

HISTORIC SITES

Royal Seats, scenes of historic events—battles, mass meetings, historic festivals, &c. Location.

Landowner. Historical or traditional notes.

"The French Invasion" and the "Barrage of Castlebar". One of the most important acts in Irish history. [Synopsis] → August 22nd 1798 general Humbert landed at Kilcummin near Killybegs with 1000 men and 3 small field guns and bearing 3000 muskets and 1000 French uniforms for the Irish who were to join with the invaders. Keeling - an Irishman who went into French service in 1797, and Matthew Tone, brother to Wolfe Tone, landed with Humbert. Killybegs taken on that day, and Ballina the day following by general Savaryin. On Aug. 25th Humbert came to Castlebar where hundreds of Irish joined his ranks including general George Blake, Austin Smalley of Binnishole, Captain James O'Donnell of Binnishole etc. Colonel James McDonnell also joined -

HISTORIC HOUSES; BURIAL PLACES [Contd on page 6]

(a) Birth places or one-time residences of distinguished Irishmen or other personalities. Location and description. Present owner or occupant. (b) Burial places of distinguished personalities.

(a) "Thomasine" Keating. Born in Rathbarney in the house now occupied by Mrs. Canell. A simple two-story red-tiled house bearing a plaque with the words "Is an tseo seo do naugao Dubha ny an tseo - 'Tomassain' - ban-ful an tseo ny 1829-1908". Olive Knight's best-known work is her poetic collection "Wild Flowers from the Wayside". West's stirring verses for "The Nation". A poem of feeling is "My Niece" - a lament for Thomas Davis. "Thomasine" named Rev. Hops Connolly - migrated to Australia and died there. Rathbarney is inside Castlebar.

(a) The Brennan brothers - Louis and Michael, born in the house now Canell & Co., Main St., Castlebar. Their father is buried in the Castlebar cemetery - a English Irish inscription on his tombstone. Louis Brennan, who died at the close of the great war years, is famed as the inventor of the gyroscope (monorail) and for his torpedo experiments. He left Ireland for Australia when young. Michael Brennan, artist, who left Ireland when young to study painting in Italy. Died in Algiers somewhere about 1870 at the age of 30. Even then he had gained considerable fame as a painter.

(SECTION CONTD. ON PAGE 11)

SPAS OR MINERAL SPRINGS

Spas formerly in use. Location and present condition. Access. Right of way to public? Mineral content and curative properties so far as known locally.

none

THE FRENCH INVASION (CONTD. FROM PAGE 7)

was one of the most powerful united Irish leaders in the West.

On Sunday, Aug. 26th Humbert left Ballinacorney for Castlebar with 800 French and 1500 Irish troops. The English garrison in Castlebar had received, the previous day, reinforcements from Galway to the number of 7000 infantry and 1500 cavalry under General Hutchinson. General Lake, a noted English military man also came to take command in the town. The English forces were positioned on Sion Hill (which is about an half-mile beyond the County Home) with a 6 inch gun battery. Two field guns were also placed on Staball Hill. This is now Thomas St. and is the hill which runs directly up from Castlebar Bridge in the northern end of the town.

Humbert was expected to arrive by the orthodox route from Toomevara. This being the only apparent route for his troops. Instead however he had switched his course and proceeded via Lelandane on the western slope of Lough Linn - in the Glen Reptin valley. A range of mountains separated him from Castlebar to the south and though the range was the wild, rocky pass of Bannageela or the Windy Gap - a route seemingly impossible to traverse by armed men.

Humbert met Mr. Conway of Lelandane and his priest undertook to lead the troops across the mountain pass. This he did and on the morning of Aug. 27th Humbert and his men arrived at Burren (in parish) some 4 miles north of Castlebar and at the foot of Bannageela. Some information having got through to the English of Humbert's march - General French and an escort set out to reconnoitre. At Burren - the general verified Humbert's almost impossible march and without engagement he (French) rode rapidly back to Castlebar.

Humbert advanced and the first engagement took place on Sion Hill. The English forces comprised - Prince of Wales Fencibles; 6th Infantry Regt.; Kilkenny militia; Longford militia; Fencible Fencibles; and the Galway yeomanry.

For a time Humbert's forces were heavily repelled. Colonel James McDonnell fell wounded. Eventually the English ranks broke in confusion and fled back to the town.

Staball Hill was then attacked and for a time held out. Bitter hand to hand combat took place from the hill top down what is now Thomas St. to the Bridge. The present Town Hall

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which was then a linen hall, bears on one of its door columns, the bullet marks of the street sniping.

There is a stone plaque inside Christ Church gate, Castlebar, which is inscribed to the memory of six privates who by tradition are said to have been killed defending the bridge. "Erected to the memory of James Beatty - Angus Mc Donald - George Munro - Donald Mcquhan - William Ross - Donald Cameron - privates of the Fraser's Highlanders who were killed in the action at Castlebar with the French invaders on 27th August 1798 as a small tribute to their gallant conduct and honorable death - by Col. Simon Fraser of Lovat who commanded the detachment.

A party of the besiegers had in the meantime circled the town by Lough Lannagh (Castlebar Lake) and entered the conflict from the west and south west. This completed the rout and the English forces fled in wild confusion. So utter was their defeat and so precipitate their defeat that their retreat has gone down historically as the "Races of Castlebar".

By night fall of August 27th Humbert was in complete charge of Castlebar and the garrison buildings were filled with his men.

The Cavalry barracks were then situated where now stand the Garda Síochána barracks and buildings adjacent. The Infantry ^{building} barracks are now the military barracks. The entrance pillars to the Cavalry barracks yet stand.

General Humbert and his officers were quartered in a house in Main St., now called "Humbert House" (Sheep-Cunningham's).

On August 31st Humbert declared a provisional republican government for Connaught and John Moore of Moorehall was appointed its first President with powers to elect 12 members to carry out administration.

At French Hill, a few miles from Castlebar is a monument to four French soldiers shot here by the retreating English. — After the capture of the town Humbert sent out a small escort under Deeling to try and effect contact with the fleeing English and to submit terms to them. Deeling and his men were sighted at

FRENCH INVASION (cont'd. from page 9)

The Hill of Linnane as it was then called (Dúnnochan) by the English, who perceiving such a small force, fired and killed four. Yelling was made prisoner but released with apologies from General Hutchinson to whose camp he was taken.

The monument is a pyramid on a 10' square base - a small iron cross surmounts it. Of cut stone and about 22' high, with the inscription: "Erected by public subscription in grateful remembrance of the brave French soldiers who were killed here in 1798 fighting gloriously for Ireland's freedom" — "Erected in July 1876"

Humbert's military error is said to have been his perseveration at Castlebar instead of pursuing the English.

On Sept. 3rd Lord Cornwallis with 15000 men was but a days march from Castlebar. English forces all over the County were marching to the west. Humbert vacated the town - leaving a small garrison in charge.

Ulison, a Protestant minister (from whom is the present Ulison St. in Castlebar) rode to Hollymount to warn the English C. in C. that Humbert was gone from the town. Colonel Crawford and his party immediately set out and made prisoners John Moore and Col. Harrot, French officer in charge.

Newport, Ballinadea and Clannacorney, taken soon after Castlebar by the United Irish, were abandoned. Killela fell later as also Bellin.

The Crown forces covered the west in an attempt to cut off Humbert and his columns. Cornwallis at Hollymount with 15000 men; General Lake at Yenchpark with 14000; joined by Gen. Taylor from Boyle with 2500; and Gen. Nugent at Sligo with 1000 men and 6 field guns. Despite these numbers Humbert made his way through Co. Sligo and Co. Leitrim but on the 8th Sept. was cut off at Ballinacorney, Co. Longford. The result was a massacre 500 Irish were slain and 100 prisoners taken. General Lake, Capt. James O'Donnell, Capt. Jas. Smalley, were hanged on the battle field. Yelling was tried in Dublin and executed on Sept. 24th. A few days afterwards Matthew Tone was also executed. Col. James McDonnell of Clannacorney escaped from the battle field and out of the County.

FRENCH INVASION (CONTD. FROM PAGE 18)

Many executions took place in Castlebar after its recapture. Fr. Conway, the priest who led the columns over the "Windy Gap", was hanged on a tree which stood opposite the door of the present Imperial Hotel on the green. Ten years the tree was being stripped of its wood and bark for mementos of the hanging. There is a cross made from its timber in the possession of Mr. S. J. McCormack of Thomas St. Finally the tree succumbed and fell - it is related that it fell on the occasion (1918?) of Mr. Devalera's first visit to Co. Mayo at Castlebar. The gap in the line of trees around the green is quite noticeable - no tree was set to replace Fr. Conway's.

John Moore died in 1799, Sept. 6th at Waterford - due to his prestige his trial was delayed and he died before it.

The name "Staball" - yet used, is said to have been derived from an incident during the furious engagement on the hill when an excited woman watching the news - shouted "Stab all - stab all."

Sources Initial dates of Killela capture and Wickliffe landing from "Analekta Hibernica" - "A Diary of the French Invasion", main facts from "The last Invasion" (Hayes) underlined sentences and bracketed paragraphs are survey findings and not from any work except for former name of Beech Hill.

St. Patrick. Said to have entered the district at Ballyheane in which village he is "Tobar Pádraic" and the ruins of an olden church said to rest on a Patrician site.

Fitcham's account gives: "and Patrick went to the well of Stungil in the wastes and was at it two Sundays. And he went to magh Raithe. And he went to Acaob Tobar." -

Stungil's well is in Berriscane + Ballintober parishes - adjoining Ballyheane area. Acaob Tobar is Aghagower parish next to Berriscane + Ballintober. Although magh Raithe is generally accepted to be Rahins in Islandeady parish, Knox in his "Notes on Dioceses" (page 101) places magh Raithe as the district around Ballyheane.