

## Belfast Monthly Magazine

---

Description of the Barony of Upper Fews, County of Armagh

Author(s): I. D.

Source: *The Belfast Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 20 (Mar. 31, 1810), pp. 168-171

Published by: [Belfast Monthly Magazine](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30072545>

Accessed: 11/08/2013 16:52

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Belfast Monthly Magazine* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Belfast Monthly Magazine*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

it evidently would guard against the baneful effects of monopoly. The poor mechanic, who might occasionally want cash, would be taken less advantage of; and that infernal business of *pawn broking*, would likely commit less ravages on the lower orders of the people.

The foregoing plan was sometime ago forwarded anonymously to a person in Lisburn. The scheme appears to be useful, but it requires further explanation. If the writer, or any other person, conversant with the practices of Scotland, would give a more full account, it would be acceptable. Information is particularly solicited, whether selling on trust to the members, forms a part of the plan, whether credit is given generally to their members, or only to the amount of the individual's subscription.

*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

DESCRIPTION OF THE BARONY OF UPPER FEWS, COUNTY OF ARMAGH.

THE barony of Upper Fews, is the most southern barony in the county of Armagh; in it are comprehended the parish of Newtown-hamilton, and part of the parishes of Armagh and Cregan, the remainder of the latter (called the five towns) being in the county of Louth. It is bounded on the east, by the barony of Upper Orier, on the west, by the barony of Turenny, and the river which divides the counties of Armagh and Monaghan; on the north, by the baronies of Armagh and Lower Fews, and on the south, by the county of Louth, and is about 13 miles long from north to south, the breadth is irregular, and is in general from 4 to 6 miles.

Towards the northern and southern extremity of this barony the face of the country is in general uneven, ascending and descending into gentle hills and dales; these hills grow more elevated as they approach the centre, where a chain of high, rude, and uncultivated hills or mountains, mostly covered with heath and coarse grass, crosses the same, near Newtown-hamilton; these begin in the county of Monaghan, and after they cross

the barony in an eastern direction into upper Orier, gradually grow more rocky and uncultivated (some spots at their bottoms excepted) and branch out into mountains of different magnitudes, the principal branch of which continues on to Slieu Gullen, the principal hiding place of the noted tory Redmond O'Hanlon, and from thence to the Newry and Carlingford mountains; these continue, with the exception of the lough of Carlingford, intervening, to the Rostrevor and Killowan mountains, and terminate after forming a vast amphitheatre, when viewed from the south, at Slieu Donard\* the most eastern, and highest of all the Mourne Mountains.

All these high hills or mountains both in this barony, and in the county of Monaghan, which were heretofore kept under stock, have been with few exceptions let within these few years back to tenants (part of them adventurers from the county of Down) who have built a great number of cabins on them; and though few of them have sufficient capital to make rapid improvements, yet nevertheless, in process of time, it is expected the face of these mountains will assume a new aspect, and the climate of the same be greatly improved, when there are proper ditches and drains made on them to carry off the spring and stagnant water, both of which are hostile to vegetation, and render the climate humid; indeed the most of these are capable of improvement, the substrata being of clay, which, when mixed with the moory strata on the top and limed, will make middling land.†

\* I think your Correspondent from Balmabinch, ought to have termed his "Tour to Mourne, a tour to Slieu Donard: as there are few countries I have yet travelled in, affords more subjects for the pen of a geographical or sentimental tourist (such as that of S. E.) than the half barony of Mourne, no part of which, with the exception of Slieu Donard, S. E. his tour entered, consequently does not describe.

† For an account of the mode of improving the different kinds of soils in this barony, see vol. 3, of this Magazine, page 178.

The soil of this barony is of different kinds, towards the north, where the same joins the barony of Armagh, it is of the calcareous kind, and produces good crops of barley, oats, potatoes, flax, &c.; in the centre, it is of the argillaceous and moory kinds, and when duly manured produces in some parts good crops of flax, but the quality of the oats and potatoes, especially in the mountains, are generally not so good; in the south the soil is in general lighter, lying in many places on a stratum of rock or gravel at various depths, it is also of a warmer nature, and produces crops of a superior quality, and there are also spots of heavy clay soils almost in every field, which is mostly appropriated to the culture of flax, the year after it has been set with potatoes. The potatoe-oats has been introduced some years back, and is found to answer the soil well, and there is always a ready market for it in Armagh, Newry, and Dundalk. There have been no quarries of lime-stone yet discovered in this barony, one only excepted, which was discovered by Mr. Donald Steward, the self taught travelling mineralogist of the Dublin Society, who visited this country occasionally, but which has not turned out well. The inhabitants of the north of this barony, having to procure this valuable fossil from the vicinity of Armagh, whilst those in the south procure theirs from Castlerock, in the county of Louth, and from near Carrickmacross in the county of Monaghan.

The principal inconvenience attending the north of this barony is the want of fuel, not only its inhabitants, but the inhabitants of the city of Armagh and its neighbourhood, have to procure their turf from the mountains of Blackbank and Grouselodge,\* a distance of from 6 to 8 miles south of said city. The roads from these mountains are almost con-

stantly filled with cars going for, and returning with turf, which causes the roads to be deep in winter, and full of dust in summer. The part south of these mountains however labour under no such inconvenience, there being plenty of turf bog interspersed in the vallies through the same; so that few people have to send more than half a mile, and many only a few perches to procure their fuel.

The mountains in the centre of the barony being the most elevated of any in the county, the waters of course divide at their tops, one part running in rivulets towards the north, the principal part of the same falling into the Callan water, thence to the Black-water, until the same empties itself into Lough Neagh; the other part runs southwardly in a meandering course through a level country, dividing the upper part of the barony nearly into two equal parts, and after receiving different smaller streams in its progress (particularly one from the eastern side of the barony which crosses the road from Dublin to Armagh, at Silverbridge) it discharges itself, after it passes along the eastern side of the town of Dundalk, into the bay of that name.

The rivers of this barony are very subject to sudden floods, especially near their sources, the water being impeded by the course of the river's being so level, and in some places being too narrow, so that the water rises in many places ten or twelve feet and overflows the holms to a considerable extent in parts; the whole lands near the river, having the appearance of a great lake at these times. These floods do great damage when they happen in any time but the winter season, as the water is so muddy and leaves so much sand and dirt on both grass and corn that they make very bad fodder for cattle, but it tends at the same time to fertilize the soil, so that there is no part in the barony where natural grass grows more luxuriant without manure, nor where oats and potatoes require less. Some of these rivers are embanked in several places and floodgates placed on the streams of water running into the same to keep the river in its bed. But when the

\* This mountain derives its name from a house two stories high, formerly built by Adam Noble, esq. who deserted the same, on account of its damp situation, the house and some lands adjoining have been let, and one story has been pulled down and the house roofed anew.

BELFAST MAG. NO. XX.

floods are high, the embankments often give way, as the bed of the river is always changing from side to side, and rats make holes in the same, both of which tend to make the ramparts weak. The greatest flood ever remembered to be in these rivers, was in the autumn of 1805 when a vast quantity of oats and hay were swept away by the flood; some of the oats however were saved although greatly damaged, being cast out on dry land, by the wind and waves; almost the whole of the bridges on these rivers were thrown down, or otherwise damaged, two or three only excepted.

There are a great number of lakes or loughs (as they are called) in the south of this barony, all well stored with trouts and eels; some of the former have been caught weighing five or six pounds; pike are also caught in some of them, perchies are common to the most of them, and in a few there are roaches; numbers of trouts and eels come down the streams from these lakes into the rivers, where they are easily distinguished when caught, being of a darker colour, and yellower in the belly than those fish that breed in rivers. The flesh of the trout is also redder, and reckoned better flavoured; this is partly owing to the nature of the bottom of these lakes, most of them being situated in turf bogs; the exhalations however of those lakes and bogs are not prejudicial to health, like the putrid exhalations of stagnant pools and marshes in other countries, but are of an antiseptic and astringent quality, owing to the water being impregnated with great quantities of timber of different kinds, particularly oak which is found in abundance on the borders of these lakes, and indeed the bogs themselves, besides what timber they contain underneath their surfaces, are mostly composed of heath and other vegetables. The principal of these lakes is called Loughross, in the midst of which is a considerable island, on which great quantities of herons or cranes build their nests on stunted low bushes, much like that of a magpie, and then bring out their young; there is also another lake

called Mullaghduff, which has a small island, on which thousands of sea-gulls or seamews of the black headed kind, build their nests: they keep up a constant screech both night and day during the breeding season; in the summer and winter season the whole of them seldom go away to the sea for any length of time, some of them mostly remaining.

Considerable numbers of Danish raths commonly called forths, are to be found in this barony, particularly in the southern part, the most of those are circular, some are enclosed by one, others by two, and a few have three rings of fosses or mounds of earth thrown up to a considerable height, and the intervals particularly of those of the latter kinds are sunk to a considerable depth; there are others of those however quite straight thrown up in like manner; one of the latter description in the neighbourhood of Silverbridge extends across the country for a considerable distance in three great ramparts, the two intervals being about thirty feet each, are sunk to a great depth: on the most of these detached white thorn bushes are growing which the common people are very much afraid to cut down or disturb; as they think these places are the abode of fairies, &c. who in case of their so doing would be revenged on them; and when any cattle die, or any accident befalls them, it is usually ascribed to the agency of those tiny sprites.

In a bog contiguous to one of these raths of the former description, about a mile north of Regan, has been found a great quantity of black oak timber, some of it of an excellent quality, and placed in the following curious manner, two long straight beams (some of them 30 feet and upwards) are lying horizontally within a few inches of each other; in each of these are three rude mortices, one at each end, and one at the centre, pieces of wood three or four feet long, and tapering towards the one end like sta'acties are driven down into the ground through those mortices,\* in the interval between

---

\* A heavy piece of timber shaped much like a band beetle has been found,

the beams beforementioned, a row of stakes from three to six feet long, according to the depth, are placed perpendicularly close to each other, whose ends rest on the clay underneath, but the upper end of almost the whole of them, bear evident marks of being burned: that part of them however whose tops are higher than the lying beams (and likely the whole of them were that high before they were burned) have each a mortice in them, through which a short piece of timber runs transversely, whose endrest on the beams beforementioned: when one of the stakes happens to be crooked, a piece is driven in between the adjoining stakes to fill up the cavity. Several short rows have been found in this bog, but the turf has been cut off one in particular, which has extended upwards of twenty perches in a straight line; the end of the horizontal beams being placed close to each other, this line does not cross the bog from hill to hill, but runs in an oblique and nearly a western direction down the bog from the rath beforementioned; more of this curiosity is stripping every year as the bog is cut over; † but the perpendicular stakes are not so long, as the bog is getting shallower the nearer it is cut to the edge. What the use of this curiosity was I do not pretend to be a good enough antiquary to ascertain; but would be obliged to any of your intelligent correspondents for their opinion on this subject. I.D.

*To be Continued.*

*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

ON FAIRIES.

“You’ve heard of such spirits.”

HAVING, in a former Essay taken a short survey of witchcraft, I now proceed to make a few observations on a link of the same chain,

supposed to be used for the purpose of diving those pieces of timber and the stakes.

† A pavement of stones, near a perch square has been found a considerable time ago with some marks of ashes upon the same; and also a pair of Querns which were formerly made use of for grinding corn.

namely the fairies. An eminent author has defined fairies to be, “a kind of fabled beings supposed to appear in a diminutive human form, and to dance in the meadows, and reward cleanliness in houses.” This description does not appear to be a general one, and perhaps related only to English fairies, the author belonging to that country; for those of this country, are said to have had several peculiar qualities beside the before mentioned, viz. an insatiable desire for stealing young children, prior to christening, or even the mother, while she lay in child-bed; they are also represented as being very vindictive, often destroying the cattle of such persons as disturbed in any manner the ground on which they hold their gambols. Their usual places of resort are stated to have been the little green mounts, Danish raths, or near some large thorn; the persons who disturbed any of those places, we are told, were sure to have their cattle all elf-shot\*, or perhaps struck themselves with some dreadful malady; those places are still held sacred, by most people, for fear of some terrible visitation, and is commonly distinguished by the name of “gentle ground.” They did not however always come in a hostile manner, for I am informed they sometimes kept up a friendly intercourse with mankind, or rather with womankind, for I understand it was mostly with them they corresponded; but wo, wo, we are told, ever befell the person, or persons, who refused them whatsoever they wanted, which they were sure to repay many fold. Legends also inform us that green was the universal colour of their dress in this country, but this seems to have been only national, as Shakespear mentions black, gray, white, and green fairies. We are also told

\* Cattle are usually said to be elf-shot that die suddenly, occasioned, it is said, by the fairies shooting them with sharp flint stones. I have been shown some of those stones, they are the heads of the ancient Irish arrows, before the use of iron here; and wonderful to relate are in high repute as an effectual preservative against fairies, &c when hung in a cow house, or boiled in the drink of cattle.