

Castlemartyr, Lepers and Martyrs, Plains and Horses and a Hermitage.

A **Baile** is not an architectural entity. It's the home-place of an individual or a group; their place of residence, place of being, of belonging, conveying a sense of identity and association with a particular place. It is a concept which can have an architectural expression as a landscaped area, a locality, a farmstead, a hovel, a village, a town, it can be a shelter above or below ground. It can be an expression of vernacular architecture or one of a more formalised design. It can as easily be a loosely defined cluster of hovels or cabins, or even a set of 'cubbies' cut into a cliff-face. It can be a **Tig Faoi Talamh**. It can be a set of buildings arranged around a 'street' (**sráid**) or one leading to the gates of a castle or great monastery or beside a roadway leading to other places.

Charles Smith (1750 AD) writes of Castlemartyr as once being a 'Leperstown' (**Baile na Martra**) at an earlier point in time; one of several in East Cork e.g. Midleton/Ballinacurra beside a monastery, Aghada beside a hermitage (Kilteskin). The Irish for Castlemartyr is **Caisleán na Martra** i.e. the castle of the martyrs. In West Cork there is Killnamartra (Kilnamartery) i.e. the Cell / Hermitage of the Martyrs. If the word Martra has been translated and transmitted accurately through time then what martyrs are in question in both place-names?

Prior to the Black Death, lepers were seen as persons undergoing purgatory on earth. Doing this penance meant direct access to heaven at the time of death. They were regarded as martyrs and this was one of many forms of martyrdom in the early church. After death, 'sainthood' in the older common sense of the term meaning a person who was seen to have lived a good life, was the reward for lepers. Therefore lepers were martyrs. However after the Black Death attitudes changed and lepers were shunned.

What kind of accommodation was provided for the shelter of lepers in rural Ireland in medieval times? If their 'colonies', their settlement places, were established in proximity to hermitages (*cluians, cills, lauras*) or larger monasteries where care for the soul as well as the body was provided what hovels were available to shelter them, what cabins, what surface buildings, what perhaps underground buildings? Did some die in such accommodations? What was the fate of the woman and young girl at Ballyanly near Inniscarra? Upon death how were lepers buried?

If leper / martyr colonies were established beside hermitages (some hermitages) does this give rise to place names such as **Cill na Martra**? Is the word **martra** therefore accurately read as martyr? Why not **lobar**?

The townland connecting Ballyoughtera / Ballvoughtera (or has it something to do with **bocht** meaning poor, impoverished and **terra** in Latin meaning land, countryside) with Castlemartyr is **Baile na Martra** (the home-place of the martyrs) where the medieval church and probable earlier church settlement lies.

Before the hermitage was created at Ballyoughtera/voughtera in proximity to the Womagh river and consequently to Pilmore harbour) what was there? Did the 14th/15th century Geraldine 'castle' / tower-house re-orientate earlier geographical orientations in the locality? Was the hermitage responsible for clearing and working the land in its vicinity? If so, then what was that land area called? Was it a plain? Was it one of three ancient plains in East Cork? Did such plains come into being in the Bronze Age or Iron Age? If so is there any settlement evidence in the nearby landscape e.g. a cemetery (**Ballyvorisheen?**) indicating the existence of a settlement place somewhere nearby and if so what was its economic reason for being, what impact did it have on shaping the landscape and how long did its impact last? Did the plain of the horse-stock (i.e. Mogeely, **Maighe Dhíle**) stretch into it and whose horse-stock were they and what was their number?

.....So many questions.....