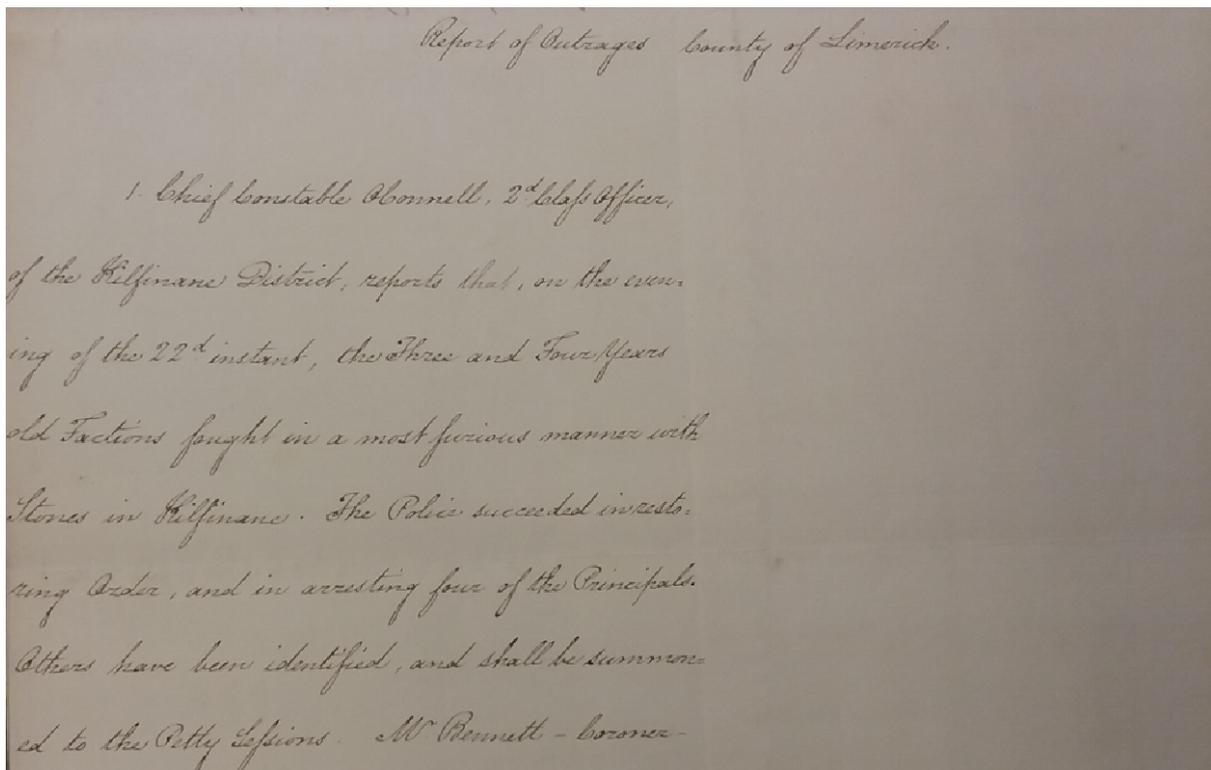


Why were the police so exercised about the policing of fairs at this time?

One of the main tasks which faced the newly formed police force was the quelling of disturbances at fairs and gatherings. In 1825 police reported that the Three and Four old factions fought desperately at the fair of Dromin causing the deaths of three men. At the fair of Knockaderry in May 1835 there was another fatality as a result of a faction fight. Below we have a police report dated 23 May 1836 giving details of a faction fight which occurred at the fair of Kilfinane on the previous day. On that occasion, the adversaries known as 'the Three and Four Year old factions fought in a most furious manner with stones.' According to the report, police managed to restore order and to arrest known individuals 'who will be summoned to Petty Sessions'. However Mr Bennett, one of the coroners of the county, in an endeavour to prevent the riot 'was struck in the head by a stone and is now confined to his bed.'



Report of Outrages County of Limerick.

*1. Chief Constable O'Connell, 2^d Class Officer,
of the Kilfinane District, reports that, on the evening of the 22^d instant, the Three and Four years old Factions fought in a most furious manner with Stones in Kilfinane. The Police succeeded in restoring Order, and in arresting four of the Principals. Others have been identified, and shall be summoned to the Petty Sessions. W. Bennett - Coroner.*

By this time the phenomenon of faction fighting seemed to have been already on the wane in the locality. This was possibly due to a number of factors.

In August 1836 Sub Inspector Smith expressed satisfaction at the peacekeeping strategies which were being pursued.

Some time ago I considered it almost impracticable to prevent fights at fairs and large meetings, but I certainly am now convinced that it only requires prudence and a zealous perseverance to get rid of that blot upon the character of our country and there is no doubt that if the business is well followed up for a sufficient time these disgraceful riots will be entirely put a stop to

Wm Smith
 Sub Inspector
 Rathkeale 16th August 1836

Another factor which contributed to the pacification of violent disturbances was the Repeal Campaign being organised by Daniel O'Connell at this time. By the onset of Famine in 1845 the custom of faction fighting had almost completely died out.

Ballinvreena Fair in the mid and late 1800s.

Sporadic nineteenth century newspaper reports indicate that Ballinvreena Fair remained a feature of the agricultural and sporting calendar of the district for most of the century. In April 1840 trading was brisk in Ballinvreena but poor the following day in Knocktoran. However drunkenness was not a problem on either day perhaps because customers could instead enjoy a cup of coffee from the many coffee tents in both places!

The fair of Ballinvreena, on Tuesday, was one of the best for the season; every species of stock was in good supply, and in better demand. In-calf cows (heifers) sold at 15l. each, and strippers at 10l. Fat sheep made 2l. 10s. — *Ibid.*

The fair of Knocktoran, on Wednesday, was rather a bad one; it having occurred on the day subsequent to that of Ballinvreena is supposed to be the cause. There was not a drunken man seen at either of the fairs. There were many coffee tents at both. — *Ibid.*

April 1840

Unsurprisingly, all such activity more or less ceased during the years of the Famine between 1845 and 1852. Only one of the four annual fairs was held during that period. On 28 August 1852 a notice appeared in The Nation newspaper announcing the revival of the August fair.

It is no barren sign of the times that fair-places and fairs, deserted and discontinued, are, in some instances, about to be frequented again and revived. One of the three, out of four, fairs discontinued since the first year of famine, at Ballinvreena, Kilfinane, will be resumed on Tuesday next when a number of Cork buyers will be present to purchase.

28 August 1852

This notice from the November 1853 fair of Ballinvreena clearly illustrated the upturn in agricultural trading which occurred in post-Famine Ireland. The report from that fair mentioned pig buyers from Dublin transporting pigs back to city by rail from Knocklong.

BALLINVREENA—The November fair of Ballinvreena was held on Thursday, and was largely supplied with stock of a very superior class. Several of the Cork buyers got large lots of fat cattle. Mr. Coleman, Tipperary, sold Mr Duke, of Cork, ten fat cows at 14l 10s each. Mr Clery, Ballinahinch, got 15l each for six cows. Mr O'Grady sold a lot at 15l 10s. Mr Gubbins, Ush, got 13l 10s for a lot. Calves rated from 3l 10s to 4l 10s. In-calf cows from 10l to 14l. Lambs from 1l 10s to 1l 15s each. In the pig fair a very large business was transacted. Messrs Slattery, Waterford, and Donnelly and Murphy, Dublin, bought very large lots at 2l to 2l 5s per owl, which they sent to the Knocklong station, where every preparation was completed to convey them away.—*Munster News*.

November 1853

NOTICE.

THE FAIR of BALLINVREENA, will be held on **FRIDAY, 19th November.**
 The Cork, Waterford, Dublin and Limerick Pig Buyers will attend.
 Cork Buyers will attend to Buy Fat Cattle.
 N.B.—The fair last year was a good one: and persons who refused the prices offered there had to sell much cheaper afterwards.
 November 6.

November 1858

At that November fair in 1858 the pig market seemed to have been the best trade of the day. Cattlemen were disappointed with the lack of buyers for their 'large lots of fat cattle'.

The November Fair of Ballinvreena, was held on Friday, the 19th instant, and was supplied with a very superior description of cattle. Messrs. Thomas William and George Bennett; Thomas and Patrick Cleary, &c., &c., had large lots of fat cattle, but made no sales as the buyers did not attend. Ballinvreena being in the centre of the best grazing district in the county of Limerick, and the principal feeders who sent cattle being resolved on selling, if necessary, at a lower figure than they would at other fairs, beef buyers would find it their interest to attend. Calves rated from £3 to £5; In-calf Cows from £8 to £11. In the Pig fair an unusually large business was done. Messrs. Slattery and Cunningham, Waterford, with several Clonmel and Tipperary buyers, bought large lots at £1 18s. to £2 2s. per cwt. Mr. Jack Barry, Knocklong, got £9 10s. each for four pigs from Mr. Cunningham. The fair being within a few miles of the Knocklong Railway Station, every facility was afforded in sending them away. Much credit is due to the spirited and generous proprietor, Mr. Barry, for his exertions in establishing the fair.

November 1858

Racing punters enjoyed a good day out at the races which again featured at this meeting. The report (below) concluded with the observation 'though there was a large police force present, their services were not in a single instance required.'

BALLINVREENA RACES.

These races came off on Friday. The day was beautifully fine, and the attendance large and respectable.

FIRST RACE.

The cup, with 13 sovs., added. Four entries:—Mr. Harty's "Mavourneen," aged, 10st. 3lb.; Mr. Walsh's "Farmer's Boy," 10st. 6lb.; Mr. Madden's "Fawn," 9st. 3lb.; Mr. O'Shea's "Vixen," 4 year old, 9st. 10lb. One mile and a-half heats.

The latter was withdrawn. There was a most exciting contest between "Mavourneen" and "Farmer's Boy."—The "Fawn" fell in the first heat, and did not go for the second.

SECOND RACE.

For a purse, value 3 sovs.; catch weights and post entry. Four entered:—Mr. Ryan's "Maryanne;" Mr. Connelly's "Dolly;" Mr. Bourke's "Steady," Mr. Nunan's "Ratler."

"Maryanne" won the first, and "Dolly" the second heat. In the third heat "Dolly" fell, and "Maryanne" won easily.

When the last heat was over the crowds immediately dispersed. Though there was a large police force present, their services were not in a single instance required.

It is clear from the following notice which appeared in the Cork Examiner on 16 April 1903 that Ballinvreena Fair survived into the twentieth century.

MUNSTER FAIRS.

April 16—Cork—Schull (p). Kerry—Kilbarney (a). Tipperary—Cappawhite, Rosrea.
 April 17—Cork—Carrigaline, Schull. Limerick—Askeaton.
 April 18—Cork—Doneraile (a. and p.) Kerry—Farranfure, Clare—Bridgetown.
 April 19—Cork—Castletownroche (p). Timoleague, Youghal (a. s. and p.) Kerry—Castlesand, Killorglin. Tipperary—Fethard, Clare—Kilkee. Limerick—Furagh.
 April 21—Cork—Dunoughmore, Kilcummer, Newmarket, Skibbereen. Limerick—Ballinvreena, Rathkeale (p). Clare—Ennis (2 days). Kerry—Listowel (p).
 April 22—Kerry—Cahirivreen, Listowel, Six-mile-bridge. Tipperary—Newport. Limerick—Rathkeale.
 April 23—Cork—Ballymakeery. Tipperary—Templemore.
 April 24—Cork—Mitchelstown. Kerry—Broona, Clare—Fscale, Kildyart. Tipperary—Nenagh.
 April 25—Cork—Lisgoold. Kerry—Dingle.
 April 26—Limerick City—Great Market Fair (a. n.).
 April 27—Cork—Crookstown, Farranagree (p). Kilslesh. Tipperary—Borrisokane. Limerick—Dromcollsher, Great Munster Fair (a. s.) Kerry—Miltown.
 April 28—Cork—Coeshin, d (a. s.). Dunmanway (p.). Eyeries, Knocknagroe. Limerick—Athea, Waterford—Kilmaethomas.
 April 29—Cork—Coachford (p). Dunmanway. Tipperary—Cahir. Limerick—Foynes (p). Kerry—Kilgarvan.
 April 30—Cork—Buttevant (a. s. p.). Rosserbery. Tipperary—Banaha, Carrick-on-Suir. Waterford—Cappoquin (a. s. p.)

16 April 1903

By mid-century the idea of establishing a co-operative mart began to take hold among the farmers of the area. By that time fairs were losing their appeal and it seems that Ballinvreena Fair was one of the first casualties in the calendar of fairs for County Limerick. In 1939 the four dates for Ballinvreena Fair were published as usual in the Limerick Leader's list of fairs for the county. In the 1940 list the only date advertised for Ballinvreena fair was 31st August. That may have been the last fair to be held in Ballinvreena.

Sources: www.irishnewsarchive.ie

National Archives, Chief Secretary's Office: Registered Papers, Outrage Reports County Limerick 1836