

Obituaries

3rd March 1990

White knights and Fitzgibbons

IN OCTOBER 1916, Fr. Patrick Woulfe, C.C., Kilmallock, contributed an article to the **Journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society** (Vol. IV, No. 1) on "Names and Surnames in Co. Limerick" — seven years later he would produce his great pioneer work on Irish surnames, **Sloinnte Gaedheal is Gall**.

According to Fr. Woulfe, in his article in the North Munster Archaeological Journal, the surname Fitzgibbon was the 60th most numerous surname in Co. Limerick, Ryan, as one would expect, being easily the most numerous. Fr. Woulfe based his findings on the frequency with which the surnames appeared in the Registers of Electors for Co. Limerick.

In 1916 there was 72 Fitzgibbons in the voters' lists for Co. Limerick. If Fr. Woulfe had taken his figures from the lists compiled after the coming into force of the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which greatly enlarged the franchise, the number of Fitzgibbons appearing in the registers would certainly have been very much larger.

The Fitzgibbons were a branch of the powerful Munster Fitzgeralds, whose head was the Earl of Desmond, and they traced their descent from one Gilbert, or Gibbon (Giobún), Fitzgerald, from whom came the surname Mac Giobhúin or Fitzgibbon. The original settlement of the Fitzgibbons was in the Mahoonagh or Castlemahon area of Co. Limerick. They also had land in the Kilmallock area, and in south-east Limerick and north-east Cork. The memory of their association with north-east Cork survives in the barony name, Condons and Clangibbon.

The title White Knight, borne by the head of the Fitzgib-

bons, dates from the year 1333, when Maurice Fitzgibbon, having distinguished himself at the battle of Hallidon Hill, near Edinburgh, was knighted by Edward III of England. The title became hereditary, being transmitted according to Irish usage.

At first the White Knights lived at Kilmallock, their castle being situated a short distance outside the town walls, on the banks of the Lúbach. Later they moved to the neighbourhood of Mitchelstown; but we find their ruined castle being shown on a map of Kilmallock dating from about 1600, the castle still being described as **Cúirt an Rí**.

dire, the Knight's Court or Castle.

It was Gilbert or Giobún Fitzgerald, ancestor of the Fitzgibbons and the White Knights, who founded the lovely Dominican monastery of Kilmallock in 1291. He is buried in the abbey, as is Maurice Fitzgibbon, the first White Knight, and various others of the Knights, including Edmund Fitzgibbon, and the last White Knight, who died in 1608.

Next year, 1991, will be the seventh centenary of the founding of Kilmallock abbey by the ancestor of the Fitzgibbons and the White Knights, and the Kilmallock Historical Society thinks it

would be very appropriate if the Fitzgibbons held a clan rally in Kilmallock that year. Any Fitzgibbon — or any person related by marriage to a bearer of the name — who is interested in the idea of a Fitzgibbon clan rally in 1991 should write — letter or postcard — to: Noel Collins, "Cois Cille", The Hill, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick.

□ **TRADITIONAL MUSIC:** This year's Weekend School of Traditional Irish Music in the Education Centre, Kilfinane, will be held on Friday and Saturday, March 9 and 10. Tuition will be provided by a panel of expert tutors, all of whom have appeared on T.V. and radio programmes, and have numerous All-Ireland championships

to their credit. The instruments being catered for and the relevant tutors are as follows:

Chromatic (Button Key) Accordion: Billy Fogarty, Nenagh, well known accordion champion.

Concert Flute: Michael Harty, Thurles, All-Ireland champion flautist.

Fiddle: Bernie Whelan, Barefield, Ennis, All-Ireland champion, and Danny Foley, Boher, Co. Limerick, who had wide experience as a music teacher and has taken part in many T.V. and radio programmes.

Tin Whistle: Mary Bergin, An Spidéal, Co. na Gaillimhe, All-Ireland champion; has played with such famous groups as Ceoltóirí Laighin and Dé Danann.

Aspiring young traditional

musicians wishing to enroll in the school should contact the Secretary, Kilfinane Education Centre, or the County Limerick Vocational Education Committee, 58 O'Connell St., Limerick. Tel: 061-314612 or 061-42692.

□ **DAONSCOIL AN EARRAIGH:** Another event taking place on Saturday, March 10, is Daonscoil an Earraigh, which is being held in the Nano Nagle Centre, Kilavullen (5 miles east of Mallow on the road to Castletownroche), under the auspices of Daonscoil na Mumhan. Daonscoil an Earraigh will run from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. and the theme will be: "Cad is féidir linn a dhéanamh?" Further particulars can be had from Pádraig Ó hÍceadha, Aonghleann, Cuilinn Uí Chaoimh, Mala, Co. Chorcaí. Tel: 029-79007.

This history of the Fitzgibbon family was taken from an Irish newspaper. Many sent it to me