and fortified Wilson’s Hospital, but were quickly dispossess­ed of it by a detachment of the royal forces.

This district forms the most elevated portion of the great central plain of Ireland, which is here 274 feet above the sea-level ; but no part of it is mountainous. The highest elevations are Knocklayde in the north, 795 feet high, and the Hill of Ben, 710. All the hills are suited, even to their summit, for pasturage, and some for tillage ; many are richly clothed with timber. Lakes are numerous : the largest lie in a direction nearly north and south along the middle of the county. Lough Shillin, the most northern, is a border lake on the side of Cavan, and near it is the smaller border lake of Lough Kinnail or Kinully. Lough Dereveragh is a winding expanse of water, eleven miles long and three broad, bordered in some parts by steep hills richly clothed with trees. Farther south is Lough Owell or Hoyle, studded with islands, and Lough Tron or Hiern, of smaller dimen­sions. The most southern, and also the largest lake of the chain, is Lough Ennell, equally admirable for its scenic beauties and for its extent of surface. A number of smaller lakes are scattered throughout the county. Loughs Lene, Bawn, Glyde, and Fore, are in the northern part ; the small but romantic lake of Loughsewdy in the western. Lough Drin is remarkable only for its great depth ; it covers but an acre of land. Lough Ree or Reagh, which is in reality a portion of the Shannon, forms part of the western boundary of the county, separating it from that of Roscommon. It is twenty miles in length, and contains several islands, two of which were the sites of religious foundations.

Though no large rivers traverse this portion of the island, it may be considered to be the source of several. The Inny, which rises in Lough Ramor in Cavan, and enters Westmeath through Lough Shillin, through the most part of its course forms the boundary line on the side of Longford, but in one part traverses the county, and after dividing two of its baronies, ultimately joins the Shannon. Two small rivers, the Golden and Silver Arms, which issued from the northern and southern extremities of Lough Owell, have been closed up, so as to increase the quantity of water in the parent lake, which is the main feeder of the Royal Canal. The Brosna flows from Lough Ennell into the Shannon, which forms part of the western boundary of the county. Lough Lene also gives rise to two streams of some noto­riety. The northern, after sinking into the ground near the village of Fore, and re-appearing, empties itself, under the name of the Glore, into the Inny, and the united streams pass through the Shannon into the Atlantic. The southern forms the Deel, which joins the Boyne, and falls into the Irish Sea. Hence this little lake, with its two perennial branches, may be said to divide Ireland into two islands.

The county forms part of the great limestone field that tra­verses the island across its centre. This substratum is in­terrupted in two places only, the one at Moat-a-Grenogue, and the other near Ballymahon, at each of which places the sandstone rises from under the limestone bed, and forms insulated protuberances of some elevation. In some places the limestone is wrought up for architectural and domestic purposes, but in others its quality is such as to render it nearly unfit for the farmer’s use, in consequence of the quantity of fuel required for its calcination. Traces of lead and copper have been discovered, but not in quantities suf­ficient to hold out a fair prospect of pecuniary remuneration by exploring them farther. Coal is also said to have been raised in small quantities. A chalybeate spring rises at Grangemore, near Kinnegad, bursting forth with force, and forming a copious stream ; but in consequence of the diffi­culty of access to it, few take advantage of its medicinal virtues. The soil is in general a deep rich loam resting on the limestone, but in the flat lands in the west it is light. The centre is intersected with numerous eskers formed of calcareous gravel. There is much bog : that of Allen co­vers a large portion of the western baronies. Many parts are well timbered ; and traces of the old forests show them­selves by the spontaneous growth of indigenous trees of va­rious kinds in places where the young shoots are protected from the depredations of cattle.

The progress of the population, and its actual state, ac­cording to the latest census, appear in the following table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year.** | **Authority.** | **No.** |
| 1760 De Burgo 50,340  1792 Beaufort 69,000  1812 Parliamentary census...112,000  1821 Ditto 128,819  1831 Ditto 148,161 | | |

The last of these returns gives a population of one in­habitant to every 3∙06 acres. The return of the Commis­sioners of Public Instruction in 1834, taken according to dioceses, gives a population to the county of about 138,560 souls, of whom 10,175 are of the established church, 251 Protestant dissenters, and 128,133 Roman Catholics. The number of children receiving instruction in the public schools, at the periods stated beneath, is as follows, ac­cording to returns made to parliament.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Boys.** | **Girls.** | **Sex not ascertained.** | Total |
| 1821 4952 2374 7326 | | | | |
| 1824-6 5740 3820 359 9919 | | | | |
| 1836-7 1717 1656 3373 | | | | |
| 1837-8 1881 1664 3545 | | | | |
| 1838-9 2126 1925 4051 | | | | |

According to the return of 1824-6, the number of Ca­tholic children educated in the public schools was 8249, of Protestants 1533, and of dissenters six ; that of those whose religious persuasion could not be ascertained amount­ing to 131. The total number of schools was 216, out of which number twenty-six, containing 1532 pupils, were maintained wholly by grants of public money ; twenty-five, with 1542 pupils, by voluntary subscriptions; all the re­maining schools, in number 165, and educating 6845 chil­dren, being supported wholly by the fees of the pupils. An establishment for the maintenance and education of 160 boys, the sons of Protestant parents, natives of Westmeath, who are afterwards apprenticed to Protestant artificers, with a fee of L.10 each, was founded under the will of Andrew- Wilson of Piercefield, Esq. and still exists. The estate be­queathed for this purpose amounts to L.4000 per annum. Under the incorporated society for erecting charter schools, there is a school situate at Leney, six miles from Mul­lingar, intended for the maintenance and education of sixty children.

The county is divided into the twelve baronies of Braw- ney, called also the territory of Brawney, Clonlonan, Cork- aree, Dclvin, Demifore, Farbill, Fartullagh, Kilkenny-west, Moyashel and Magheradernon, Moycashel, Moygoish, and Rathconrath. These are subdivided into sixty-two parishes, of which fifty-nine are in the diocese of Meath, and three in that of Ardagh. It was represented in the Irish parlia­ment by ten members, two for the county, and two for each of the boroughs of Athlone, Fore, Kilbeggan, and Mullin­gar. By the arrangements under the union act, all the boroughs were disfranchised, except the first, which belongs only partially to this county, one half of it being in Ros­common ; it now returns one member. The constituency for the county was as follows in the under-named years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date.** | **No.** |
| 1829 2601 | |
| 1830 641 | |
| 1831 921 | |
| 1832 1395 | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date.** | **No.** |
| 1833 1395 | |
| 1834 1395 | |
| 1835 1395 | |
| 1836 1526 | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date.** | **No.** |
| 1837 1525 | |
| 1838 1525 | |
| 1839 1300 | |