

Holy Souls Keenagh Centenary



*Praise
the
Lord
with the
Sound of
trumpets*



Holy Souls Church Keenagh 1918 - 2018



The Centenary of a Church in any Parish marks a very important milestone in its history. It is a time for celebration, not only for the Church itself but for the whole parish community. The centenary of a Church is a very significant event. It is an event to be marked, an event well worth recording, and, above all, an event to be celebrated. We thank God for the many graces and blessings that have come to the people of Keenagh and surrounding areas through this Church in the cen-



ture that has passed.

We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the people who gave so generously in difficult times and built this beautiful Church for our Parish. Hope you enjoy the snippets of history that we have put together as we will celebrate a spirituality that has served us well over those hundred years.



**CELEBRATING THE PAST
EMBRACING THE FUTURE**

Centenary Prayer

Father, you have honoured your people
At Keenagh for one hundred years.
You have welcomed us in baptism,
Anointed us in confirmation and
Nourished us in Eucharist.

You have listened with compassion
To a century of prayers.
You continue to surprise us
With gifts of life and love.

We thank you for the people
Who grace our journey.
We thank you that our names
Are written in heaven.

As we look to the future
Give us wisdom to hear your call,
Hands to do your work
And hearts to respond to your love,



provision forgiveness acceptance
strength victory peace family
joy Give thanks to the Lord prosperity
grace mercy blessings unconditional love blessings
every good and perfect gift wisdom healing anointing

Celebrating Life at 100

Fr Francis Judge P.P.

A Church touches the lives of a person from their Baptism until their Funeral. A long procession of people winds its way through the history of our Parish from August 1918 until the present day. Reading through the Parish Church records - Baptisms, First Confessions, Holy Communion, Confirmations, Marriages & Funerals, - we are reading the unfolding life story of a people. We think of all who entered the house of God to worship and pray, pobal De Ghleann na Madadh, bringing the work of their hands and minds, their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears, their laughter and tears, to God's love and forgiveness. They

departed to their life's work each week having heard the Word of God, having shared in His sacrifice and sacraments, to "go forth and serve the Lord and one another". We thank God for the many graces and blessings that have come to the people of Keenagh and surrounding areas through this Church in the century that has passed.

I would like to record our thanks to all who actively help in the life of this Church and Parish, the Priests who have ministered here, Eucharistic ministers, lay Readers, choirs, sacristans, servers, collec-

tors, counters, altar society and all who prepare for and celebrate the Eucharist. A special word of thanks to all who have been so generous, in their weekly contributions to the repairs and maintenance of our Church.

As we celebrate our centenary we give thanks to God for 100 years of Blessings here in Keenagh. This is an important milestone and an appropriate moment to acknowledge and honour the countless number of people who have given so much to his place over the years. As we look to the future, we ask the Lord to continue to bless and guide our journey. May we walk humbly, love tenderly and act justly as we hand on the vital gift of faith to the next generation.

Fr Francis

Centenary of the Dedication of Keenagh Church Bishop John Fleming

Nephin has overshadowed the religious aspirations of the people of North Mayo and, in particular, those who lived their lives in the area surrounding Keenagh Church, for ever. It has seen the journey from paganism to Christianity and it has witnessed the development of the Christian tradition over the past sixteen hundred years. Thounacran has a special place in all of this. The old church, in which people worshipped from Penal times until the early twentieth century, withstood, as the late Canon Anthony McHale, said, 'the fierce storms that beat against the Nephin hills' until such time that it became 'a crumbling ruin, sapped by the inevitable erosion of time'.

The challenges which faced the Parish of Crossmolina one hundred years ago were very great. The parish church in Crossmolina was in need of repair at that time, as was the church in Kilmurray. The population around Keenagh church was small, one hundred and fifty households in all, and their ability to contribute was limited, due to the stark economic circumstances in which they lived. Add to this the increased building cost which resulted from the outbreak of the Great War, 1914-1918. However, the determination of the parishioners, together with the generosity of those who had emigrated all over the world, ensured that Keenagh Church was built and paid for.

One hundred years later we can celebrate this centenary. In doing so we remember with gratitude the commitment and generosity of those who built this church. We recall all those who were welcomed into the Christian community of this parish in this church during the past one hundred years. New families were formed at the weddings of so many people before this altar and families were left in sadness as they said a fond farewell to those whose funeral Mass was said here. Indeed, very many of the important moments of the lives of this community over the past one hundred years have been marked here.

Looking to the future. While clouds gather once more over Nephin, with the shortage of vocations and the decline in the population of this area, some bright light also emerges. The willingness of parishioners to assume responsibility for the maintenance of their churches will allow priests to leave a good deal of administration aside. Their support of their priests will also allow priests the freedom to focus on our spiritual and pastoral ministry. With the commitment and understanding of the people of church areas such as this, with God's help, this church will serve the needs of the people of this area for many years to come.



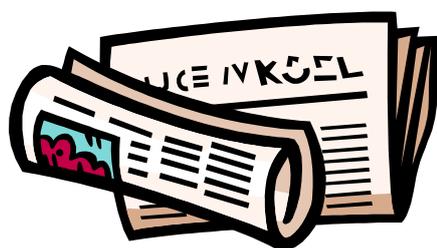
The late Monsignor O'Hara.
Granduncle to the late Fr Anthony Hannick & Fr Anthony Gillespie,
P. P. Dromore West.

Keenagh New Church Parish of Crossmolina

The Priests and People of Keenagh, Parish of Crossmolina, have undertaken with heavy heart indeed, in view of local circumstances, to erect a New Church suited to the conditions

of a poor district, yet worthy in some fashion of the honour due to the Almighty. The old Church of Thauacran in which the most Holy Sacrifice has been offered and the people

the fierce storms that beat against the Nephin hills. Though humble in design and proportions, it served passing well the wants of a simple people for generations; and the tender associations of youth, as well as hallowed memories of the past, would be today its strongest guarantee of preservation were it possible to arrest its decay.



Western People Oct 7 1916

have worshipped since the Penal days is a crumbling ruin, sapped by the inevitable erosion of time and

But in truth, the old building is falling to pieces, as all who pass the way by the Nephin road from Castlebar to Belmullet may plainly see; and to attempt its repair now or any time within ten or fifteen years past would mean so much waste of labour and money. The battered walls are unsound from the foundation upwards, the cankered braces no longer hold in their sockets; and while no part of the roof itself is rain-proof, **THERE IS A GAPING SEAM OVER THE SANCTUARY** through which the driving rain and rude breezes of the mountain are free to enter with disconcerting effect if not with dangerous result to the celebration and the celebrant of the Divine Mystery of the Altar. It may be readily believed that this at all events would have been long since remedied, had it been safe to weight the roof with the necessary outfit for repair. For Priests and People it is an anxious time, as the question becomes more insistent daily, **SHALL THE OLD WALLS HOLD TOGETHER, SHALL THE ROOF COLLAPSE SOME STORMY SUNDAY AND ENVELOPE THEM IN ITS RUINS.**

Provision for a New Church became an imperative duty in the closing years of my lamented predecessor, the late Monsignor O'Hara. In response to his appeal, the householders of the district – 150 all told – contributed generously year after year according to their means, enabling him before his death to lodge some £700 to credit of the building fund; his own contribution, as well as those of the late and present Bishop, and a few clerical friends included.

That sum has been considerably increased during the past two years, and early last June, when the venerated Bishop of the Diocese laid the foundation stone, the credit balance amounted to £1,000. Needless to say, nothing short or downright necessity could have induced the authorities responsible in face of inflated war prices of labour and materials to start building on that comparatively slender basis, with the lowest obtainable contract proposal – for the shell only – reaching the **STARTLING FIGURE OF £2,600.**

Begun under necessity, work has progressed apace since June last, and now our little fund is deeply drained by successive payments on foot of contract; the next demand a few months hence, is bound to exhaust it. The People of the other districts of the parish can help but little, if at all; they have themselves more than enough to provide for in the sadly needed renovation of Kilmurray Church, besides the erection of the no less needed Parochial Residence, and the improvement of the Parish Church and grounds in Crossmolina.

CELEBRATING
100
YEARS

Keenagh New Church Parish of Crossmolina

Though naturally reluctant to add to the many claims at present before the public, there is no choice left to the Parish Priest and his Assistants save to appeal for help to their brothers of the ministry and their good friends of the laity, and in general to the ever generous givers in God's cause at home and abroad. We appeal especially, and with heartfelt confidence, to the scattered children of the parish, wherever they have settled down, whether under the sheltering flag of America or in the Colonies. Contract obligations and bare necessities for the celebration of Mass at the solemn opening of the Church next year will leave us IN DEBT NEARLY £2,000, yet we trust in the goodness of God and the generous thoughts of many hearts inspired by love for the fitness of His earthly dwelling, that we shall be then in a position to discharge much, if not most, of our liability. We promise in return for ourselves that no year shall pass

without due and formal celebration of Holy Mass for our living and deceased benefactors separately, and that a list shall be kept for permanent daily commemoration in all Masses offered by the Priests of the Parish.

Subscriptions may be sent to MOST REV. DR. NAUGHTON, Lord Bishop of Killala, Ballina; to the undersigned, and to the Rev. J.J. Meagher, C.C., Crossmolina.

Signed, ANTHONY. MacHALE, V.G, P.P, Crossmolina, Chancellor of Killala.

HUGH LYNN, Keenagh, Crossmolina, Treasurer.

REV. M. O'DONNELL, C.C. Keenagh, Crossmolina, Sec.

My Dear Chancellor MacHale,

I cordially approve of the appeal which you are about make for funds to enable you to meet your liabilities in connection with the building of you new church at Keenagh.

I do so all the more willingly, because I am aware that the good people of the Taunacran district, have already by their zealous efforts and generous contributions exhausted the local resources before calling on their charitable neighbours for assistance

The absolute necessity of a new church for this district, in combination with the special circumstances mentioned in your letter of appeal, will, I am confident, beget sympathy on your behalf and enlist the generous support both of your friends at home and the exiled children of the diocese in foreign countries.

Hoping your efforts will be crowned with success, and praying fervently that Almighty God may bless and reward a hundred fold all who in any way assist you.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

JAMES NAUGHTON

+Bishop of Killala

Very Rev. Chancellor MacHale, P.P., V.G. Crossmolina

Keenagh 1897 – 1997 By E.J. Walsh

The site for the Church was given by Lady Palmer upon whose advice and wisdom the location was decided with a view to elevated ground whilst disapproving of a site close to Keenagh Crossroads already chosen .

Isaac Beckett, Ballina was the construction contractor and the resident curate was Fr. Michael O'Donnell. The marble for the beautiful altar which was most impressive from Italy, it was truly an altar of ornate dimensions.

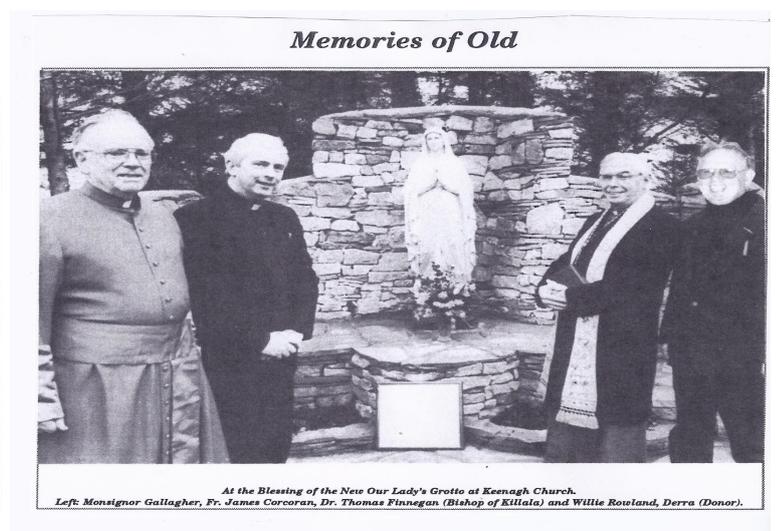
In 1972 the church was transformed with a view to liturgical changes, this altar with its magnificent iron marble-topped Communion rails were totally removed and a new altar table of marble replaced it at the opposite gable.

Many people and especially emigrants felt gravely disillusioned with the transformation, in coming back to visit, finding so much that held great sentiment for them had vanished and the memories they so closely kept at heart.

The present curate's house was built in the early years of 1930 when Fr. Martin Moran was curate in Keenagh with many renovations carried out since for greater comfort.

In June 1993 the Keenagh church Bell was installed through the generosity of the Cafferkey family who live in Bray and Dublin, while in 1996 a beautiful grotto "Our Lady of Lourdes" was erected in the Church grounds, the gracious donor was Willie Rowland, Dublin formerly of Derra.

Our Lady's Grotto



Keenagh Church by Fr Gabriel Rosbotham

In my few years here, I want to congratulate you the people of Keenagh in this your Centenary year and I also take this opportunity to say a very sincere thank you for your kindness and your support. Not just to your Church but also to Francis and Myself. I cannot help but think when it comes to ceremonies, you are up there with the best. Especially at Christmas and Easter and during the year; every Sunday you have a choir, your reader and Eucharistic minister.

I want to say a sincere thank

you to the Principal, teachers and young people when they come here to mass. They sing their hearts out and they can answer every prayer during mass. It is a pure pleasure to be with them and it gives us hope for the future of our church. Our wish is to make your church a place of love, joy, forgiveness and a sincere welcome. In this Year of the Family, my hope and prayer is that you and your family will experience that love, joy and forgiveness.

(Fr Gabriel)

100th
Anniversary
Celebration



Bunaveela Lake

**FRANCISCAN SISTERS MINORESS
SOUTH AFRICAN MISSION
St. Theresa's Convent
P.O. Box 3044, Newcastle 2940
Kwazulu, Natal, South Africa**

Today in the Spirit of our Founder and St. Francis our sisters reach out to the poor in many different ministries including Nursing, Aids treatment, Childcare, Orphanage, Cathetics, Noviciate, Visitation, Education and the provision of food and housing for those in need. Through our "Zibambelini" project we feed over 70 children each day and provide food packages to countless others who are unable to attend.

I cannot conclude without thanking all our benefactors especially the people of Keenagh for the "Crib Money". This money much valued and counted upon by us every year and is very carefully spent. It is all the more special by the fact that it is donated in the memory of Sr. Alphonsa. A favourite saying of hers was "*I never felt alone with the people of Keenagh at my back*". We feel especially privileged that Keenagh continue to support our work as while we have made great strides the needs are now greater than they ever were. God Bless you all for your help and support, you are always in our prayers.

In the words of Pope Paul II when he met some of our sisters "*You have not only a great history to remember and recount but also a great history still to be accomplished*".

May you and your loved ones have a very happy, holy Christmas and a holy prosperous and healthy New Year.

Sr Margaret McDermott.



*(Extract taken from *The Parishes in the Diocese of Killala* by
Rt. Rev. E MacHale, P.P., V.G. Killala)*

KEENAGH

The Catholic Directory lists Glenhest and Keenagh together as a separate parish from 1836 (the first year of publication), to 1845, with two priests for some of the time. I have been unable to find out when exactly this arrangement first began, or the reason for it. I am inclined to think that it had something to do with the troubles which distracted the diocese during Dr O'Finan's episcopate. It may instead be an effect of the new road to Castlebar which joined these two areas. The P.P.s listed are John Hopkins for 1836 and his brother, Andrew, from 1837 to 1844. William Quigley is given for 1845 and is listed as curate in Crossmolina for the following year.

There is no curate given for 1836 or 1837. James McMurray is given for 1838, with a blank for the following year. T. McManus (whose name does not appear in any other parish), is listed for 1840 and 1841. Again, there is a blank for 1842. Dominick Madden is given for 1843, and James McDonagh for 1844, and from that to 1850 for Addergoole.

Tradition tells us that Andrew Hopkins lived in Glenhest and that the neighbours there used to convoy him with lights through Letterkeeghaun when he had to walk on sick calls at night to Keenagh. This would bear out the Directory in showing that there was no curate living in Keenagh for some of the time. It is on record that John Hopkins was suspended by Dr MacHale when he was Bishop of Killala, and that he was restored by Dr. O'Finan. James McDonagh was ordained in Propaganda College, Rome and had a D.D. He was engaged in public controversy in 1847 with Michael Brannigan of Ballinglen and complained to Rome about this man's proselytising activities.

The church before the present one was situated at Townacran, but I do not know the date of its erection or by whom it was built. The roof had sagged by 1914 and was supported by new beams to prop it up. The site is still discernible on the right of the road about a mile from Keenagh crossroads in the Castlebar direction.

The foundation stone of the present church was blessed and laid by Dr

Naughton on Pentecost Sunday, 1916. The contractor was Isaac Beckett of Ballina, and the resident priest at the time was Father Michael O'Donnell.

Keenagh School was built in 1897. Sir Roger Palmer gave a donation of £35 towards the cost of the building. At this time he was also giving an annual grant of £5 to the teacher at Deelbridge School through his agent, Mr O'Donnell. The previous Keenagh School (beside the present church) was later converted into a Curate's Residence around 1898.

There is a Holy Well at Trista which used to be much frequented until recent years. Tradition says that St. Patrick said Mass there. It is located in the low ground between Nephin and Trista itself. There is a rude stone altar and three beds or cells and two wells, one dedicated to Our Lady and the other to St Patrick.

I give here some items gathered from an old account book belonging to Father Pat Howley, and used by him later for Kilcommon-Erris accounts:- (a). In 1902 the heads of the guilds of the Women's Sodality were: - Rose O'Boyle (B.V.M.); Maria Gallagher (St. Patrick); Ellen Gallagher (St. John); Mrs Lynn (St. Clare); Bridget Walshe (St. Peter); Annie Cleary (St. Monica); Bridget Granahan (St. Anthony); Bridget Conmy (St. Bridget). The heads of the men's guilds were:- Martin Granahan; Anthony O'Boyle; Pat Granahan; Hugh Lynn; John Gallagher; Pat Gallagher; (b), Michael Conway, the clerk – got £5-8-1 for Station dues from May to October, 1902. John Gallagher was clerk from 10/10/1902 to 06/12/1903. Pat Mulhern began to serve Mass on Christmas Day, 1903 and began to bring a pint of milk daily to the priest on 05/01/1904. This continued up to 03/08/1906. His wages were £7-10-0 a year and a penny a pint for the milk. (c). Father Howley was here from September, 1900. His housekeeper's name in 1902 was Mary Canavan. (His two sisters were with him later). (d). The Curate's Collection for Keenagh district in 1902 was £66-17-0. (e). In March, 1905, Father Howley received £20 Relief Money from Monsignor O'Hara to distribute. This was disbursed in 10/- amounts and a list of the recipients are given.

Keenagh Church Centenary (1918 – 2018)

Parish of Crossmolina

Recollections through the decades.

My early memory of Keenagh Church and its associated religious services mainly includes the decades from the 1950' to the 1970's. I was raised in a family and during a time when the teaching and authority of the church was solidly and unquestioningly accepted. My parents, especially my mother, had a strong faith and sense of obedience to the church. We attended at all cost the church services hail, rain or shine.

Our family would be representative of most families in the community and parish at that time. It was a time characterized by deep devotion featuring Sunday Mass, Holy days, the rosary, benediction, sodalities, indulgences, processions, customs and rituals. It was common place for the rosary to be recited nightly before going to bed.

The Latin Mass

My very early memory was attending church when the Mass was read in Latin and the servers –altar boys at that time- responded in Latin. They learned the Latin responses at national school. Benediction in Latin was also learned in school. The congregation in general would not have knowledge of Latin so for the duration of mass they must have recited rosaries by the dozen.

The altar was made of beautiful carved marble and there were altar rails, also made of marble, and a gate that separated the altar space from the congregation. The Mass service was performed with the priest facing the altar and his back to the congregation. My early recollection of attending Mass on Sunday is that it was customary for the men to occupy one side of the church and the women occupied the opposite side. The women always had their heads covered. This custom of gender segregation must have its origins in the early church.

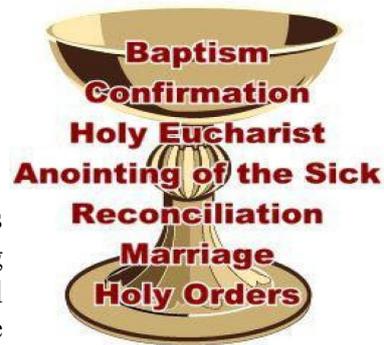
It was necessary to fast for three hours prior to receiving Holy Communion and considering that a lot of parishioners had to walk a long distance to church and home again one can imagine how difficult it was but they persevered because of their strong faith.

Friday was also a day of abstinence from eating meat but fish was allowed for dinner. It was traditional therefore that fish was commonly sold on a Friday.

Participation by the laity in the Liturgy

There was no participation in the liturgy by the laity at that time other than attendance at the services and reception of the sacraments. A sense of 'distance' was maintained between the priest and the laity perhaps because he was considered to hold 'great power' and occupy a 'sacred space'.

The second Vatican Council(1962-1965) heralded significant changes in the performance of the liturgical services such as the Mass read in the 'vernacular of the people' hence changing from Latin to English, and with the Priest facing the congregation, participation by the laity such as lay ministers of the Eucharist, lay Scripture readers, and Communion in the hand.



Preparation for the Holy Sacraments

Prominent memories of church related matters relate to preparation for the Holy Sacraments of First Confessions, Holy Communion and Confirmation. The local priest had a very strong link with the national schools during those years. It was usual for the priest to visit the school weekly and question the pupils on maybe his sermon of the previous Sunday- to see if we were paying attention at Mass - and on the Catechism. If we failed to answer there would be 'wigs on the green' after he left as it would be a reflection on both the pupil and the teacher that somehow we were not up to standard.

There was a lot of pressure and high anxiety around those events as we had to ensure that we remembered the teachings of the Catechism, that we would remember 'off by heart' what we had learned in school and that on the day we could go through the performance seamlessly.

Confirmation was even more dramatic as the Bishop was centre stage and all the parents and general congregation in the backdrop. Each child presenting for confirmation had to answer questions presented by the bishop and if he or she failed to answer, woe awaited them. The following week in school would see serious recrimination.

We had a great sense of holiness on the day, having been dressed up in white dresses and veils for the girls and new suits/outfits for the boys.

Walking to Mass

A lot of families back then did not have cars including ours so at times we obtained transport to get to church and at other times we walked – almost three miles. On walking to Mass on Sundays, particularly in the summer, my Father would note along the way what other farmers were achieving and doing on their farms. Afterwards he would relate what a 'fine garden' of stalks (potatoes) or cabbage a certain household had. This was work he loved and took pride in and admired an abundant crop when he saw one.

Meeting neighbours at Mass was an opportunity, similar to present times, to exchange news, talk and meet the visitors. It had probably a more important social purpose than present day as people would not meet as often related to restricted travel modes.

The Mission

The parish mission was another event that took place usually in the summer and approximately every four years. The mission consisted of religious services twice a day for one week. It was facilitated by two or three Missioners from religious orders such as the Redemptorists. It was a time of spiritual renewal and parishioners had an opportunity to reach to the deep and dark corners of their hearts, minds and souls through discussions and confessions with the Missioner and avail of forgiveness and peace of mind so that he or she was once again restored to the straight and narrow path to heaven.

The Missioners usually gave thunderous, resounding and fist thumping sermons prophesying 'brimstone and fire', on a wide range of issues traversing the Ten Commandments of God, the Six Commandments of the Church and the Seven Deadly Sins.

You would hear a pin drop during the deliberations and would be forgiven for wondering if the parishioners felt better or worse with their lot when it was all over since they probably discovered so many sins they had never known of.

Stalls were erected in the church grounds for the duration of the Mission selling every kind of religious objects from stat-

One year during Mission time a 'chip van' appeared on the church grounds selling the glorious french fries. An enterprising individual who had returned from Australia was availing of the ready-made audience to market his product. The local population eagerly forgot about fast and abstinence and for a brief few moments they indulged on the new found culinary delight. It was probably the beginning of the end of harvesting the humble potato in the local area.

Poitin making

Poitin was a whiskey that was commonly made and revered in Ireland for centuries. There was a 'still house' where the poitin was made, usually at a discreet location or on the side of a mountain, in every village where the precious whiskey was distilled. A Shebeen was a place or premises where the illicit beverage was drunk and sold. Poitin was considered to have properties that would cure all ills hence its importance in the social life of the community.

My father used recount a story where at Mission time the parishioners were ordered by the Missioner to bring all their barrels, stills and worms (distilling apparatus) to the church and have the equipment destroyed. They were also ordered to bring and destroy (spill) their whiskey and to take a 'temperance pledge' to abstain from drinking alcohol.

It was with heavy hearts that the poitin makers submitted to the ecclesiastical orders and brought their hard crafted equipment to the church yard and relinquished it to the scrappage orders. They believed that if they reneged they may suffer eternal damnation or worse still at their next 'round' of brew there may be no whiskey at all!! Apparently there was an Intoxicating Liquor Act passed in 1924 that made it illegal to produce alcoholic beverage without a licence. The Missioners seemed to take on the job of eradicating the heavenly brew and it was said that they achieved more in a day than the Guards did in a month. One would have to admire how self-sufficient the community was at that time down to making their very own whiskey.

Lent

Over past decades the Lenten traditions of prayer, fast, abstinence and penance were observed with great devotion and reverence. The fast days were Ash Wednesday and Good Friday as is still the tradition. Fasting was strictly adhered to with just one full meal consumed. Meat was omitted but fish could be eaten instead.

On Good Friday the rosary was recited at home at 3 pm and a period of silence was maintained for three hours afterwards. For those who did not have transport to the church for the Stations of the Cross individual families recited the rosary and maintained a period of silence and reflection at home as described.

Lent was a dark time of self-denial and self-punishment in preparation for spiritual renewal. The pleasures of life were suspended and attendance at dances and social gatherings were discouraged if not forbidden except for St Patrick's Day. Social events therefore were usually not scheduled during the six weeks of Lent. It was customary for individuals to 'give up' something of pleasure for Lent such as alcohol, sweets,



November –the Month of the Holy Souls

The tradition of attending at church services on the feast of all saints on 1st November- a Holy day of Obligation- and the Feast all Souls on 2nd of November was diligently adhered to. There was great emphasis on indulgences and two kinds- a Plenary and a Partial -could be obtained on behalf of the Holy Souls.

A Plenary indulgence would be granted on behalf of a Soul in Purgatory during November by attending Mass, receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist and a visit and prayers at a cemetery and praying the Our Father, Hail Mary and the Glory for the Pope's intentions. The Plenary indulgence granted remission of all temporal punishment due for sin and release of the Soul from Purgatory. A Partial indulgence granted partial remission.

A Plenary indulgence could be gained once a day and a Partial indulgence could be gained several times a day. Hence there was a ritual of intense praying in loud whispering tones as the faithful hurriedly paraded in and out of the church in order to achieve multiple visits to satisfy the indulgence requirement. The commotion was like Picadilly Circus on a busy day. It seems the faithful were just all going for the partial indulgence?

The Stations

A tradition prevailed whereby Mass would be celebrated in each home in the locality on a rota basis. Based on the number of households in the church catchment area it emerged that each house would host 'the stations' approximately every 6-7 years.

Great effort and detail was undertaken in preparation for the stations. The house would be cleaned and painted from top to bottom, new furniture may be purchased if the household could afford it, or borrowed from neighbours for the day. Special items of linen and candles were provided for preparation of the altar and those linen cloths were stored away until the next stations.

The 'parlour' would be allocated towards accommodating the Priests for hearing confessions and for breakfast after Mass. Extra effort and resources would be employed towards something 'special' for the Priest's breakfast.

Members of the congregation would bring extra food items to complement what the household had available for breakfast. When the Priests left after mass and breakfast a party may get underway and continue into the night.

Church choir

We had a Church choir that prepared and practiced at school. Particular practice would take place especially in preparation for Easter, Christmas and St Patricks Day. We took up position at the back of the church and sometimes on the day we could start off on the 'wrong note' caused perhaps by some 'distraction' nearby. We had no keyboard, organ or conductor to rein us in and the performance could be less than admirable.

No doubt before the day was over we would be told how bad we were. The criticism did not enhance our confidence or self-esteem. Our saving grace was that usually the teacher did not attend mass in Keenagh !!.

Over the decades the Keenagh community created a much more professional choir with exceptional singing and musical talent drawn from the local population. This choir continues to grace Sunday Mass and many other Liturgical services with their wonderful performances.



Emigration

During those early years and for many preceding years emigration was high and the destination for many primary school leavers was England. It was common for girls to work in factories and for men to work in building construction. The term ‘he is working on the buildings’ was a common description of occupation – a term that I never gave much thought to until later years. There was an abundance of work re-building London and other British cities after the war years as they had been severely bombed and destroyed during World War II.

Those returning emigrants, at holiday times, brought a sense of excitement, affluence and curiosity and at Sunday Mass a glimpse into the ‘outside’ world was evident by the image they presented. For the men long hair, drain pipe trousers and pointed toe shoes with raised heels were all the rage. The ladies were attired with colourful clothes, hand bags, high heels, lipstick, eye shadow and back-combed hair – big hair. The discussion for the next week was all about the visitors or ‘strangers’ as the case may be that were seen at Mass and had returned to the locality.

Employment in the Parish

Fortunately for the Keenagh church catchment area and the wider parish vital and much valued employment was provided by Bord na Mona, the ESB (1950s – 2005) and the State Forestry Programme. This helped to stem the flow of emigration and enhance people’s lives economically. Ireland’s entry into the EEC (European Economic Community) in the 1960’s continued that prosperity.

The Priests that were appointed in Keenagh during those years and afterwards took an interest in the social and economic life of the population. With the advent of electricity they took part in organising committees that lobbied public representatives so that the national electrification scheme would extend to all homes in the area. Other projects they helped to progress included road improvements such as tarring of the road and encouraging participation in the free education programme (1966).

Keenagh church and community today (2018)

Many changes have taken place over the decades in the lives of the local community. The Keenagh church community has persevered and prevailed despite a declining population, loss of a post office and more recently the loss of a resident Priest. The church has been refurbished over time and presently it reflects the care and preservation that it has been afforded over the years.

Great credit is owed to the congregation both past and present, the wider community, the Priests who have served in Keenagh over the decades and the whole parish for supporting the church from its completion to the present day. Keenagh church remains a beautiful Church in a small community and deserves a celebration on its 100th birthday.

Anne Lynn



Memories of Keenagh Church

By Nora Barrett Klim Durand Michigan USA.

I was born in 1921 in Lahardane, Co. Mayo. I am the eldest child of Bridget and Patrick Barrett of Coolnabinna, Boughadon. My siblings are Katherine (Kathleen), twins Michael and John, and twins Bridget (Bridie) and Mary (Mae). Kathleen, Michael, and John have passed away. R.I.P. The Barrett family has been parishioners of Keenagh church for many generations. Our family received many sacraments at Keenagh; baptisms, weddings, and unfortunately funerals. When I was a young girl, I can remember our horse, Roger, would pull a jaunting car to transport the family to mass on Sunday mornings.

My father, Patrick Barrett was a builder and he built many stone homes in the area. He built the stone wall surrounding Keenagh church. My recollection was that the stone wall took several years to build. The rocks came from a quarry in Galway. In between deliveries of the stones, my father would take work building homes to support the family. Dad would ride his bicycle to the church each day. As a young girl under the age of ten, I would occasionally walk 4 miles each way to bring Dad his lunch. I remember watching him use hand tools to chip away at each stone until it was the right size and shape he wanted. He hand placed each and every stone. There is not even a spoonful of mortar binding them together. I am not sure how my father learned the art and skill of rock wall building, but I am very proud that his hard work, diligence, and craftsmanship have endured all of these years.

When the wall was completed the Bishop came to bless the wall and to thank my father for his patience and skill in building the wall. My father didn't feel the need for much recognition. He believed it was his duty and service to the church.

The Barrett family including my father's siblings also donated two pews to the church. My understanding is they are still there.

I attended Keenagh church for the first 17 years of my life until I immigrated to England and ultimately to America. I have many fond memories of attending Keenagh church including attending the Missions, and visiting with neighbours and friends outside the church after Mass. I have been fortunate to be able to return home for visits every few years; my last visit was three years ago at the age of 94.

We always make the trip to Keenagh, attend Mass at the holy well of Tristia, and make the pilgrimage to Knock, Keenagh Church, and the Roman Catholic Church will forever be a major part of my identity, and my life. I am so thankful

I can participate in the celebration of the Keenagh Church Centenary.

**Keenagh Church
1965**



Keenagh New Church

Solemn Dedication by Most Rev. Dr. Naughton

Eloquent Sermon by Very Rev. Father Sutton, CSSR.

(From our Reporter)



Western People 24th August 1918

An event of great joy to the people of the remote district of Keenagh, Parish of Crossmolina, took place on Sunday last when the beautiful new church just completed there was solemnly dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory by the Lord Bishop of the diocese, Most Rev. Dr. Naughton, in the presence of a number of clergy and a very large congregation. Though the morning was wild and unpromising the people were not deterred from journeying to witness the memorable ceremonies. And the inhabitants of every home in the that part of the parish, as well as quite a large number from Crossmolina and other districts surrounding gathered to be participators in an occasion which was for them one of special happiness and deep religious significance.

The ordeal for this handsome and spacious House of God was long a source of anxiety to the pastors of the parish. Years ago the old church had reached such a state of dilapidation and decay that it was no longer fitted for its sacred purpose, nor safe for the good people who heard Mass Sunday after Sunday under its shaky roof, with its bulging walls. Built in the Penal days, it had weathered the ravages of centuries, and though its historic associations with the holy inspiration they gave made it dear to the hearts of priests and people, it was painfully evident that to continue its use was to court disaster. Before his death the late Right Rev. Monsignor O'Hara had with the cordial sanction of the then occupant of the See of Killala. Dr. Conmy, set on foot the project of providing a new and suitable church, but it remained for the present able and respected pastor of Crossmolina, Very Rev. Chancellor MacHale, with the blessing and active assistance of his Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Naughton, to bring the good work to happy fruition. In taking up the great task Chancellor MacHale was whole-heartedly supported by the beloved curate of Keenagh, Rev. M. O'Donnell, whose well-known energy and enthusiasm were ceaselessly employed to augment the funds and otherwise push forward the undertaking. At any time, the building of such a fine, commodious structure would have been a task of magnitude, requiring much patient and prolonged effort but under the strain of the war, with the consequent high and ever increasing cost of materials, the difficulties were very great. The fact that they had been successfully surmounted is an achievement of which Chancellor MacHale is entitled to be very proud, and on which his indomitable spirit merits the warmest congratulations. The completion of the building itself by no means relieves the burden that the Chancellor took upon himself for there still remains to be paid of a large debt.

We have every hope that with the donations received at the door on Sunday last, and as a result of the collection which will be made first in Ballina and later throughout the diocese the liability incurred will be soon removed, and that the traditional generosity of the people in all such holy causes will enable Chancellor MacHale to leave the church free from debt.

The church occupies a commanding site on high ground adjacent to the residence of Fr. O'Donnell. An excellent view of the country for miles around is obtainable from the grounds, in which a marked transformation has been effected since the foundation stone was laid a little over two years ago. The soft turf has given place to a neatly gravelled yard. The front gable is surmounted with an artistically constructed belfry, also moulded and enriched. The building consists of a spacious nave, 70 ft long by 26 ft wide, 17 ft high to the cornice, and 30 ft high to the apex; a chancel 26 ft wide by 14 ft deep, off which opens a well-lighted and arranged sacristry, store-room and porch. There are two entrances to the nave, the principal entrance being through a well – proportioned and designed porch with moulded doors and windows. The nave is lighted by eleven circular-headed side windows and three large gable windows, all artistically glazed with coloured glass. The sanctuary is well lighted with three long gable windows and one side window. The roof, which is one of the principal beauties of the building, is of open construction, supported on six moulded pitch nine framed principals. The rafters and purlins are also moulded and dressed. The spaces in between the rafters or diagonally sheathed, and all the timber work, which is exceptionally good is oiled, and varnished with very pleasing results. The floors, porches, passages and sanctuary are nicely tiled, and the remainder is floored in white Norway boards. The building is entirely constructed of stones quarried from the site, and plastered on the exterior face with cement and sand. The charges, corbels, hood-mouldings and dressings generally are finished in cast concrete of the finest description; also the gable crosses. The contract was placed in the hands of Mr. Isaac Beckett of Ballina who, with his foreman, Mr. John Molloy, deserve much credit for the way they carried it out under the supervision of Messrs Wm H. Byrne and Son, architects, 20 Suffolk St, Dublin, who designed the building.

Among the gifts to the new church are a costly altar, presented by Mr. J.C. Nolan in memory of his late wife. Four beautiful statues adorn the sanctuary, that of the Sacred Heart being given by Mr A.J. Pickett, East Putney, London (who was received into the Catholic Church at Crossmolina a few years ago); of St. Anthony, presented by Rev. M. O'Donnell, C.C., in memory of his deceased parents; of St. Joseph, the gift of Miss Fanny O'Donnell in memory of her brother Patrick, who died in San Francisco, August, 1915; and of the Virgin and Child presented by Miss Delia Canavan, The Hotel, Crossmolina. The richly ornamented Stations of the Cross were presented by (1) Chancellor MacHale P.P., V.G; (2) Mr. A. J. Pickett; (3) Miss Maria O'Hora, N.T., Deelbridge, (4) Miss Lavin, Letterbrick, and Miss Corcoran, Deelbridge, the remainder being subscribed for by the women of the district.

Keenagh New Church

Solemn Dedication by Most Rev. Dr. Naughton
Eloquent Sermon by Very Rev. Father Sutton,
CSSR.

(From our Reporter)



Western People 24th August 1918

The Dedication

The impressive ceremony of dedication began at 11:30 and was followed with close interest by the congregation. His Lordship was assisted by the clergy named below. High Mass Coram Pontifici was celebrated at noon, the celebrant being Rev. M. O'Donnell, C.C.; deacon, Rev. A.Dodd, B.D., C.C., Crossmolina; sub-deacon, Rev. J.J. Meagher, Adm., Easkey, master of ceremonies, Very Rev. Canon Tempany, President of St. Muredach's College, Ballina. Most Rev. Dr. Naughton presided having as assistants at the Throne Very Rev. Canon Healy P.P. Kilglass; Very Rev. Canon Tully, Adm.V.F. Ballina. Very Rev. Chancellor MacHale, P.P. V.G., Crossmolina, was the Assistant Priest. In the choir were Venerable Dean Kelly, P.P., Lahardane; Very Rev. Canon Munnelly, P.P. V. F., Ballycastle; Rev. Fr Byrne, S.J.; Rev. Fr. Naughton, CSSP, Rev. M. MacHale, P.P.; Rev. P. Hewson, Adm., Backs; Rev. M.F. Quinn, Adm, Lacken; Rev. Father Heveron, C.C., Skreen; Rev. Father Durcan, C.C. Geesala; and Rev. A.J. Timlin, C.C., Backs. The music of the Mass and Benediction was excellently rendered by the Gortnor Abbey Nuns' school choir.

Latin inscription on foundation stone



*The foundation stone
of the Church in honour
of the innocent souls in purgatory
laid*

*James Naughton
Bishop of Killala
Pentecost Sunday
11 Day of June 1916
Anthony MacHale Pastor*

A note from Mary Jordan, (nee Hegarty)

Castlebar



A recent trip travelling past Keenagh Church, through Keenagh village, passing the old N.S of 1897, through Shramore and back to Castlebar, via Newport, evoked many pleasant memories of this area and my school days in Keenagh N.S during the 1930's.

Our teachers were, husband and wife, Mrs. Mary and Master Anthony Cafferkey. One-hundred and twenty pupils were on the roll. Some of the children from Lena, Gowlaun and Lettertrask arrived by horse-drawn van driven by Edward (Jack) Walsh. They always arrived at the school for 10am and departed at 3pm. This was much to the envy of those of us who lived locally. We were first to arrive for 9am and were last to leave at 3:30pm, having to complete the last of the tidy- up and sweep of the floor.

In the 1930's Catechism was a very serious subject, together with Irish, needlework, knitting and sewing. The school inspector, Mr. Mc Shane from Donegal was very keen on these subjects and condemned many 'buttonholes' as not 'fit for purpose'. Knitting was also scrutinised with comments of 'heels not turned properly' and 'do it right next time' being a regular response. Fr. O'Connor was the school examiner in Christian Doctrine. He was later replaced by Fr. McDonnell who subsequently became the Bishop of Killala.

We had an occasional medical examination which was followed by the dreaded dental treatment on-site. The dentist and nurse operated behind the screen while the rest of us children shivered in anticipation as to who was next to enter the treatment zone. We listened nervously to the command of 'open your mouth', the screen being of little use to quell the sounds or calm the anxiety of the petrified students. Glasses were also supplied as deemed necessary but were seldom worn.

Participating in the choir in Keenagh Church was out of our reach as we did not have an organist in our school, and so, we were not able to practice. The choir during this period consisted of Deelbridge N. S, conducted by Mrs. Gallagher and Letterbrick N.S, conducted by Mrs. Ellen Mc Dermott. However upon Master Cafferkey's' retirement his daughter, Madge N.T, became principal of Keenagh N.S. She brought an organ with her and much to the pupils delight music was now available in the school.

Very soon after her arrival we had a choir we were very proud of. We were delighted to sing at Mass and Benediction, which was most Sunday evenings. Gregorian Chant was sung at Mass along with Kyrie Elison, Gloria, Credo and Sanctus. In general, we sang hymns to suit the occasion, 'Hail Queen of Heaven', 'Glorious St. Patrick', 'Faith of Our Father', 'I'll Sing a Hymn to Mary', 'Sweet Heart of Jesus', 'Soul of My Saviour', 'To Jesus Heart All Burning', 'Sweet Sacrament Devine', 'Adeste Fideles', 'Silent Night', 'Away in a Manger', 'Nearer my God to Thee' and 'Stabat Mater' are those I remember most. The choir was situated at the end of the Church, where the altar is now situated. My sister Phil Hegarty (RIP) and Vincent Lynn (RIP) were soloists in the choir. This was the Latin Mass era, with the priest saying Mass with his back to the congregation. Interestingly, both soloists later entered the Religious life and Priesthood respectively, Phil became a Franciscan nun spending most her life serving in the missionaries in South Africa, while Vincent Lynn became a priest of the diocese of Killala and President of St. Muredach's College, Ballina.

Fr. Martin Moran C.C. visited the school weekly and on one occasion he very kindly brought in his radio. Such was the intrigue of the students that he left the radio in the school for a whole week. The radio provided the impetus for a very exciting week at school as we were shown the inner working of the radio, while Ms. Cafferkey did her best to explain the mysteries surrounding how it worked. These were exciting times long before computers, mobile phones, Google or iPads, but somehow we coped!

First Communion usually took place when we were six or seven. The sacrament was received at the Station Masses in the company of our parents and we had to know the prayers and parts of the short Catechism. Many the long night was spent learning the principle parts of the mass, the seven deadly sins, and acts of faith, hope and charity. The station Masses were held at Easter and autumn in every village.

Confirmation was a big day for the whole district when the Bishop came to the Church. However, it was welcomed with some trepidation by us pupils as it involved a Catechism exam in the Church. This examination was given by the Bishop and Priests. This meant further long nights studying such things as the hypostatic union and reserved sins in the diocese of Killala. If your answers were considered satisfactory you got confirmed, if not you returned the following year.

The Church always looked well inside and out. I still remember Fr. Moran C.C (RIP) who lived in the parish house opposite the Church and the effort he put in for the Bishops visit in the 1930's. One of his projects was erecting the wall surrounding the Church. This was built by Mr. Barrett from Boughadoon, assisted by my father, William Hegarty. There were not many cars around then, but side-cars and traps were in constant use for Sunday Mass. Stabling for the horses was provided outside the Church, which was often in scarce supply. A travelling shop attended after Mass with Sunday Papers and light grocery essentials, which occasionally also meant treats for us children.

I have very fond memories of growing up in Keenagh surrounded by the beautiful un-spoilt scenery and many lovely neighbours and friends. It is a pleasure to share my memories. Slan Go Fóill.

Mary Jordan, (nee Hegarty)



My childhood memories of going to mass in Keenagh Church - Margaret Barrett

I lived 4 miles from Keenagh Church in the village of Gowlaun with my mother (Margaret Walsh nee Gillespie from Derra) and my 5 siblings. I was the youngest and my father Patrick died when I was a baby.

Times were hard then. We had no transport- we walked to Mass and sometimes the older men would give you a lift on the bar of the bicycle. It would take an hour and a half to get to the church - it's wasn't called 'back the hills' for nothing!

We would leave early and I would carry my good shoes and change them in Henry & Mary Browns house in Keenagh, they were elderly - we also called on the way home they loved the company on a Sunday morning and we would bring in turf and do other odd jobs for them.

At Christmas time a man named Tom McNeely came to visit Lena. He had a lorry and he used to bring everyone to Mass on the lorry- what a novelty in those days.

I remember my confirmation with Bishop Naughton - he asked the Apostles Creed!

People did not mind walking to mass when I was young. In later years I learned to cycle - no bicycle was allowed inside the church gate! There were all left along the wall outside.

The women had to have their heads covered. The women sat on the right and the men on the left. The Priest had his back to the congregation and the Mass was in Latin.

We had prayer books with Latin & English translation. If there was a big crowd at mass - children has to sit at the altar rails on the cold marble!

Mrs McDermott ran the choir. There was no baskets or boxes for the collection - the money was dropped into a collectors hand & then given to the priest.

When mass was over, all behind the church would walk together going home and make plans for socialising for that night - county house dance maybe.

Sunday was a special day, all the household chores were done on Saturday, bread was baked and dinner prepared, shoes polished etc. Sunday was a rest and prayerful day. People did not mind walking to Mass even though we were fasting since before 12 midnight the night before.

Margaret

I remember walking to mass with family and neighbours.

In later years we cycled.

When Fr Moran was the priest there was 3 masses on Christmas Day

And we would stay for all of them.

Paddy Mangan



Keenagh Church Choir

“To sing is to pray twice” are words attributed to St Augustine and over the past 100 years there have been many prayers sung for the glory and praise of the Lord in the Church of the Holy Souls, Keenagh.

The Church was dedicated on 18th August 1918. Fr Michael O’Donnell was the resident curate in Keenagh at that time. The Gortnor Abbey Nuns school choir provided the choir on that occasion.

In 1922 Miss Ellen O’Boyle, Sranacally (later Mrs Ellen McDermott) was appointed assistant teacher in Letterbrick N.S. As part of her duties Ellen was asked to organise a choir in Keenagh Church. Ellen, who was a beautiful singer and played the harmonium, was the ideal person for the task.

Ellen was organist and choir mistress in Keenagh Church for almost forty years, retiring in the late 1950’s due to ill health.

She is still fondly remembered by many, both as a teacher and choir mistress.

In the early years under Ellen’s direction, many of the choir members were her pupils from Letterbrick N.S. with some pupils from Deelbridge N.S. also helping out.

The Deelbridge children were directed by their teacher Mrs. Maria Gallagher, Mungaun.

But this was all to change in 1938 when Madge Cafferkey (later Mrs Madge McCoubrey) took over the position of principal teacher in Keenagh N.S.

With Madge came a breath of fresh air to the school mainly due to her interest in singing and drama. Soon the children were well versed in all the English and Latin Hymns and were well able to join their contemporaries from Letterbrick and Deelbridge at church choir on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation. Some Hymns from the time still fondly remembered are Hail Queen of Heaven, Tantum Ergo and O Salutaris Hostia.

When Fr Mark Diamond (later Canon Mark) came to Keenagh in 1963 he encouraged all the congregation to join in the singing at Mass and would ask Paddy Kilroy, from Letterkeen, to start everyone off “on the right note”. This began Paddy’s “official” involvement with the choir which was to last for almost 50 years. Paddy, his brother Matt and their good friend Tony Lynn RIP often joined in with the choir even before Fr. Mark’s time. Matt, Thank God, still sings with the choir. Paddy was blessed with a fine singing voice and could also play the accordion and tin whistle. He rarely missed Sunday mass and was readily available for all occasions including marriages, funerals and missions. Paddy was equally comfortable singing solo or accompanied and was always generous with his time and talent.



Ms Ellen O’ Boyle
Center of Pic

In 1973 Fr. Brendan Hoban came as a newly ordained curate to Keenagh and it was during his time the Sisters of Jesus and Mary from Gortnor Abbey became involved with the choir. Their contribution, over many years, was immense and Sr Anna Dyar and Sr Geraldine Langan, in particular, deserve special mention and credit for their leadership and dedication.

Many musicians and singers have contributed so much to the choir over the years and deserve special mention. Families like the Walshes (Doodaun), Lynns (Glendavoolagh), Rowlands (Derreen), and Kilroys (Letterkeen & Keenaghbeg) Organists Bernadette Walsh-Molloy, Catherine Magner, Breege Lynn, Delia Corcoran, Catherine and Andrea Mulhern have all added greatly to the liturgy with their musical talents.

We remember too the many choir members have been called to their eternal reward, people like Paddy Kilroy and Bridget Syron and many others who were faithful members of the choir, some for many years. Our dearest wish is that they are now singing in the company of the angels in their heavenly home.

Thankfully we still have a choir in Keenagh Church ably assisted regularly by organists Darren Walsh and Mary McDermott (Dalton) Granddaughter of Ellen McDermott, the choir's first organist.

Please God the choir will continue to sing for the Lord and for the people, for many years to come.



Some members of our present Choir from L to R Patrick Kilroy, Breege Corcoran, Mary O'Donoghue, Margaret Walsh and Matt Kilroy.

A little bit of Church History

The Foundation Stone of our Church in Keenagh was blessed and laid by Bishop Naughton on 11th June Pentecost Sunday, 1916 and just over 2 years later on August 18th 1918, it was dedicated as the Church of the Holy Souls.

The architect was William Henry Byrne & Son, Suffolk Street Dublin. It was Romanesque in style, measuring 90 by 30 ft and the contractor was Issac Beckett, Ballina.

The total cost of almost £3000 was far greater than originally estimated due to wartime inflation.

Local man Richard Gallagher (father of Joe and Hugh)) from Mungaun and later Fiddaun, was present on Pentecost Sunday 1916 and helped lay the stone which was blessed by Bishop Naughton.

The previous church was located at Townacran but no records are available to inform us when this was built. We know from local knowledge there was another Church in Keenagh prior to this. It was located between the River Deel and the Glendavoolagh Road. The remains of this building can still be clearly seen on the left hand side when you cross the bridge over the River Deel. It is possible this building was never officially dedicated but was simply a building used by the priest to read Mass. This church was in use up until the late 1700's and possibly into the early 1800's. Therefore we can assume the Church of Townacran may be at least 100 years old by 1916 but without any records its impossible to exactly know.

One of the outstanding features of the new church was the beautiful Italian marble altar donated by Mr James Nolan in memory of his recently departed wife Kathleen Agnes.

James Nolan born 1860 was a successful business man and Clerk of the Court in Crossmolina. The Nolan family had property in Moyne, near Killlala and leased land a house in Lower Derra from Sir William Roger Palmer.

In 1890 James Nolan married in London, Kathleen Agnes Leyden, she was a member of the wealthy Leyden family who had established themselves in Blackwater, St Elizabeth, Jamacia in the 19th century. Jamacia was at the time a British colony. John Leyden (Kathleen's father) and later his three sons were substantial land proprietors in the area. They built houses, owned department stores, were partners in a local shipping company and in the 1890's installed a plant to generate electricity. John Leyden's residence, Waterloo House, was the first private residence in Jamacia and among the first in the Western Hemisphere to have electricity installed in 1893.

James Nolan and his wife Kathleen Agnes lived in Jamacia for some time and he was appointed justice for the Peace for Westmoreland in 1902. Sadly Kathleen Agnes died aged 50 on 15th June 1918 in Surrey, England, just two months before the dedication of the Holy Souls Church in Keenagh, James died on 22nd Oct 1921 in Co. Dublin aged 61 and he is buried in Kilmurray cemetery.



1937 in Keenagh Photo taken in Keenagh church by Fr. Brown the photographer priest.

The Stations of the Cross were donated by Maria O'Hora, N.T Deelbridge, (Mrs Jim Gallagher, Munguan) Teresa Lavin N.T. Letterbrick and Bridget Corcoran N.T Deelbridge, (Mrs William Fergus, Lock) Mr A.J. Pickett Putney London Chancellor MacHale, PP, VG and the women of the district.

The wall surrounding the church was built of stone quarried where the new school now stands. Patrick Barrett, Coolnabinna and William Hegarty, Keenaghbeg were the builders helped by other men from the area. There was also a horse stable, part of which can still be seen. This was built by brothers Thomas and John Gallagher, Derra Lower.

A new curate's house was built in the 1930's during Fr. Martin Moran's time. Until then the curate lived across the road in a house which was previously Keenagh N.S. This was converted into a curates residence in 1898. The first curate to live there was Fr Francis Clarke. There was also a stable attached to this house for a horse.

There was a shop opposite the Church gate which was operated originally by Michael Francis Lynn and brother Hugh Joe, Glasheen.

Various alterations and improvements have taken place over the years in the Church but possibly the significant change was the removal in 1972 of the marble altar and rails been replaced at the other end of the church by a new more modern style altar. Up until Vatican II 1962-1965 the altar in a church was usually on the East Wall and the priest faced east with his back to the congregation. With this design in place Priest and People faced east, the birth place of our Lord Jesus and the location of his ministry and crucifixion. The sanctuary containing the altar, tabernacle - holding the Sacred Host - and sanctuary lamp was considered the most holy of holies and therefore only accessible in the main to the priest. The altar rails were a physical symbol of the division between the sacred sanctum and the main body of the church.

The Second Vatican Council brought many changes. One of the most obvious was the Priest saying Mass in the vernacular of the people and facing the congregation. Other changes included more active participation by the laity in church services. It appeared, in many ways, a more humble style Church where all were equal under Gods' roof. The design of church buildings, after Vatican II, were to reflect these changes and the gradual disappearance of grandiose altars and rails was, in many ways, symbolic of the reforming Church.

Keenagh church was probably one of the first to adopt this new style but for many the needless removal of what many held so dear was something they found hard to understand or accept.

All the windows were replaced in the 1980s by Fr. Desmond Kelly. The new windows have, as their central motif, symbols of the Twelve Apostles, including Judas, depicted by a rope. Fr. Des must have the rare distinction of being one of the few Priests to include Judas in this art form, rather than the usual Saint Matthias, the Apostle who replaced Judas after his betrayal of Jesus and subsequent death.

In 1988, during Fr Michael Nallen's time, a new entrance door and 2 confessionals were added at the east end of the church. The parking area around the church was expanded and additional lighting installed.

Under the direction of Fr James Corcoran 1983-1998 changes were made in the sanctuary. The Tabernacle was centralised and the Statues of Our Lady and Sacred Heart were elevated on plinths either side of the altar.

A glass porch was added at the rear of the church in 2017 and works carried out in the church grounds.

Many generous gifts have been donated to our church in the past 100 years, gifts like the church bell in 1993 (Cafferkey family) and Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto in 1996 (William Rowland) RIP and many other contributions have greatly enhanced our place of worship.



*We wish to remember all our dearly departed
who were part of our community here in Keenagh.
Those who were baptised, had their First Holy
Communion, Marriages and Funerals here in the
Church of the Holy Souls.
May you Rest in Peace.*

A memorable aspect of Church life in the past 100 years has been the regular parish missions. They usually take place every three or four years, but no mission, either before or since, put the fear of God into the people like the Redemptorist mission of 1932 lead by preachers Fr. Stiofan Connelly and Fr. John Gorey.

Bishop Naughton, had for many years, preached on the social evils of alcohol and in particular poteen making. He encouraged the redemptorist mission within the diocese, mainly due to their feverent emphasis on eradication of the illicit brew. According to a report in the Western People at the time "During the mission the fathers had delivered strong sermons against poteen making, and had said that the curse of God would come down on the families, the stock and the crops of any person who carried on or trafficked in poteen making. They also visited the houses of known poteen makers, who seemed terrorised by the visit.

Strong emphasis was also placed on confession and a pledge not to make or distribute the illegal spirit had to be taken. The Penitent was not allowed to stand until he agreed to take the pledge.

One story is told of a man who thinking he might get some leniency from the resident curate was disappointed to discover that everyone had to attend the missioner for confessions.

In addition all stills had to be brought to the church yard where, on the final night of the mission they were set alight and destroyed, in the area where the grotto now stands. Apparently the blaze could be seen for miles.

With the mission came the inevitable stall selling all manner of religious objects and icons, The blessing of all purchased items usually took place on the final night of the mission. Long after the mission departed people could distinctly remember various religious objects in their homes that were bought at the time of the mission.

Please God our beautiful Church will remain a central part of our community and continue to be a place of worship for many generations to come.

Patrick Kilroy



From records available it seems the first baptisms in the newly Dedicated Church were

*Michael Patrick Fergus on August 21st
Son of James & Winifred, Tubridge*

*Hugh Joseph Lynn on August 24th
Son of Michael and Bridget, Glasheen*



Confirmation in late 1960's with Fr Mark Diamond
The temporary altar is to the back as the priest faces the congregation.



The First Holy communion class of the Centenary year 2018



Fr Brendan's memories of Keenagh

In one way it seems just like yesterday. In another way it seems a long time ago. Time flies, we're told, and the older we get the more we realise how true that cliché actually is. Forty-five years ago, in July 1973, I came to Keenagh and the other day I realised that I'm the oldest former Keenagh curate. A strange place to be.

Where have all the flowers gone? That famous song is an anthem to the passing of time. Looking back from my 70th year and the prospect of my impending retirement, I wonder where all the summers have gone – and all the 'fair daffodils we weep to see' fading into the mists of history.

When I arrived in Keenagh it was another time, another age, another era, almost as different from today as chalk to cheese. There was a great innocence and simplicity about life then. Or so we thought. Possibly it had a lot to do with the lack of expectation. While employment in Corrick, valuable though it was, modified the ambition that more education might have rewarded, it all felt as if it was a kind of golden age when a certain prosperity was beginning to emerge. Everything seemed possible. I had been recently ordained so it was my first appointment. I settled into it very quickly, as priests tend to do with a first appointment, without any real sense that someday I would move on from it. Of the seven appointments I've had over forty-five years, it is my favourite. Older people were invariably supportive and extraordinarily generous and, at just 25, I was surprised to find that Keenagh was full of young people.

I was given responsibility for Keenagh and Eskeragh. It was like having my own parish, as Canon Ben McLoughlin, a gentle and revered figure and a benign presence in the parish, was happy to give me my head. (I was continually reminded by priest-colleagues how lucky I was and they were right!). Incredibly, to modern eyes there was no phone in the house so, even if he wanted to contact me, it wasn't simple.

(Fr Ben, as he was known, suggested during my time there that we should apply for the phone. It cost £1500 at the time. To put that figure in context, around the same time I bought a new Toyota Corolla (all the rage at the time) and the list price was £1900. As well as that it took over two years to arrive, by which time I had been transferred to another parish! When I tell that to young people now, replete with the latest Apple I-Phone, they don't really believe me.)

My weekend duty roster was the 9.30am Sunday Mass in Eskeragh and then the 11.00am Mass in Keenagh. (No Saturday evening vigil Masses then!) Both were filled to capacity each Sunday, from the 115 homes in Keenagh and the 45 homes in Eskeragh. Moving between the two areas became part and parcel of the pattern of my days. I think I may have spent as much time in the car as I did in the house.

Hard to imagine, at this distance how different life was. It was a black and white world, particularly on television. It was as if colour, in every sense, hadn't been invented. But we were young, we had a few bob in our pockets and everything seemed possible.

Inevitably we set up a football team, though we had no field to play in, apart from Granaghan's in Letterbrick, opposite the post office. We even attempted to secede from Crossmolina but, at a famous meeting in Crossmolina, our plans were rejected on the basis that the GAA rules stipulated that you could have only one club in a parish. (It was only later, naive as we were, that it dawned on us that Ballina parish had two successful teams in the Stephenites and Ardnaree!)

We planned a Community Centre, converting the vacant Letterbrick NS and extending it. We attempted a water scheme but it ran into the ground through lack of interest, though not through lack of need. The plan was to source a promising well on the hill opposite Letterbrick school that would provide a gravity feed as far as Derra. We ran '25' card-games in Deelbridge School to access funds for Keenagh Church, with the first prize being either a turkey or a goose, with their heads sticking out of a plastic bag in the corner while they waited for their new, temporary home. We ran dances in Crossmolina Hall to clear the debt on Eskeragh new church. We set up a Community Council to give a voice to the people of the area. We started a Christmas magazine, a few typed pages at first, a far cry from the very professional Crossmolina Chronicle of later years. We put on two one-act plays in the Community Centre, where an over-flow audience cheered us to the rafters. In the days before we ever heard the words 'health and safety' that night there were so many stuffed into the school-room, someone remarked later, that even though he had brought sweets with him, there wasn't room for him to get his hand in his pocket! All the hectic activity can on reflection be seen as striving for our own identity, making our mark on the world. A case in point was when local sheep-farmer, Patrick Fergus, became the subject of an RTE television documentary that eventually won a Jacob's Award. The cameras followed Patrick everywhere, even to reading at Mass in Keenagh Church which was part of what he did regularly, without a microphone as was the way then. And many of us got small walk-on parts in what was a great community event – all still immortalised in a precious, grainy video tape that periodically see the light of day and reminds us of the way we were.

The Keenagh Gaelic football team was another case in point. We competed in the North Mayo league and defeated Crossmolina's second squad in what we regarded as the equivalent of our All-Ireland final. Extraordinarily the biggest difficulty we had was getting games for our huge squad of players and we struggled sometimes when players who thought, often with good reason, that they should be playing, and weren't always recognised for the talent they had. (I was part of the selection committee so I usually picked myself!). We decided to buy jerseys – white with a red tinge – each one buying his own jersey and there's an embarrassing photograph somewhere of an imposing squad of footballers, a pale shadow of their present fuller physiques and, like myself, with more hair than they care to remember. It was the best of times, getting rosier with every telling, as memory shuts out the bad days when life was less than it might be.

Forty years ago, in June 1978, unexpectedly I got a letter from Bishop Thomas McDonnell informing me in his usual terse style that I was being transferred to Dromard and that I would enjoy the new appointment as it was a place of great natural beauty. It was but I sensed too – something that I've never had cause to question in 40 years – that my Keenagh years were where the best of memories would stay with me. Older and wiser priests say that a first appointment is the most important because it becomes a huge part of a priest's life and you settle into it with no experience of having to leave it.

The Sunday I started in Dromard in Sligo 40 years ago was the day the Keenagh Community Centre opened and was a day full of strange and sometimes conflicting emotions. Today is another day with strange emotions too. As we celebrate the centenary of Keenagh Church my thoughts won't just relate to the people who will be present or the memories that can be shared but to those absent friends who have gone to God and who were such firm and constant friends.

May they rest in peace.

Fr Brendan Hoban

Memories
are
timeless treasure
of the
Heart

Memories of Keenagh Church

A number of my childhood memories are connected with Keenagh Church. Christmas morning 1929, I was almost 3 years old, my sister Linda was born the following February, so somebody would have to stay home to “mind me”. I went to mass on the side car with Mam, Dad, my brother Tommy and 2 neighbours. I so well remember the Altar – a huge number of candles - all lit up – it was like a bit of Heaven. The Church was in darkness, in the long ago days, there were 3 masses on Christmas morning, so it was very early and probably not quite day light. The memory of that morning has stayed with me so clearly. The church full of people, most particularly the beautiful altar, the vestments the priest wore, It was an unforgettable happy occasion for me as a child.

I also remember an evening of a mission, all of us children, sitting on the step. The altar rails behind us and a Missioner had a sermon about “company keeping”, loud shouting, and stating that a curse would fall on them. For some reason, I thought a company was a number of people and started crying, my Mam took me out of the church. I also have a vague memory of John Sheridan with a poteen still on a donkey cart and drumming on it with two sticks. We were just behind him on the side car. The poteen stills were condemned. I have a vague memory that they were buried to the right, inside the church gate.

Eddie and Mick Gillespie RIP made poteen, they had a “hut” on the Tubridge side of the Tubridge River. When the river was in flood, the guards could not cross over. The first of the poteen went to the fairies glass after glass, until the glass came back “bottom up”, the fairies had a great time drinking poteen that night.

I have so many good memories of the people I grew up with in Doodaun, Keenagh and the surrounding villages – neighbours and friends – many of them now gone to their reward in Heaven.

We worked hard, helped each other, we were self sufficient, a great community. We prayed together at Mass every Sunday and attended Benediction. The rosary was recited in every house each evening and novenas were said regularly for the intercession of Our Lord, his Blessed Mother and the Saints to aid us along life's, sometimes difficult, path. We also danced to the local ceili music and sang our old songs and had so much fun, Thank God. These are my memories of growing up in Keenagh.

Eileen Roughneen (Gallagher)



Photo by Mike Kinsella

KEENAGH CURATES 1918—2018

Fr Michael O'Donnell was born in Ballyglass, Charlestown in 1879 and was ordained in 1912. He served in Keenagh from 1914 – 1919 was curate at the time of the building of the new Church. He died in 1956

Fr Martin Hegarty was born in Ballycastle in and was ordained in 1912. He served in Keenagh from 1919 - 1923. He died in 1950

Fr Thomas Howley was born in Castleconnor and was ordained in 1917. He served in Keenagh from 1923 - 1932 and died in 1939

Fr Martin J Moran was born in Ballinlough Co. Roscommon in 1902 and ordained in 1925. He served in Keenagh from 1932 – 1941 and died in 1967

Fr Hugh Brady was born in Dromard, Co. Sligo in 1908 and ordained in 1935. He served in Keenagh from 1941 - 1951 and died in 1984

Fr William Moyles was born Rathkip Ballina in 1915 and ordained in 1940. He served in Keenagh from 1951 – 1958 and died in 2003

Fr Patrick Clarke was born Rathball Ballina in 1913 and ordained in 1941. He served in Keenagh from 1958 - 1963. He died in 1987

Fr Mark Diamond was born in Ballina in 1923 and ordained in 1950. He served in Keenagh from 1963 – 1973 and died in 2014

Fr Brendan Hoban was born in Ballycastle in 1948 and ordained in 1973. He served in Keenagh from 1973 – 1978. He is presently PP in Moygownagh

Fr Des Kelly was born in Ballina in 1954 and ordained in 1978. He served in Keenagh from 1978 -1986. He is presently PP in Castleconnor

Fr Michael Nallen was born in Kilmore Erris in 1961 and ordained in 1986. He served in Keenagh from 1986 – 1993. He is presently co-Pastor in Kilcommon Erris

Fr James Corcoran was born in Rathball, Cooneal in 1953 and ordained in 1978. He served in Keenagh from 1993 – 1998. He is currently PP in Cooneal

Fr Peter Gibbons was born in Cloghans in 1965 and ordained in 1989. He served in Keenagh from 1998- 99. He left active ministry in 2006

Fr Alan Munnelly was born in Kilfian in 1969 and was ordained in 1994. He served in Keenagh from 1999 – 2001. He left active ministry in 2012

Fr Albert Slater was born in Ballina in 1941 and was ordained 2001. He served in Keenagh from 2001 -20016 and retired in 2016 and currently residing in Ballina

Religious of the Keenagh Area

Canon Francis Vincent Lynn was born in Keenaghbeg on 30th March 1929. One of a family of eleven, at the age of 13 he left home to go to the boarding school in St Muredach's College where he studied for 5 years. He continued his studies in Maynooth and was ordained in 1954, he studied for a further 2 years to receive his doctorate in 1956.



Fr Vincent's passion and strong beliefs in good education served him well as a teacher in St Muredach's where he eventually became President of the college. Seen by some as a tough task master his heart was always in the right place wanting to bring out the potential in those around him. Many would thank him later for his commitment and genuine belief in his purpose.

Fr Vincent loved the arts, going to musicals and drama regularly, loved hill walking, travelling abroad and a keen follower of GAA. Family was very important to him and he kept in very frequent contact with all his nieces and nephews as they grew up and bringing them treats. Something his nieces and nephews remember him affectionately for.

In his later years he worked as a parish priest in both Skreen and Ardagh parishes. He died on October 29th 2005 and is survived by his brother Thomas Lynn.

He is the only priest from our area over the past 100 years.



Fr Francis Vincent Lynn with his parents Hugh and Mary on his ordination day

Sr Muredach (Bridget) Hegarty was born in Keenaghmore in 1900 and joined the order of Jesus and Mary and was professed in 1926. She taught in Crossmolina N. S and spent her later years in the convent in Enniscrone. She celebrated her diamond jubilee in 1986. She passed away in 1995.



Sr Lelia O'Hora Letterbrick emigrated to America in the 1930's and joined the Sisters of Christian Charity in Pennsylvania. She celebrated her diamond jubilee in 1992 and went to her eternal reward in 2001.

Sr Pascal Holmes was born in Derra in 1910. She joined the Sisters of Mercy in the UK in the 1930's. In 1985 she received the Papal Medal and Scroll in recognition of her contribution to the care of the sick. She passed away in 1991.



Sr Mary Fergus (Sr Thomas Moore) was born in Corcullen in 1914.

In 1934 she entered the sisters of Mercy in Southwark England. She taught for many years in different schools. She also formed many young Mercy Sisters and was leader of the Mercy Convents in the diocese. She gave much of her later years to the poor and needy. She passed away in 2002 at the age of 88.

Sr Geneieve (Sarah) Gilroy was born in Keenaghmore in 1923,

She joined the Franciscans and spent most of her life working in Scotland and England as a nurse with her later years spent in Honan Home, Cork. She celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in 2004. She was niece of Sr Muredach. She passed away in 2005 and is buried in Scotland.



Sr Magdalen (Bridgie) Clarke was born in Keenaghmore in the 1920's.

She joined the Franciscans and spent most of her life working with Sr Geneieve in Scotland and Cork.

She was professed in 1947.

She is currently based in the UK.

Sr Alphonsa (Phil) Hegarty was born in Keenaghbeg in 1929 and joined the

Franciscans. She dedicated many years of her life working for those in need in South Africa and was a great visitor to her native Keenagh. She was so proud when fundraisers were held for her work in Natal. Sadly she took ill and passed away in 2002.

She is buried in Scotland. Her memory still lives on with the donations from the Christmas crib sent to her order in Africa to continue her good work.



Sr Rose Ann Granaghan Derreen joined the Franciscan order

And was professed in 1957 and worked in Africa before returning to the UK.

She is currently in the Franciscan home in Glasgow.

and worked in Africa before returning to the UK where she is still based.

Sr Ursula (Maura) McDermott was born in Townakeel in 1934 and was considered to be a woman ahead of

her time. She started secondary school in Gortnor Abbey at 11 years old and entered the novitiate there in December 1950 at the tender age of 16. Her reception took place in June 1951, she took the name Ursula and made her vows in January 1953 at the age of 19. She taught in Gortnor Abbey and Scoil Ide, Galway and later she was appointed as principal of Our Lady's Grove Primary School in Dublin. She is still fondly remembered by staff and pupils of Our Lady's Grove, and indeed the library in Our Lady's Grove is named the 'Ursula McDermott library' in her memory. She had a great interest in working with women, providing them with a structure to meet and work in groups. Amongst many others, she orchestrated the formation of the 'Keenagh Women's Group' in September 1991, which continues to flourish today.

After Sr Ursula left Dublin in 1985 she returned to the staff of Scoil Íde before being transferred to Mayfield, Edinburgh. After a short illness she passed away in St. Vincent's Hospital in June 1994, one week before her 60th birthday.



Keenagh Church Centenary Weekend

Friday 13th July 2018

**8pm Opening Ceremony in Keenagh Church,
followed by Music & Dancing with Local Musicians & Atlantic Rhythm
in Marquee**

Saturday 14th July 2018

**2pm Family Day in Conjunction with World Meeting of Families
in Marquee & School grounds.**

7pm Annual Cemetery Mass in Kilmurry Cemetery

Saturday Night

Music and Barbeque in Keenagh with Music by Medicine Bow.

Sunday 15th July 2018

12 Noon Loop Walk Drumleen Lake - Tawnakeel

3pm Centenary Mass With Bishop John Fleming and Clergy

Sunday Night

Centenary Dance in O'Malley's Crossmolina

Music by Irish Eyes.

