

Ballynure Village

Ballynure (Ballinewyie in Irish) meaning the home or place of the yew trees has been a parish of 8540 acres in the hands of the Crown since the reign of Elizabeth I and the Spanish Armada by virtue of the fact that one, John Dalway, came over to Ulster with Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex in 1573 and by a propitious marriage to Jane O'Brien O'Neill, a sister of Shane O'Brien O'Neill, a kinsman of the great Hugh O'Neill, who with the O'Donnells west of the River Bann ruled Ulster, received the Cynament, or territory of Ballynure as a dowry from her brother. The only daughter of his marriage married a John Dobbs, a Lt.-Of Engineers who was sent to Carrickfergus to repair the ruinous castle walls and who, in turn, the same family inherited the parish of Ballynure and continued to the end of the nineteenth century when the Gladstone Acts dispossessed landlords.

It is generally conceded today, by writers not blinded by prejudice, that landlords around the time of the famine in 1845 - 47 were generally not as bad as authors would have us believe and the family Dobbs was one of the best. Of such was Arthur Dobbs 1689 - 1765, whose father Richard, had the honour to be the first to welcome the Prince of Orange on 14th June 1689 when he landed in Carrickfergus, Arthur Dobbs was to become surveyor General of Ireland and also had the distinction of becoming the first Governor of North Carolina in the Colonies in America. In the nineteenth century Ballynure was a thriving place of industry due to the powering of waterwheels, having a good flow of water from the hills surrounding the village before steam arrived, Such was the population after the Revolution of 1798 a company of Red Coats kept order from a Barracks one mile out of Ballynure at Ballybracken along with four members of the Royal Irish Constabulary stationed on the now Castle Road. These, perhaps, were really needed, as in the middle 1800's there abounded in Ballynure four hostelrys, each with its own clientele and on Fair days in May and November rival factions from neighbourhoods nearby descended on Ballynure to settle old scores.

The ruins of the old church was once a thriving place to worship paying 1 shilling tax to Pope Nicholas in 1297, but at the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, Ballynure belonging to Muckamore Abbey and the hospitallers ceased Roman Catholicism and became Church of Ireland. Its most famous incumbent was Rev. Jonathan Swift, later Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, whose outspoken words against the Establishment are quoted to this day. Indeed one of his sayings is my favourite and I quote "The man who maketh two blades of grass to grow where one grew before doeth a greater service to mankind than all the race of politicians put together"

Knowing the integrity of the farmers of this Parish and also knowing some politicians, long may it remain so.

Ernest M A Scott