



ST. PATRICK'S, MONKSTOWN

MONKSTOWN:
The Story of a Parish

by

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ST. PATRICK'S (Monkstown) PAROCHIAL COMMITTEE
MONKSTOWN, CO. DUBLIN

1966

FOREWORD

The heart of a Parish is its Church—Monkstown's Parish Church, St. Patrick's, is just one hundred years old. This booklet has been designed to mark the centenary and to record some part of the long history of a community which has grown in numbers and in Faith through the centuries.

J. J. CANON MATHEWS
Parish Priest

Monkstown apparently has one of the most clearly defined background names of any place in the country— Monks' Town, a name that seemingly has its origin in the ninth century migration of monks from the raided monastery of Holmpatrick, one of the islands off-shore from Skerries in the north County Dublin, under pressure from the Danes. These monks—reputedly bringing with them the relics of St. Mochonna, the founder of their island monastery—are presumed to have landed in the creek formed by the stream flowing down from the high lands of what later became known as Kill of the Grange. The stream still flows, now piped underground beneath part of Carrickbrennan Road.

Four hundred years earlier King Laoghair had established a fort at this point and gave the place its name—Dun Leary. The Monks did not remain by the sea but moved up the valley to higher ground and it was at a site subsequently known as Carrick Brennan that they settled and built their church—

St. Mochonna's; the ruins still to be seen in Monkstown Graveyard on the Carrickbrennan Road are of a later church.

A map of the 16th century designates the area as Carrick Brennan, and at the time of the Down Survey in the 17th century it was marked as Mouncetown; by the 18th century, however, the name Monkstown was well established and it appears on the maps of the period.

The settlement of monks in what we know as Monkstown does not appear to have been of any great strength and is not recorded on the "Map of Monastic Ireland" (1965). There were, however, early Celtic monastic settlements in the neighbourhood at Taney, Leopardstown and Tully.

Evidence of the Celtic settlement which grew up around Laoghaire's fort were found in the De Vesci Gardens area in 1932. It is probable, however, that the area was inhabited many centuries earlier for the remains of Mesolithic man (pre-2,500 BC) were found on Dalkey Island in 1957.

Macgiollamoccolmog—an ancestor of the FitzDermott family—was the chieftain of the territory when the monks first arrived and must have afforded them some protection, but as the Anglo-Norman strength developed in Dublin the monks of St. Mochonna were absorbed by the Cistercians from St. Mary's Abbey in Dublin who built Monkstown Castle on slightly higher land and undertook what was apparently an aggressive agrarian policy to develop farmlands—the lands which later became known as Monkstown Farm. The Castle was essential to the monks to prevent incursion by raiders from the Dublin and Wicklow Hills. They built another castle at Bullock (now part of the property of the Carmelite nuns) to safeguard their fisheries. Their granaries into which the tithes were gathered were established beside the farm and apparently gave the name to what is now Kill of the Grange—literally Wood of the Barn, apparently a "marriage" of Irish and English words.

Monks Leave

Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries ended the history of the monks in the neighbourhood. Their lands were surrendered by the last Abbot of St. Mary's in 1540, and it was

at the surrender that the names of tenants were registered together with the rents which they paid (per year)—a cottager paid a hen (value 2d), one sheep out of each flock of seven (8d), one piglet from each litter of seven (6d). Tithes were also taken from corn and hay crops.

Among the names on the roll of tenants of the period are those of William Kelly, John Gavan, James McShane, John O'Moran, Thomas Myles, William Lacy, Patrick Gygin and William Fullam.

St. Mochonna's Church passed into the charge of the Dean of Christ Church who appointed the parson in charge.

General Sir John Travers, Irish by birth but the commander of Henry VIII's artillery force and Master of Ordnance in Ireland, was given Monkstown Castle and its lands in 1546.

Travers died in 1561, leaving the property to his surviving daughters, both of whom had remained Catholics. Mary Travers married James Eustace (later the third Viscount Baltinglass) who was subsequently outlawed for his part in the Rising of the Earl of Desmond and died in Spain.

Monkstown Castle changed owners but it was subsequently restored to Lady Baltinglass who married a second time to



Gerald Aylmer, from County Kildare. When she died in 1610 the property passed to her nephew Henry Cheevers of County Meath. His son, Walter, succeeded to the Castle, but did not long enjoy it. Cromwell's General Edmund Ludlow—signatory of Charles I's death warrant—came to Ireland as Lieutenant-General of Horse in 1651 and replaced General Ireton in November of that year. Cheevers was banished to Connacht and Ludlow moved in. Ludlow is credited with restoration of the castle and laid out the gardens including the planting of a Yew Walk, some of which still remains near the ruin of the Castle. General Ludlow stayed only a short time; he returned to England in 1655 and never came back.

Back to Monkstown

The Cheevers family returned to Monkstown Castle on the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Over the succeeding years the estate was broken up. The heart of the area—Monkstown—was sold to the Archbishop of Armagh, Primate Michael Boyle, who was also the Lord Chancellor. Subsequently much of the land formed the Longford and De Vesci Estates. When Monkstown began to develop as a residential area in the 19th Century the family names were perpetuated in roads and terraces—Longford Terrace, Pakenham Road, De Vesci Gardens, Knapton. The whole of the history of the area is recalled in its districts and thoroughfares—Carrickbrennan Road recalls the earliest settlement; Dunleary, the fifth century fort of Laoghaire; Monkstown Castle Farm, and so down to the later period when the new estates honoured St. Patrick, Blessed Oliver Plunkett and men of more recent times in Casement Villas and Rory O'Connor Park.

Some big houses were built in the district in the 18th century, but it was not altogether peaceful and there are records of highwaymen being active on the road between Dublin and Dunleary and in 1787 a reward of £20 was offered for the apprehension of highway robbers and burglars. A nightly patrol supplemented the local Watch on the route. Side cars provided transport, later supplemented by a stage coach service.

The hinterland was good hunting country and this is probably what attracted wealthy residents of Dublin to establish



their homes in the district. In the early years of the following century one of the district's landmarks was built—the Martello Tower at Seapoint at the western end of the parish : it was one of a number built as a defence against invasion. The seashore at this time was, of course, completely unreclaimed and the whole of Dublin Bay was regarded as treacherous, many ships being lost on its sandbanks and rocks. The greatest disaster took place near the Martello Tower in 1807 when two transports, the *Rochdale* and the *Prince of Wales*, which had sailed from the Pigeonhouse Fort, were driven ashore—the latter on the rocks near Blackrock and the *Rochdale*, after being swept past the small harbour at Dunleary in a snowstorm, was driven back and on to the rocks beneath the Seapoint Martello Tower ; all on board (265 officers, sailors, soldiers and members of their families) were lost. Most of the bodies recovered were buried in Monkstown Graveyard.

The Graveyard has become heavily overgrown and the graves of the victims of the *Rochdale* wreck are not evident, but another maritime disaster is recalled by a grave—in the same cemetery—of Captain John McNeil Boyd and members

of the crew of *HMS Ajax* who lost their lives in trying to rescue the crew of the brig *Neptune* in February, 1861, near the East Pier of Dun Laoghaire (then Kingstown) Harbour—an event commemorated on the Pier itself by an obelisk.

Bligh's Survey

Between the Martello Tower and Dunleary there was a foreshore of sand and rock with the Seal Rock just offshore about midway along the coastline. Close to Dunleary another group of rocks known as The Chickens formed another danger to ships making for a small harbour which had been built at the mouth of the creek. Probably stimulated by the disasters to the *Rochdale* and *Prince of Wales* and the report of a survey of Dublin Bay made by Captain William Bligh (Bligh of the Bounty) the government provided funds for another pier in 1809. The Dunleary Harbour at this time was little more than an attempt to provide shelter at the mouth of the creek and spread out over lands which subsequently became the site of the Kingstown Gas Works and is now the site of a major factory complex.

A coffee house was built on a slight rise in the land on the Dublin side of the harbour, a site now incorporated in the lands of an hotel.

The British Admiralty regarded the establishment of a Harbour of Refuge on the south shore of Dublin Bay as of major importance. Bullock had been an earlier port of entry, but it was small and too far from the city; there were dangers in the Liffey. A safe port, with accommodation for warships and within easy reach of the City of Dublin was essential and in 1816 work began on the East Pier of the harbour when the Lord Lieutenant laid the foundation stone. Granite from nearby Dalkey Hill was used for the construction work and a number of convicts are said to have been engaged on the project. This is quite probable as a convict hulk was moored in the area. A community grew up around the harbour works and the track from Monkstown to Bullock, which had existed for centuries, was made up as a road—George's Street, George IV being the reigning monarch at this period and sailing from Ireland in 1821 from the recently-completed East Pier. The

occasion also gave the name Kingstown to the district, although the area around the creek retained its old name as Dunleary. The Building of the West Pier, the base of which lies within the present Parish of Monkstown, was undertaken to complete the Harbour of Refuge but was not finished until 1859.

Railway Construction

The decision to link the new port with Dublin by a railway was an obvious one and the works in connection with the project began in 1832. This—the first railway in Ireland—was a remarkable undertaking for the period, requiring miles of embankment, the shutting out of the water from the old harbour area and the blasting of cuttings through rock. By 1834 the service was in operation, although the end of the line for some time was at Dunleary—several hundred yards short of the existing station at Dun Laoghaire—as the result of opposition by the town people of Kingstown. Their views had been urged on the parliamentarians responsible for the legislation authorising the railway by Thomas Gresham who built the first Gresham Hotel in Dublin in 1865.

The original plan for the railway would have carried it around the landward side of the hill on which Salthill Hotel now stands, but it was subsequently altered to pass on the seaward side. The Dublin and Kingstown Railway Company had to buy the whole of the land of Salthill House and with it the big house they did not want. The house was later sold to a man named Marsh who developed it as a hotel which has changed ownership several times and has been considerably developed since that time.

Salthill had derived its name from a salt works extracting salt from sea water, and the site on which Salthill Railway Station was built was part of a mineral water factory.

The area developed rapidly and at one time there were swimming baths at Salthill, but they became derelict towards the end of the century. At the Dublin end of what is now Monkstown Parish the names Brighton Vale and Brighton Avenue recall projects of the 19th century to establish watering-places in the style of Brighton on the south coast of England—which had been made fashionable by the Prince Regent (later

George IV)—but, apart from the names there was apparently little development of the idea.

Parish Units

While the communities along the coastline and inland had been growing during the centuries following the dissolution of the monasteries the Catholic faith had been kept alive, and there are records of Mass Houses in various parts of the area during the 17th and 18th centuries. The government of the parish appears to have moved several times; at one period it was at Cabinteely and at another Loughlinstown, and in the early 18th century the Very Rev. John Canon Talbot is described as Parish Priest of Monkstown which then embraced Cabinteely, Dalkey and Bullock.

St. Michael's Church, Dun Laoghaire, destroyed by fire in 1965, was built on land leased in 1820 and nine years later the widely-spread parish was formally re-organised with Monkstown in the area given to the charge of Bartholemew Canon Sheehan; other chapels in the parish were at Cabinteely and Crinken.

Dalkey, which enjoyed an industrial boom with the building of the harbour, was given a chapel, and another was subsequently built at Killiney. In the early 1860's there was another break-up of the parish, Kingstown and Monkstown becoming one unit; Dalkey, Glasthule and Killiney forming the other parish.

Before his death in 1862 Canon Sheehan had given orders for the building of a chapel at Monkstown with a completion date set for July 1st, 1865.

The need for a new church at the Dublin side of the parish of Kingstown had become clear during the late 1850's and the architects chosen to design the church for a site on the Carrickbrennan Road were Ashlin and Pugin, who also designed the Church of the Sacred Heart in Donnybrook. Building Contractor for the work was Michael Meade.

Distinguished Design

At the time St. Patrick's was built it was described as "Early French"—indicating the decorative Gothic of the

14th century—and a contemporary reporter described it as “. . . an architectural gem, and can be contrasted favourably with any sacred edifice of its size in the three kingdoms.”

The church, as designed by Ashlin and Pugin, was 133 ft. long and 51 ft. 2 inches wide. The site chosen is an indication of the location of the population of the area at the time.

Building material for the church was drawn from many sources. The North Front with its rose window has elaborately carved mullions of Caen stone and an arcade of niches of Aberdeen granite with background of green porphyry. Over the centre the statue of St. Patrick stands on a shaft of black polished marble. The walls are of rusticated granite relieved with chiselled limestone and faced with Bath stone.

Inside the church there was even more lavish use of materials. The chancel arch is supported by shafts of red Cork marble; the capitals and the arch itself are of Caen stone carved by Thomas Early, of Dublin. The arches dividing the aisle from the chancel are of red Cork marble, and those dividing the nave from the aisles are of stone set on shafts of Mitchelstown brown porphyry, with circular bases of white-veined Italian marble and sub bases of black Ennis Limestone. There is no reference to the carved panels illustrating incidents in the life of St. Patrick over the main doors and these were probably added later. The sanctuary windows are described as being by Mr. O'Connor, but he is not further identified.

During the period of construction, Canon Sheehan's successor, James Canon Kavanagh died and Edward Canon McCabe was appointed to the parish.

Dedication Announced

While the building of the new church at Monkstown was a self-evident fact to the people of the neighbourhood, Dubliners rarely journeyed out so far and the first many of them learned of the project was in an advertisement in *The Freeman's Journal* of September 8th, 1866, under the heading SERMONS.

THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP

will dedicate

THE NEW CHURCH OF ST. PATRICK MONKSTOWN

On SUNDAY, September 16th, 1866

TICKETS OF ADMISSION

| | |
|--|--------|
| Large Pink Family Ticket to admit Three to Upper Part of Nave | £1 5 0 |
| Small Pink Ticket, to Admit One | 0 10 0 |
| Large Yellow Family Ticket, to Admit Three to Upper Part of either Aisle | 1 0 0 |
| Small Yellow Ticket, to admit one | 0 7 6 |
| Small Blue Ticket, to admit one to Lower Part of Nave | 0 5 0 |
| Small White Ticket, to Admit one to Lower Part of either Aisle | 0 2 6 |

Tickets can be had in KINGSTOWN at Miss Benson's, Upper George's street ; in DUBLIN at Messrs. Lesage, Sackville-street ; Messrs. Dollard's, 9 Dame street ; and at Mr. Duffy's, Wellington Quay.

The Function will commence at 11 o'Clock.

Mr. Hamilton Croft, the Musical Director, has been preparing a large Choir, consisting of a full Instrumental Band and efficient Chorus, numbering between Fifty and Sixty.

The Music to be performed on the occasion is

HAYDN'S IMPERIAL MASS No. 3

And at the Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament

ROSSINI's ADMIRE TANTUM ERGO

All the celebrated Amateurs of Dublin and Kingstown have kindly promised their assistance to the distinguished professional performers Mr. Hamilton Croft has engaged.

This was a great period of church building for the growing community around Dublin and St. Patrick's was not the only church for which provision was being made at this time. A meeting was held in a temporary wooden chapel at Glasthule "to adopt measures for the erection of a spacious and handsome church in that district where it was much needed". The out-

come of that meeting was the fund-raising effort which financed the building of St. Joseph's, Glasthule. Three weeks before journeying out to Monkstown Cardinal Cullen had dedicated the Church of the Sacred Heart at Donnybrook, and on the Sunday after the ceremonies at St. Patrick's he was dedicating a church at Roundtown.

Sunday, September 16th was a sunny day when the clergy assembled to greet Paul Cardinal Cullen. The church was not finished—the spire (not part of the contract) was only half built—and within there was a temporary High Altar, and a temporary pulpit was used when Father Nicholas Donnelly, preached the sermon which he ended with an exhortation “to praise and give thanks to God for the ineffable mercy conferred on them by his coming to dwell in the midst of them after so many centuries”.

Celebrant of the Mass at which the Cardinal presided was the Rev. Father William J. Dillon, C.C., assisted by the Rev. P. McCabe, C.C., (deacon), Rev. James Leahy, C.C., (sub-deacon) and the Rev. J. McSwiggan (Master of Ceremonies). Assistants at the throne were the Very Rev. Mgr. Edward McCabe, V.G., and the Very Rev. Mgr. William Forde, V.G.

The ceremonies ended with the imparting of the Papal Blessing.

Monsignor McCabe later became Cardinal Archbishop of Dublin, and Father Donnelly, who preached the sermon, was subsequently the Bishop of Canea, an historian who wrote an important series of booklets under the general title “A Short History of Some Dublin Parishes” in the early years of the century.

First Marriage

The first marriage in St. Patrick's Church was solemnised in the following year—on November 22, 1867, when John Ormond of Townsend Street, was married to Martha Graham, of Northcote Avenue, by the Rev. William J. Dillon. The Sacrament of Baptism continued to be administered in the Parish Church of St Michael for a number of years and the

first entry in the Baptismal Register of St Patrick's was of Thomas Fitzgerald whose parents lived in Belgrave Square. He was baptised on September 15, 1881, by Father Bernard Farrell, who had been named Curate in Charge earlier in the year. It was at this time that a parishoner—Patrick Madden—donated funds to enable the spire on St Patrick's to be built; the debt on the building of the church was paid off about 11 years later.

After the death of the Very Rev. Nicholas Canon Walsh, V.G., who was Parish Priest of St Michael's from 1885 to 1902 it was decided that Monkstown should be erected as a parish and Father (later Canon) Robert Eaton, who had been Curate at St Joseph's, Glasthule, became the first Parish Priest. Father Peter Dunne was assigned as a Curate, with Father J. Coffey who also became chaplain to Carriglea Industrial School which had been established in 1880 under the care of the Christian Brothers.

Although Carriglea lies just outside the physical boundary of St Patrick's Parish part of the land was made available in 1965 for the building of the new Church of the Holy Family which will serve an area of the Parish which developed very rapidly after the area was incorporated in the Borough of Dun Laoghaire in 1930. Ten schemes to provide housing were undertaken by the Corporation between 1934 and 1963 embracing both houses and flats, providing nearly 900 new homes.

New Schools

Construction of new schools for the area was started in 1965 on a 2½ acre site in Upper Monkstown; these will provide accommodation for 640 pupils in 16 classrooms—an indication of the growth of the Parish which built its first National School, the four-classroom Blessed Oliver Plunkett School, during the period when John Canon Fennelly was Parish Priest (1925-1934); Canon Fennelly had succeeded Father John Healy who spent a year in charge of the Parish after Canon Eaton's death in 1923.

The first secondary school in the Parish was established, at the request of His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. John Charles

McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, by the Religious of the Sacred Heart in 1945. The nuns took over one of the former "big houses" of the district—Yapton, which had been owned by the Baggott family on Carrickbrennan Road. The foundation was made from the Sacred Heart Convent at Mount Anville and received its first 65 pupils in September, 1945, the community being welcomed to the Parish by Laurence Canon Sheehan who had become Parish Priest on the death of Canon Fennelly in 1934.

Within four years the premises at Yapton were too small and the nuns acquired the neighbouring property—Greenbank. It was in the basement of Greenbank, when it was the Martin family home, that Mother Mary Martin began the foundation of the Medical Missionaries of Mary.

A new school building linked the two houses and was blessed in October, 1953, by His Grace, Archbishop McQuaid. By 1965 the Sacred Heart School at Monkstown had 380 pupils and in 1966 a new Chapel is being provided for the growing number of children. The existing Chapel—the old drawing room of the "big house"—barely accommodates the community of 25.

The Community of Irish Christian Brothers began teaching in the neighbouring Parish of St Michael's, Dun



Laoghaire, in 1929. In 1950 the Brothers acquired the house and lands of Monkstown Park and adapted it as a secondary school, the first four classrooms being brought into use in September of the same year. The completed extension to the premises was blessed by His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin in May, 1953. The number of pupils rose sharply and by 1965 totalled 750; this growth necessitated further extensions in 1964 and these include an auditorium with seating for 500.

Joseph Canon Matthews was appointed Parish Priest of St Patrick's in 1956, at a period when the development of the parish area was reaching its peak; by 1965 the Catholic population of the parish reached 9,500, of whom 1,500 were children under the age of seven.

With the completion of the new schools at Upper Monkstown in 1966 and the building of the new Church of the Holy Family—a name proposed by the parishioners and approved by His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin—Monkstown enters upon a further stage of its history . . . a history that goes back to the beginning of Celtic life in Ireland, and a history which has been strong in the Catholic Faith since the first monks made their landing on the foreshore at Dun Leary a thousand years ago.

Published by
St. Patrick's (Monkstown) Parochial Committee

Printed by
Irish Printers Ltd.
64 Aungier Street
Dublin 2