



*A History of*  
THE PRIORY CHURCH  
KILLADEAS

## CHAPTER 1

### *8th Century*

The Irish monastic reform group the "Ceili De" or Culdees meaning "Companions of God" came into prominence. This order of "anchorites" or religious recluses was founded by Maël Ruain of Tamlaght near Dublin and at some point the Culdees combined the solitary and monastic life.

They were particularly dedicated to "singing divine praises".

Later in the 8th century St Molaise founded a community on Devenish Island which "accepted the rule of the Culdees".

In medieval times this order became the secular community of the parish under the prior with its own chapel "Colydea" on the island.

The first Christian building or "chapel of ease" built at Killadeas was a "daughter" chapel of this Culdees community. A church on the shore was of obvious greater convenience to the lay parishioners, incorporating as it did the beauty of the Rockfield site.



*Devenish Island.*

## CHAPTER 2

### *9th to 11th Centuries*



*The Bishop's Stone.*



The Culdees emerged into the 9th century as a growing spiritual revival movement seeing themselves as reformers in a church where there were obvious abuses. They advocated Sunday observance and strict observance of religious practices.

The Devenish Culdees still held sway up until the early 17th century.

The Bishop's Stone, 34.4 metres north north east of the north west corner of the modern church, is thought to be from this period. It is the profile of an ecclesiastic figure walking westward carrying a bell and crozier - most likely a depiction of a bishop.

The west face of the stone is described as "rather primitive with raised ridges on either side of the mouth", "a crude, chubby face carved with an open mouth and puffy cheeks, giving a startled expression". The elegant boots can be matched to Irish manuscript illustrations.

There are two interpretations of these carvings:

(I) The carving on the west face is earlier than the south face and was originally a pagan idol adapted by the Christians.

(II) The two carvings are contemporary and similar to those on White Island in Lower Lough Erne but not thought to be the work of the same sculptor.

The stone may have had a body of which the right arm has left its outline. The broad interlacing may have been substituted at the time the travelling bishop or abbot was carved.

The bell is interesting and quite rare in that it is depicted with a clapper. Irish bells were usually struck rather than rung.

The stone may represent a particular bishop or abbot or may be a depiction of a well known saint such as St. Antony of the desert or, be symbolic of Christ the "Abbot of the world".

A stone with a small Greek cross (with equal arms) is close by.



## CHAPTER 3

### *18th century*



In 1744 it is recorded that Isaac or "James" Butler saw the church on his way to Lough Derg, "two miles from ye former (Ballycassidy) are ye ruins of Yellow church on ye roadside. It is of rude sculpture and built like a barn".

Several fabulous stories are related to the church. One is that the founder, unknown to this day, being "advertised in a vision to erect a church on a place named, he, not regarding what ye vision informed him of, (deliberately or otherwise!) built it a considerable distance from where he should." When finished and consecrated "it was by angels in one night taken up and laid where it is now"!

It is however surprising that Isaac Butler records that he does not know why the yellow church was so called for if the archway built into the righthand side of the present stone screen which divides the nave from the choir and chancel is what remains of the Yellow church, "it is easy to see that it was named for its colour."

## CHAPTER 4

### *19th century*

In 1825 there is record of the walls of an old church, "still partly standing" in the vicinity, but not now visible".

Did the angels really move the church??

The position of a ruined chapel is marked on an Admiralty map of Lough Erne circa 1836 being "away on the other side of the road towards Ballindullagh".

It is also recorded that in 1838 one Thomas Maguire was paid 45 shillings to "build an arch in the Yellow church and make a drain to carry off water".

The present church, commissioned by J G Irvine of the Manor House, Killadeas was completed in 1864, with the tower added later in 1881.

The original architect was a W Fuller Esq. of Dublin (there is also mention of a W Armstrong of Belleek), and the builder, Whelan's of Newry.



**The Consecration of Killadeas Church.**  
Killadeas Church was consecrated on Tuesday last by the Lord Bishop of Derry. Notwithstanding the inclemency of the day and the severity of the night before, there was a very large attendance of clergy and laity, the former appearing in their robes. The service, which was altogether choral, was that appointed to be used in the Church of Ireland revised prayer book. The Bishop, who took for his subject 'The Transfiguration of Christ,' preached a most able and eloquent sermon. A collection was made after the sermon. The communion office was then proceeded with, and the service, which began at 11.30, closed about 2.30.

*Impartial Reporter, 24th November 1881.*

The cost was £3,000 excluding the furniture.

The church is described as having a "high slate roof with a gabled porch and transept facing the road".

The consecration of the present church took place on 22nd November 1881. There are accounts of the consecration service in the editions of the *Impartial Reporter* dated 24th November 1881 and 1st December 1881.

It was, by these accounts, an inclement Tuesday following a severe night.

The Lord Bishop of Derry, acting for the Lord Primate, led the service and took for his subject "The Transfiguration of Christ". It was, by the accounts, "a most able and eloquent sermon". There seems to have been 23 other clergy in attendance including the incumbent a Reverend Gumley who "intoned" the prayers.

Apparently the "musical portion of the service was very well rendered indeed, so much so that the Bishop said at the conclusion he had never heard it (Kent's anthem "Thine O Lord is the greatness") better in any parish church.

# CHAPTER 5

## 20th century



*Impartial Reporter, 19th November 1981.*

On the Sunday afternoon of 22nd November 1981 a service was held to mark the centenary of the church's consecration. This was the culmination of a number of events held to mark the occasion. The previous Sunday 250 attended a youth service led by the Reverend Victor Carson, religious education adviser with the Western Education and Library Board.

To mark the International Year of Disabled People, blind soloist, Miss Carol Somerville, sang at the service. Also taking part were readers Miss Avril Armstrong and Mr David Pierce of Killadeas, and Miss Alison Deane helped take up the collection.

There was a community service on Wednesday 18th November and a guest tea was held in the Manor House hotel on the evening of Friday 20th.

among them for their own use, no one allowed to sell turf after this year.

### Consecration of Killadeas Church.

The church was consecrated on Tuesday the 22nd November, by the Bishop of Derry, acting for the Lord Primate. Amongst the clergy present were:— The Archdeacon of Clogher, the Dean of Clogher, Canon Verschöyle, Canon Tottenham, Canon Finlay, Revs. W. H. Bradley, T. J. Hurst, W. Steele, J. H. Steele, L. W. Rutledge, J. B. Annesley, S. Greer, D. O'Leary, A. Kenney, D. O. Abbot, P. H. Schoales, W. C. Hayward, W. E. Fleming, O. Halaghan, S. L. Brakey, B. Moffatt, R. Gumley, F. Hogan, L. Fyfe, Ch. Irvine.

The service was choral throughout. It began with the Bishop and Clergy proceeding up the nave chanting the 24th Psalm. The service selected was Dr. Clarke-Whitfield's service in E. The anthem was Kent's anthem 'Thine O Lord is the Greatness.' The musical portion of the service was very well rendered indeed, so much so that the Bishop said at the conclusion of his sermon that he had never heard it better in any parish church.

The music also included the consecration hymn No. 419 in the church hymnal and No. 335. The prayers were intoned by Rev. R. Gumley, Incumbent. The 1st Lesson was read by Canon Tottenham, and the second by Rev. Christopher Irvine.

He chose for his address the portion of St. Matthew's Gospel, from the 15th verse of the 16th chapter to 18th verse of the 17th, relating to the transfiguration of our Lord and the events immediately preceding and following that. He interpreted the passage as illustrating the manner in which Christ was teaching his church, leading her in the earliest ages to 'to a creed' subsequently to a 'worship' and lastly to a 'work.'

The church is very handsome, and built in gothic style throughout, with the exception of the roof, which is barrel-shaped and ceiled, being divided into panels by arches of pitchpine, which tends rather to produce an echo. At the west end is the baptistry containing a very neat and handsome font, of carved stone on red marble column. The church is cruciform having north and south transepts with choir and choir stalls, beyond which is an apsed shaped chancel. The windows are of cathedral tinted glass. The pulpit is a particularly handsome one of pitchpine open work, enriched with floral designs round the top, being different over each panel. The lectern is finished in the same style. The tiling of choir and chancel is very handsome, particularly inside the chancel rails.

The architect is W. Fuller, Esq., of Dublin, and the contractor is Mr. Whelan of Newry. The estimated cost was £3,000 but the entire cost including church furniture, &c., will exceed that sum.

*Impartial Reporter, 1st December 1881.*

## CHAPTER 6

### *The Interior*



The newspaper report of the consecration describes the church as being "very handsome, and built in gothic style throughout, with the exception of the roof, which is barrel shaped",



"being divided into panels by arches of pitchpine, which tends rather to produce an echo". It is cruciform with north and south transepts. There are choir stalls beyond which is an apse shaped chancel.

*Interior artefacts of interest include;*



1) **Framed flags in the nave** - Two framed flags in the nave are the Queen's Colours of the Fermanagh Light Infantry, Late 4th BN Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

2) **Pulpit** - Described as "particularly handsome of pitchpine open work, enriched with floral designs round the top, being different over each panel. The lectern is similarly finished.



3) **Organ** - The organ in the north transept was purchased from the parish of Holy Rood, Edwalton with part proceeds of the old National School, Tully, Killadeas through the benefaction of the Irvine estate. It was transported and installed at the expense of the congregation of the parish in September 1989.

4) **Stained glass windows** - Described as being of "cathedral tinted glass".



5) **War Memorial** - Commemorating those from the local community who fell during both World Wars, conflicts beyond and the "Troubles".



6) **Font** - Located at the west end, the font is described as "neat and handsome, of carved stone on red marble column".

## CHAPTER 7

A variety of restorative works have taken place in recent decades to combat the ravages of time and weather on church structures. Major repointing of the tower in the nineties helped to slow the ravages of damp. Under the auspices of Canon Watson a small hall was built at the back of the church partly on land kindly donated by the Noble family of Rockfield. It has proven a great asset to parish life, but the most extensive works necessitated closure of the church from January until August 2018 to facilitate a number of works which it is hoped will leave the building and its environs in good stead for the generations to come.

The church tower and walls have had external pointing. The tower roof has had asphalt and plaster repairs, and repairs have been made to tower room floors. Mesh grilles have been fitted to the louvres, external stair windows have been Perspex covered and sealed, and a replacement aluminium ladder has been fitted.

Damaged spouting has been repaired or replaced and all rainwater goods have been painted.

New drain trenches and drainpipes have been laid.

Other works have included the fitting of new under pew flooring in the nave and the replacement of all under floor electric cabling.

All ceiling panels have been repaired or replaced (one panel had collapsed prior to work being started, so all were inspected and replaced as deemed necessary to ensure safety).

The entire church along with the tower bell, front gates and front door hand rails were also treated and repainted.

The interior of the church was deemed ready and was handed over on 21st August when a posse of roughly 20 parishioners spent a busy evening bringing the interior up to its usual standard of cleanliness to allow for morning prayer the following Sunday, 26th August.

New items to the church interior include a new sound system, kindly donated by the Bradshaw family, in memory of the late Ivan, and new carpet on the Chancel steps and in the Baptistry also kindly donated by the Hale family in memory of the late Jack and Betty Armstrong.

## CHAPTER 8

### *Items of interest in the church grounds*

- 1) **Bishop's Stone** - described in detail earlier.



- 2) **Pillar Standing Stone**  
This stone stands 16.8 north of the north east corner of the present church. Although damaged, it stands 1.14 metres tall and probably belongs to the Pre-Christian period.





3) **Holed Stone** lies 3.0 metres north east of the Pillar Stone and is thought to be the socket of a cross shaft (now gone).

4) **Cross Carved Stone**  
This lies 4.6 metres north west of the Pillar Stone. A Maltese cross is carved on the east face and bears a raised circle in high relief. Its interior cross arms end in "triquetra knots". Its stem is divided to stand in what may be a boat - the "Ark of



God" symbolising the Church.

The splayed cross stem is a Coptic device. The early Church embraced many reflections of the oriental church.

On the reverse side of the cross shaft are "cup marks", in twos where the stone has been damaged and elsewhere in threes. These hollows in upright stones are thought to have been of Mediterranean origin and relate to the "Great Mother" or "Earth Goddess".

It is thought also that the number of small boulders peppered in the old graveyard mark the graves of children who died in infancy. Commemorative headstones were obviously beyond the reach of the average family at the time.



## CHAPTER 9

### *Local History*

It is known that in the 1850s the farm and farmhouse at Drumcaw, Killadeas, about one mile west of the church on the main road was purchased by a family of the name Wright. It is believed they came from Strabane to Fermanagh for the sake of the mother's "Jeannie's" health. She may have suffered from Tuberculosis.

The family appears to have been well off. Mr Wright had prizewinning horses, notably a stallion which won the "Cock of the North" medal at the county show.

There was in their employ three members of a Doherty family from Whitehill. Mr Doherty was the gardener, Ned Doherty, his son, looked after the livestock, while Ned's sister Catherine looked after the ailing Jeannie Wright.

It is the case that the Wright's son William, and their daughter Jane began courting with Ned Doherty and his sister. Both were mixed Catholic/Protestant relationships.

The day that Killadeas church was consecrated, on 22nd November 1881, it is assumed that the Wright family would have been in attendance at the three hour service, along with a number of the local community. While their home was unattended someone, presumably having taken umbridge at the mixed faith romances, set fire to the barn, burning alive the horses, including the prizewinning stallion.

Probably as a direct result of these events, Jane Wright took her father's cattle to market and, believing the proceeds to be her inheritance, and, along with Ned, his sister Catherine and her brother William and Ned's younger brother, made plans for passage to Dunedin, New Zealand.

On landing first of all at Wellington, one of their party disembarked briefly, and seeing a sign for land for sale, returned to his travelling companions with the announcement of a change of plan.

They bought a farm at Taranaki, some of the most fertile land in New Zealand, and started the dairy farm where the Wright family continues to farm to this day.

Members of the Doherty family have visited Killadeas a number of times and have become friends with the present owners at Drumcaw, Stewart and Mary Gormley.

The charred timbers of the barn can be seen to this day.

The "Cock of the North" medal is still in the family's possession in New Zealand.



## CHAPTER 10

### *Acknowledgements & Information Sources:*

- "Prospect of Erne" Mary Rogers
- Impartial Reporter via Enniskillen Library archives
- History notes of the late incumbent Canon Victor Mc Keon
- Jack Doherty of Taranaki, New Zealand
- Stewart Gormley, Drumcaw
- Information Collated by Mrs Hazel Allen

An aerial photograph of a church and cemetery situated on a lush green hillside overlooking a large, blue lake. The church has a prominent steeple and is surrounded by a well-maintained cemetery with numerous headstones. The lake in the background features several forested islands and a small boat on the water. The entire scene is framed by a dark green border.

LEAFLET PUBLISHED FOR  
**REDEDICATION  
SERVICE**  
NOVEMBER 2018