the recently added suburb of Ballydaheen, and 5229 in the town. This place was anciently called Malla, Moyalla, and Moyallow, of which its present name is only a modification. Though the town has little claim to antiquity, yet the seignior, which is independent of both baronies, formed part of the territories of the great Earl of Desmond, who erected a noble castle here on the northern bank of the Blackwater, which commanded the pass of that river.

After the rebellion of the Earl in the reign of Elizabeth, during which this place was the centre of the operations of the English forces, the Queen was advised to fortify this castle for the defence of the ferry, where the troops were frequently detained for many days. In 1584, the castle and the manor were granted by the Queen to Sir Thomas Norris, Lord-President of Munster; they afterwards passed by marriage with the daughter and heiress of Sir Thomas to Major-Gen. Sir John Jephson, of Froyle, in the county of Hants, and have since continued in the occupation of his descendants. In 1612, Jas. I. confirmed these possessions to Dame Elizabeth Jephson, Sir John being then living, with the grant of a court baron and power to determine pleas to the amount of 40s.; also the privilege of a market and two fairs, with the power of appointing a clerk of the market, and of licensing certain tradesmen.

In the same year the town, which had greatly increased and was strengthened with a second castle on the north side, called Castle Garr, or "the Short Castle," was incorporated and made a free borough; and on the breaking out of the war in 1641, besides its two castles, it contained 200 houses occupied by English settlers, of which 30 were strongly built and roofed with slate. On the 11th of February, 1642, the insurgent forces under Lord Mountgarret entered the town, on which occasion Capt. Jephson entrusted the strong castle of Mallow to the custody of Arthur Bettesworth, with a garrison of 200 men, an abundant supply of arms and ammunition, and three pieces of ordnance.

Castle Garr was also defended by Lieut. Richard Williamson, who, after sustaining repeated assaults, in which he lost most of his men, and several breaches had been made, agreed to surrender upon honourable terms. After he had left the fortress, finding that the insurgents were not inclined to observe the terms of capitulation, Lieutenant Williamson seized a sword, and, with the rest of his party, resolutely fought his way through their ranks and retired into Mallow Castle, which had been maintained with better success by Bettesworth. The insurgents, during their stay at this place, chose as their commander Garret Barry, who had served under the King of Spain; and on the 15th of February, a party of them attacked the fortified mansion of Mr. Clayton, in the immediate vicinity, but did not succeed in taking it till after a sanguinary conflict in which 200 of their number were killed and many wounded by the garrison, which consisted only of 24 men, whom, on taking the place, they put to the sword.

The castle of Mallow was assaulted and taken by the Earl of Castlehaven, in 1645, and was nearly reduced to ruins. When the kingdom was threatened with invasion by France, in 1660, it was, from its advantageous situation, commanding the chief pass of the Blackwater, considered to be of such importance, that a presentment for its repair was made by the grand jury of the county; but the proposal could not be entertained, as the law allowed presentments only for bridges, causeways, and roads.

After the battle of the Boyne, Major Geo. S'Gravenmore having advanced from Tipperary with 1100 horse and two regiments of Danish foot, sent Col. Doness, on the 13th of Sept., 1689, to burn the bridge of Mallow, and to survey the castle; the Colonel, on his return reported that there were 100 Protestant families in the greatest alarm and danger from McDonough, one of Jas. the Second's governors of counties, who was assembling forces for the purpose of plundering and burning the town. On this intelligence S'Gravenmore sent 100 horse and 50 dragoons for their protection; and McDonough, on his approach to the town with nearly 4000 men, was suddenly attacked in the great meadow near the bridge, by the Danish horse, routed, and pursued with great slaughter on both sides of the river.

The loss of the Irish, on this occasion, is stated at 500 killed, while on the side of their opponents neither a single man nor a horse was wounded; S'Gravenmore subsequently made this town his head-quarters previously to the siege of Cork.

The town is finely situated on the northern bank of the river Blackwater, about a mile below its confluence with the Clydagh, in a vale enclosed on the south side by a chain of mountains, but more open on the north, and on both sides richly wooded. It consists chiefly of one main street on the mail coach road from Cork to Limerick, near one extremity of which was Castle Garr, on the site of which is now a modern house; and at the other is Mallow Castle, commanding the river, over which is a stone bridge of eleven arches, connecting the town with the suburb of Ballydaheen, on the opposite bank.

Within the last few years the town has been greatly enlarged and much improved; several spacious houses have been built, a new street has been opened to the north of the main street, and the latter has been lengthened by the addition of several respectable private houses at its western extremity.

Most of the houses in this street have a projecting square window on the first floor, which has a singular but not unpleasant effect; the principal footpaths are flagged, though the streets are not paved; and the inhabitants are amply supplied with excellent water. The total number of houses, including the suburb of Ballydaheen, was, in, 1831 996, of which number 426 are slated and the remainder thatched; they are generally well built, and the town has, on the whole, a handsome and cheerful appearance. The beauty of its environs, and the tepid mineral waters for which Mallow is celebrated, had made it a place of fashionable resort, during the summer, months, and the number of gentlemen's seats in the immediate vicinity had rendered it a desirable place of residence, long before it attained its present importance as a place of trade.

The Mallow Club, consisting of an unlimited number of the resident gentry of the town and neighbourhood, elected by ballot as proprietary members, was established here several years since on a very liberal scale.

The club-house, situated in the principal street, contains billiard, card, supper, and reading rooms; the latter, which contains also a good library for reference, is open to strangers. There is also a public subscription news-room on a smaller scale. The members of the Duhallow hunt hold their meetings here, and are distinguished for their superior pack of foxhounds. Races are held annually in September on a course about two miles to the east of the town; and balls and concerts occasionally take place, under the patronage of the neighbouring gentry, in the new and spacious assembly-rooms attached to the principal hotel. The military depot, formerly established here, was discontinued on the formation of a larger establishment at Fermoy, but there are still infantry barracks for 7 officers and 103 non-commissioned officers and privates.

The mineral waters, in their properties, resemble those of Bristol, but are much softer; one of the tepid springs was at a very early period in repute as a holy Well, dedicated to St. Peter, but they were all neglected for medicinal use till the earlier part of the last century. The principal spring is

on the north-eastern side of the town, where it rises perpendicularly in a powerful stream from the base of a limestone bill that shelters it on the east. There is another spring called the Lady's well, also warm and of the same quality, though not covered in or used. The water of the spa has a mean temperature of 70 of Fahrenheit, rising in summer to 72 and falling in winter; it is considered as a powerful restorative to debilitated constitutions, and peculiarly efficacious in scrofulous and consumptive cases, for which the spa is much frequented by persons of fashion from distant parts of the country, being the only water of the kind known in Ireland.

The spa house was built in 1828, by C. D. O. Jephson, Esq., M.P., the present lord of the manor and principal proprietor of the town -it is in the old English style of rural architecture, and contains a small pump-room, an apartment for medical consultation, a reading-room, and baths; the whole fitted up in the most complete manner for supplying, at the shortest notice, hot and cold salt-water, vapour, and medicated baths.

The approach to the spa from the town is partly through an avenue of lofty trees along the bank of an artificial canal, affording some picturesque scenery; it is in contemplation to form an approach from the north end of the new street, winding round the brow of the hill and through the Spa glen, the present outlet from the lower part of the town being inconveniently narrow. There are no public promenades; but the excellent roads leading through the environs, which abound with scenery of a richly diversified character, afford a variety of pleasant walks; and a road nearly five miles in circuit, called the Circular Drive, which has been made along the southern, bank of the river Blackwater, crossing Clydagh bridge in a westerly direction, and returning by the navigation-road on the north side, affords excellent opportunities for equestrian excursions.

Through a great portion of its length this road is shaded on both sides with rows of lofty trees, and the whole line presents an uninterrupted succession of elegant seats and tastefully embellished demesnes. The season usually commences in May, and terminates in the beginning of October, during which period there is a considerable influx of company; and it is probable that, as the improvements around the Spa are continued, advantage will be taken of the many eligible sites which the vicinity affords for the erection of pleasant lodgings.

The inhabitants carry on an extensive and lucrative trade with the opulent and populous districts in the neighbourhood, importing most of their articles of general consumption direct from England. There are in the town and its immediate vicinity three soap and candle manufactories, three tanyards, three flour-mills, of which those belonging to Messrs. W. and K. Brady and Messrs. Molloy and Co., are worked by the river Clydagh, and produce each about 10,000 barrels annually; the extensive brewery and malting establishment of Owen Madden, Esq.; two lime and salt works, and a small manufactory of blankets and flannel, with a dyeing and pressing-house. Branches of the Provincial and Agricultural Banks have been recently established in the town. The projected railway from Dublin to Valencia win, if carried into effect, pass close to the town.

About 40 years since, about 31 miles of a line of canal, intended to connect the Duhallow collieries with the sea, was cut and may still be traced adjoining the road to Kanturk, thence called the 'I navigation road.' The principal market is on Tuesday, when large quantities of corn are bought by agents for the Cork merchants; there is a second market on Friday; and butter, celebrated for the sweetness of its flavour, and eggs are brought for sale daily. Fairs are held on the 1st of January, the day before Shrove-Tuesday, May 11th, July 25th, and Oct. 28th, for general farming stock; the January fair is chiefly for pigs, of which more than 12000 were sold in 1836. The market place has been recently erected, at the sole expense of Mr. Jephson; it occupies an area 75 yards in length and 50 yards in width, and contains markets for butchers' meat, pigs, sheep, potatoes, and general provisions.

The town received its first charter of incorporation from Jas. I. in 1612, and though a new charter was granted by Jas. II, it was acted on during only a very short period, and the original charter was revived. By that charter the corporation consisted of a provost, twelve burgesses, and a

commonalty; the provost was chosen from the burgesses at Midsummer, and sworn into office at Michaelmas ; and vacancies in their body, as they occurred, were filled from the commonalty by a majority of the burgesses, by whom also the freemen were admitted by favour : vacancies in the office of provost were to be filled within 15 days, and in that of the burgesses in 7 days. The provost was clerk of the market, and the corporation had power to make bye -laws, to have a mercatory guild, and a common seal; to appoint two serjeants-at-mace and other officers ; and to hold a court of record every Friday, for the determination of pleas to the amount of five marks. Probably from the peremptory necessity of filling up vacancies within so short a period, the corporation soon fell into disuse, and it has now ceased to exist.

The charter also conferred the privilege of returning two members to the Irish parliament, who for a long time previous to the Union were, after the extinction of the charter, elected by the freeholders of the manor, by whom also the member returned to the Imperial parliament since the Union was elected till the 2nd of Wm. IV.; till which period also the freeholders of the manor had a vote both for the town and for the county. The act of the 2nd of Wm. IV., cap. 88, extended the right of election to the £10 householders, the right of the 40s. freeholders not occupying houses of that value to expire with their lives. The number of registered electors is about 300.

A new boundary for electoral purposes has been drawn round the town, including the village of Ballydaheen, and comprising an area of 350 statute acres, of which the limits are minutely detailed in the Appendix; the seneschal of the manor is the returning officer. The manor extends over that part of the parish of Mallow lying north of the Blackwater (except a small portion in the barony of Duhallow), and over part of the parish of Mourne Abbey, on the south side of the river, comprising the townlands of Quartertown and Gortuaeraggy; the seneschal holds a court baron every third Wednesday, for the recovery of debts under 40s., and a court leet twice in the year, for the regulation of the markets and the appointment of bailiffs. Quarter sessions for the East Riding of the county are held in April, and petty sessions are held every Tuesday by the county magistrates.

A new court-house and bridewell have been erected, the former a handsome building of hewn limestone fronting the market-place, and ornamented with broad pilasters supporting a cornice and pediment; the latter, a commodious and well-arranged building, is at the rear of the court-house. A constabulary police force is stationed in the town.

The parish comprises 8622 statute acres, as apportioned under the tithe act, and valued at £9067 per annum ; the land is chiefly in pasture, and that part of it which is under tillage is fertile and in a high state of cultivation. In the vicinity of the town are quarries of limestone of a superior quality, which are worked to a considerable extent for supplying the neighbourhood with lime. Within a circuit of 5 miles from the town are not less than 50 gentlemen's seats. Mallow Castle, that of C. D. O. Jephson, Esq., is at present being rebuilt in a style more appropriate to the extensive and beautiful demesne in which it is situated: the prevailing character of the building is the Elizabethan; several of the offices are finished, and the whole, when completed, will be a spacious and elegant mansion. The Castle grounds are richly wooded and laid out with great taste; the walks are shaded by fine avenues of stately trees which intersect the demesne ; and though in a retired situation, the grounds afford some pleasing scenery, especially an opening which displays a picturesque cottage, and a fine sylvan view on the banks of the Blackwater. This demesne has been described by Arthur Young, Esq., as one of the best "fermes ornées" in the kingdom.

The other seats in the immediate vicinity are Bally Ellis, formerly the residence of Lord Ennismore, and now of A. G. Creagh, Esq. ; Beareforest, lately the residence of R. De la Cour, Esq.; Dromore, of A. Newman, Esq.; Rockforest, of the representatives of the late Sir James L. Cotter Bart.; Quartertown, of 11. Croker, Esq.; Longueville, of Col. Longfield; Waterloo, of H. Longfield, Esq. ; Castle Kevin, of E. B. Thornhill, Esq.; Carrig, of W. H. Franks, Esq.; Annabella, of R. H. Purcell, Esq.; and Firville, of R. Akins, Esq. The living is a rectory, in the diocese of

Cloyne, and in the patronage of C. D. O, Jephson, Esq. ; the tithes amount to £600. The old church was dedicated to St. Anne ; the present church, towards the erection of which the late Board of First Fruits granted a loan of £3500, in 1818, was built on a site presented by the Jephson family: it is a handsome structure, in the later English style, with a tower and well-proportioned spire ; an organ has been lately erected by subscription, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have proposed to grant £20 per ann. to the organist. Adjoining the church are the remains of the ancient edifice, of which the tower and the greater portion of the walls are standing. In the R. C. divisions the parish is the head of a union or district, comprising also the parish of Rahan and a small portion of that of Mourne Abbey; the chapel, a large and substantial edifice, is in the town. There are also places of worship for Independents and Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists; attached to that for Independents is a library of about 500 volumes.

About 200 children are taught in four public schools, and there are eleven private schools, in which are about 350 children. The parochial school was built at an expense of £300, defrayed by subscriptions aided by a grant from the Lord- Lieutenant's school fund ; the infants' school was established in 1834 and is supported by subscription; a school is supported by the Independents, who have also an asylum for a few poor persons of their congregation; and a national school is about to be established. The county infirmary, to which is attached a dispensary, is a neat plain building at the east end of the town; it has at present accommodations for 14 patients, but is capable of containing 30. In the year ending Jan. 5th, 1836, 350 patients had received relief in the infirmary, and 2067 from the dispensary. A fever hospital is about to be erected, and in the mean time a temporary wooden building is appropriated to that use. A charitable loan fund has been recently established, which has a capital of nearly £500, distributed in loans varying from 5s. to £5. The late R. McCartie, Esq., of Mount Ruby, bequeathed the interest of £250, charged on that estate, for distribution among the Protestant poor annually at Christmas.

The present church, the ruins of the ancient edifice, and the R. C. chapel, being situated on the south side of the town, are seen to great advantage from the bridge; between them and the river is a broad expanse of meadow, which being occasionally inundated has always a verdant appearance. Mallow Castle and its richly wooded demesne are also most favourably seen from this point of view; and the bridge itself forms a conspicuous and interesting feature in the distant view of the town. On the lands of Quartertown, on the south side of the Blackwater, and about 3/4 a mile to the west of the town, is a chalybeate spring subject to be overflowed by the river; and there is another at Beareforest, about half a mile to the south.