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### THE PARISH OF MUNGRETT.

**SITUATION.** This Parish is situated partly in this Barony of Pubblebrien and partly in the Liberties of Limerick and is bounded on the north by the Shannon, on the east by St. Nicholas's, on the south by Crecorah and Knocknagaul and on the west by Kilkeedy.

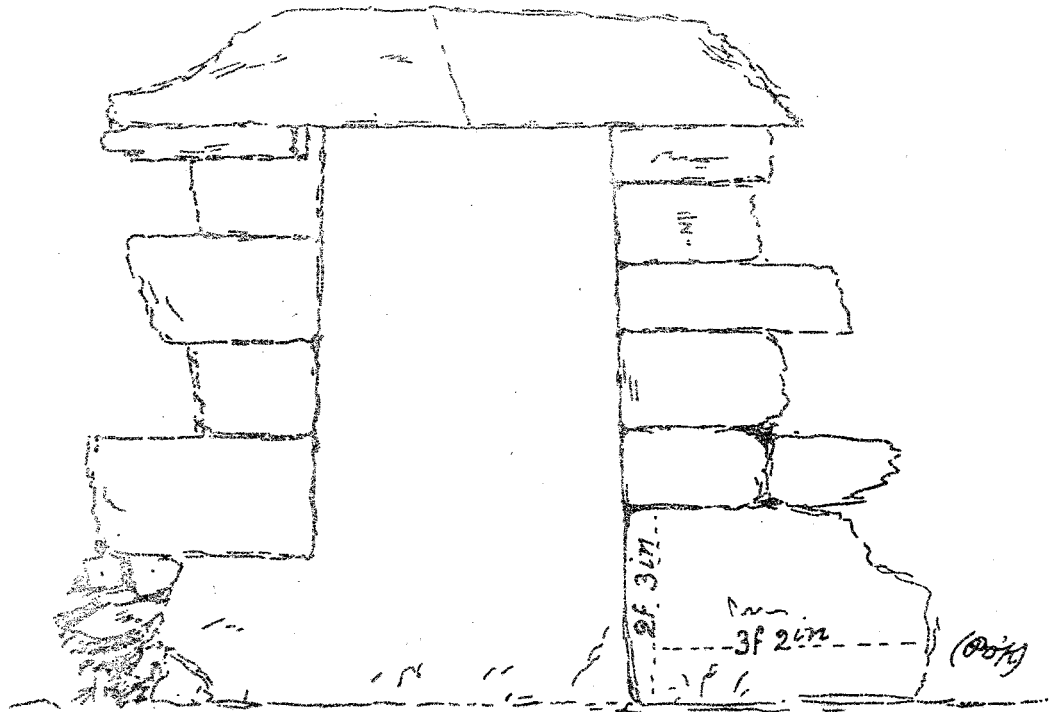
**NAME.** The name of this Parish is written Mungairit in the Annals of the Four Masters and in the older Irish Chronicles, but its meaning is not given in any of them. We must therefore have recourse to conjecture and try what meaning the name would produce when decomposed. Let us try Mun Gairit, q.d., Muine Gairit, q.d., Muine Gairid, i.e., the Short Hill, but as this derivation savours of the Fight-hard (Feathard) of the Ulster King of 1644 and of the Cantabri (Heds-high-above) of the Ulster of 1840, we must state 30 that it is a mere etymological guess, which is as apt to be wrong as right, and express our opinion that before we finally pronounce upon it, it will be necessary for us to discover what the early Irish etymologists made of it. Mung Gairid? Mong Airit? !

Away with etymology unsupported by history, authenticity or by the features of the locality! O'Flanigan in his very bad translation of the Annals of Inishfallen anglicises Mungairit to Mount-Garrett, which is wrong in every point of view.

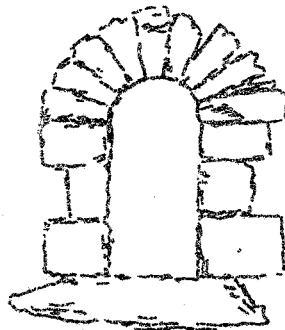
The ecclesiastical remains now to be seen at Mungret are very inconsiderable. They consist of:-

1. An old Church in the Irish style of the tenth century.

Lintel split in the middle by the weight of the gable



Doorway in old Church.  
Mungrett.



Window in East Gable of old Church  
Mungrett

This is situated immediately to the left of the road as you approach it from Limerick. It measures on the inside forty one feet in length and twenty three feet in breadth. Its walls are in good preservation considering its age. The side walls are two feet ten and a half inches in thickness and fourteen feet in height and built of good stones cemented with excellent lime and sand mortar. The west gable is remarkably high, and sharp at the point, but the east one is rendered obtuse by the storms of ages. The doorway, as is usually the case with old Irish Churches, is in the west gable and in the semi-Cyclopean style. It is six feet eight inches in height and in breadth three feet four inches at top and three feet seven inches 31 at the bottom. It is traversed at the top with a large lintel measuring seven feet ten inches in length, one foot four inches in depth and extends one foot nine inches into the thickness of the wall. The annexed sketch of this doorway will convey a pretty accurate idea of its form and characteristics.

See sketch opposite.

There is a large breach in the south wall extending from the ground to the top of a roundheaded window, which (window) has all disappeared except its round top. The east gable contains a rude roundheaded little window placed at the height from the ground and 32 measures on the inside about five feet ten inches in height and two feet eight inches in width and on the outside about three feet ten inches in height and one foot six inches in width.

The following sketch will convey a pretty correct idea of its construction on the outside:-

See sketch opposite.

The north wall is in very good preservation but featureless; the south wall is a good deal injured; it contained, besides the window already referred to, another which is now reduced to a formless breach.

Not far from this ancient Church are the ruins of what is called the Abbey of Mungret "which bespeak neither magnificence nor antiquity." For a description of this see pp. 43-44.

What I deem worthy of remark in this modern little Abbey is its square doorways covered with horizontal lintels, of which there is one on the south wall of the nave; another on the west wall of a small apartment attached to the west end of the nave and the third leading from the nave into the tower. 33

A short distance to the east of this modern Abbey is the ruin of a small Church which looks old being built of large square stones and cemented with excellent lime and sand mortar. It is fourteen feet in breadth on the inside, but its length cannot be ascertained

as the original west gable has disappeared and in its place a modern wall has been erected. The greatest height of the side walls is eleven feet. The thickness, two feet six inches. The east gable contains a narrow window about six feet in height and eight inches in breadth but so clothed (enveloped in) with ivy that I could not by any convenient exertion ascertain whether it is round or lancet headed.

The south wall contained two windows, both of which are now disfigured.

This Church is not as old as the first one described, but it is much older than the Abbey.

Still further to the east are the walls of an old house said to have belonged to the Abbey; and to the west about a quarter of a mile are the ruins of a small Castle called Castlemungret; only the arch over the ground floor and one wall of it remain.

I here insert what the Irish writers have collected of the history of Mungret:— 34

MUNGH AIRIT\* - Annals of the 4 Masters.

"A.D. 752. Bodbgal mc Feargaile, Abb Mungairde do mharbhadh."

"A.D. 762. Ailill mc Craoibeachain, Abb Mungart (décc)."

"A.D. 834. Loscadh Mungairdi agus araile cealla i n-Urmumhain leo (.i. le Gallaibh) din."

"A.D. 909. An treas bhliadhain triochat do Fhlann. S. Litheach, Abb Cluana h-Eidhneach agus Maolcaisil, Abb Mungarat décc."

"A.D. 965. Cond mc Corcrain, Abb Mungairde agus ceand Mumhan uile décc."

"A.D. 993. Muirgheas mc Muireadhaigh, Abb Mungairti. Fogartach mc Diarmada mc Uathmarain tighearna Corca Firtri Conacht do mharbhadh do Ghaileangaibh Coraind."

"A.D. 994. Rebachan mc Donchadh, Airchineach Mungairti décc."

"A.D. 1006. Caichear mc Maonaigh, Abb Mungarat décc."

"A.D. 1014. Niall mc Dearggáin, Airchindeach Mungairte do mharbhadh."

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\* Now Mungret three miles south west of Limerick.

"A.D. 1028. Art Ua Dunchadha, Airchindeach Mungairti décc."

"A.D. 1033. Conn Ua Maoilpatraicc, Airchindeach Mungairti agus Disirt Oengusa décc."

"A.D. 1070. Cathasach mc Cairpre, Abb Mungairde ceand Clerech fear Mumhan décc."

"A.D. 1100. Cond mc Gillebhuidhe, Abb Mungairde saí egnaidh 35 agus sruith sheanóir Mumhan décc."

"A.D. 1107. Mungairit do orgain do Muircheartach Ua Briain."

"A.D. 752. Bovgal, son of Fergal, Abbot of Mungret, was killed."

"A.D. 762. Ailill, son of Creevaghan, Abbot of Mungret, died."

"A.D. 834. The Danes burned Mungret & other Churches in Ormond."

"A.D. 909. The 33rd year of Flann. Saint Litheach, Abbot of Clonenagh and Mulcashel, Abbot of Mungret, died."

"A.D. 965. Conn, the son of Corcran, Abbot of Mungret and head of all Munster, died."

"A.D. 993. Murges, son of Muredach (was) Abbot of Mungret."

"A.D. 994. Rebachan, son of Donogh, Erenach of Mungret, died."

"A.D. 1006. Caicher, son of Maonach, Abbot of Mungret, died."

"A.D. 1014. Niall, son of Deargan, Erenach of Mungret, was killed."

"A.D. 1028. Art O'Donoughe, Erenach of Mungret, died."

"A.D. 1033. Conn O'Mulpatrick, Erenach of Mungret and Dysart Enos, died."

"A.D. 1070. Casey, son of Carbry, Abbot of Mungret, head of the Clergy of Munster, died."

"A.D. 1100. Conn, son of Gillaboy, Abbot of Mungret, a wise doctor and chief senior of Munster, died."

"A.D. 1107. Mungret was plundered by Mortogh O'Brien."

Gough's Camden:—

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Mungret, three miles south of Limerick, was of ancient erection.

The Psalter of Cashell says it had within its walls six Churches and contained, exclusive of scholars, 1600 religious. The remains of its Church bespoke neither magnificence or antiquity; the east end is forty seven feet by sixteen; the nave thirty feet by twenty eight; on its north side a small porch; the west end twelve feet by twenty two, having on the north side a small square tower (Archdall H. 434, 435, Wilson 162). Edmond Henry Perry, second Lord Glentworth was created Earl and Viscount Limerick, February 11th 1802. 37

Archdall's Mon. Hib., Vol. II, R.I.A.:— 38

Mungret\* is situated near three miles south of Limerick, where an Abbey was said to have been erected in the fourth century, before the arrival of Saint Patrick in Munster (O'Halloran, Vol. 2, p. 44). It is however, indubitable, that Saint Patrick placed Saint Nessian here, who died A.D. 551 (Tr. Th. pp. 158, 186).

Saint Manchin, son of Seadhna, grandson of Cas and great-grandson of Conall of the Dalgais race, and nephew to Blaid, King of Thomond, was Abbot here; for his unexampled piety and extensive learning he was ordered by Saint Patrick to undertake the instruction of his new converts in the Province of Connaught, and afterwards became the first Bishop of Limerick (Acta. SS. p. 332. O'Halloran, Vol. 2, p. 95). 39

A.D. 760. Died the Abbot of Ailioll, the son of Creabachain — Annals 4 Masters.

A.D. 820. This Abbey was plundered and destroyed by the Danes — History of Limerick, pp. 13, 14.

A.D. 834. This year the Abbey, together with several other Churches in Munster, was burnt and destroyed by the Danes — Annals 4 Masters. 40

A.D. 840. The Danes repeated their depredations — O'Halloran, Vol. 2, p. 158.

A.D. 908. Cormac Mc Cullenan, Archbishop of Cashel and King of Munster, did, by his last will, bequeath to this Abbey three ounces of gold, an embroidered vest and his blessing — Mc Curtin, pp. 193 & 194.

A.D. 909. Died the Abbot of Macilcaisil — Annals 4 Masters.

A.D. 934. The Abbey was again consumed by fire — Tr.Th. p.633.

A.D. 994. Died Rebachan Mc Dunchuda, the Airchennach (id).

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\* Was called anciently Imungram and Mounfairid.

- A.D. 1006. Died the Abbot Caichir Mc Maony (id). 41
- A.D. 1014. Died Niall Mc Deargan, the Archdeacon (id).
- A.D. 1028. Died Art O'Donoughe, Deacon (Archenach) of this Abbey - 4 Masters.
- A.D. 1033. Died Constans; he was Archidnach of this Abbey and also of the Abbey of Disert Aenguis - AA.SS. page 582.
- A.D. 1070. Died the Abbot Cathusach Mc Cairpre; he was the Chief of the Clergy of Munster - 4 Masters.
- A.D. 1080. The Abbey suffered much this year from a general conflagration - Annals Munster.
- A.D. 1088. Donal Mc Lochloin with the force of Ulster destroyed this Abbey - Annals id.
- A.D. 1100. Died the Abbot Conn Mc Giallabuidhe, a philosopher of repute - 4 Masters.
- A.D. 1102. On the 5th of October, died in this Abbey the Blessed Mugron O'Morgain, principal Professor of Divinity at Armagh and in all the west of Europe - Tr. Th. p. 399. 42
- A.D. 1107. The Abbey was plundered and sacked this year - id p. 633.

The Psalter of Cashel gives an incredible account of this Abbey; that it had within its walls six Churches, which contained exclusive of scholars, 1500 religious, 500 of whom were learned preachers, 500 Psalmists and the remaining 500 wholly applied themselves to spiritual exercises - Mc Curtin p. 193. 43

The ruins of this Abbey may still be seen consisting of the walls of a Church, which by no means bespeak either antiquity or its former (?) splendour; the east end is forty seven feet long by sixteen broad, with a plain narrow window; the centre or nave is thirty three feet by twenty eight and a half and the communication from this with the east end is by a small arch; on the north side of the nave is a small perch or entrance; the west end is twelve feet by twenty two, on the north side whereof is a small square tower with ruined battlements; there are no old tombs to be found here, but at a small distance north east are the walls of an old house which probably made a part of the Abbey. 44 45

Lan. Ecc. Hist. L. Vol. II, p. 102:- 46

VI. Another distinguished Saint of the south of Ireland, contemporary with Senan, and partly with Carthagh (p. 103) was

Nessan, Abbot and most probably founder of the Monastery of Mungret near Limerick (54). The early history of this Saint is involved in obscurity, for we cannot admit the story of his having become a disciple of Saint Patrick when in Munster; as if Nessan could have been a grown up young man about the year 450. He may, at least in part, be said to have been a disciple of Saint Ailbe of Emly, with whom he used to converse upon theological subjects and questions, the solution of which he was anxious to learn. At the time of these conversations he could not have been very young, and it may fairly be inferred that he was born before the beginning of 6th century. It is also probable that he was then, or at least before Ailbe's death, Abbot of Mungret. He never rose higher in the Church than to the rank of Deacon, by which title he was known not only during his life time but likewise ever since. Yet his reputation was so great that he has been considered as one of the fathers of the Irish Church (60) and therefore it can scarcely be doubted that he was the Nessan named in the second class of Saints. He died in the year 552 and his festival was celebrated at Mungret on the 25th of July. This Monastery became very eminent and is said to have contained at one time a prodigious number of monks (64). Not long after the death of St. Nessan we find marked that of some other distinguished persons, concerning whom however, very little is known.

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Vol. III, page 373:—

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XI. The northmen still continue to plunder and destroy various religious establishments. In 926 Kildare was despoiled first by these of Waterford, and afterwards by those of Dublin. This town was a great object of their cupidity for it was plundered again in 927 by the Danes of Waterford, commanded by a son of Godfred, and afterwards in 928 on St. Brigid's Day by Godfred himself. Leinster was not as well defended as some other parts of Ireland. Auliff, a son of Godfred, I suppose the same as the one just mentioned, was

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(54). (p. 104) We have already shown (Note 79 to Chap. VI) the absurdity of the opinion that St. Patrick founded this Monastery for Nessan. Nor is there any reason to think that there was any such monastery established there either by Saint Patrick as Harris states, or by any one else before the times of Nessan, who ought, I believe, be considered as the founder of it.

(60). In Cumman's Paschal Epistle Nessan is joined with Ailbe, Kieran of Clonmacnois, etc. That this was Nessan of Mungret cannot be called in question, whereas Cumman alludes to Saints who left great establishments after them, and particularly in places not far distant from the Shannon. Now there was no other Nessan in these parts of Ireland to whom these circumstances could apply.

(64). (p. 105) See Archdall at Mungret. It is strange that Ware has not made mention of this Monastery.



defeated in 926 by Murtogh Mac Neill (a son of the King Neill Glun- 50 dubh) and his Ulster men, who killed 800 northmen, among whom were three of their chiefs, Abdean, Aufer and Harold; yet they afterwards penetrated into that Province, and the same Auliffe, assisted by the northmen of Lochcuain (Strangford-Lough) plundered Armagh about Saint Martin's festival 932. A party of them pillaged (p.374) Clonmacnois in 935, and in the same year they burned the Monastery of Mungret.

The antiquities of this Parish of Mungret were examined by Messrs. P. O'Keeffe and J. O'Donovan, and the notes arranged by the latter.