

KENRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Charter (Babby) School - Ringmoylan

The very insignificant-looking photo of the ruin accompanying this item is the only remaining structure associated with the Ringmoylan Charter School of 1735-1835.

The ruin is referred to locally as 'The Babby School' that was an additional development of the Charter School which formally stood west of the road to Ringmoylan Pier and not far from the remains of the Windmill. As the aim of the Charter School was not felt to be achieving its educational/proselytising purpose in regard to older children, the junior establishment of 'The Babby School' was built near the entrance to the Shannongrove House of 1709 built by John Bury, c1650-1722.

A valuable historical insight into the working of this Charter School - commonly called 'Blue School' from the colour of the student's attire - is gained by the report of the prison reformer John Howard of 1787 that reported fifteen deaths of children within about a year, with as many more ill. An uninscribed stone in a wall near where the Charter School stood is thought locally to mark the graves of children from the school. (A drawing of which accompanies this note)

The original Phineas Bury, a Cromwellian adventurer was granted over five thousand acres in Kenry for his support of the campaign. The above-mentioned John was his son and John's son William acquired the Moore estate in Tullamore on his marriage (1723) to the Honourable Jane Moore. He thereby acquired 22,000 acres and the title 'Earl of Charleville' and his move resulted in the passing of the Shannongrove estate out of Bury ownership.

Happily the house of 1709 (now in private hands) is in an excellent state of preservation. The 'Shannongrove Collar' presented in 1948 to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, is so called because it was found in boggy land on this estate and remained in the custody of the Bury family. Efforts in the past to have this treasure repatriated have been obviously unsuccessful.

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