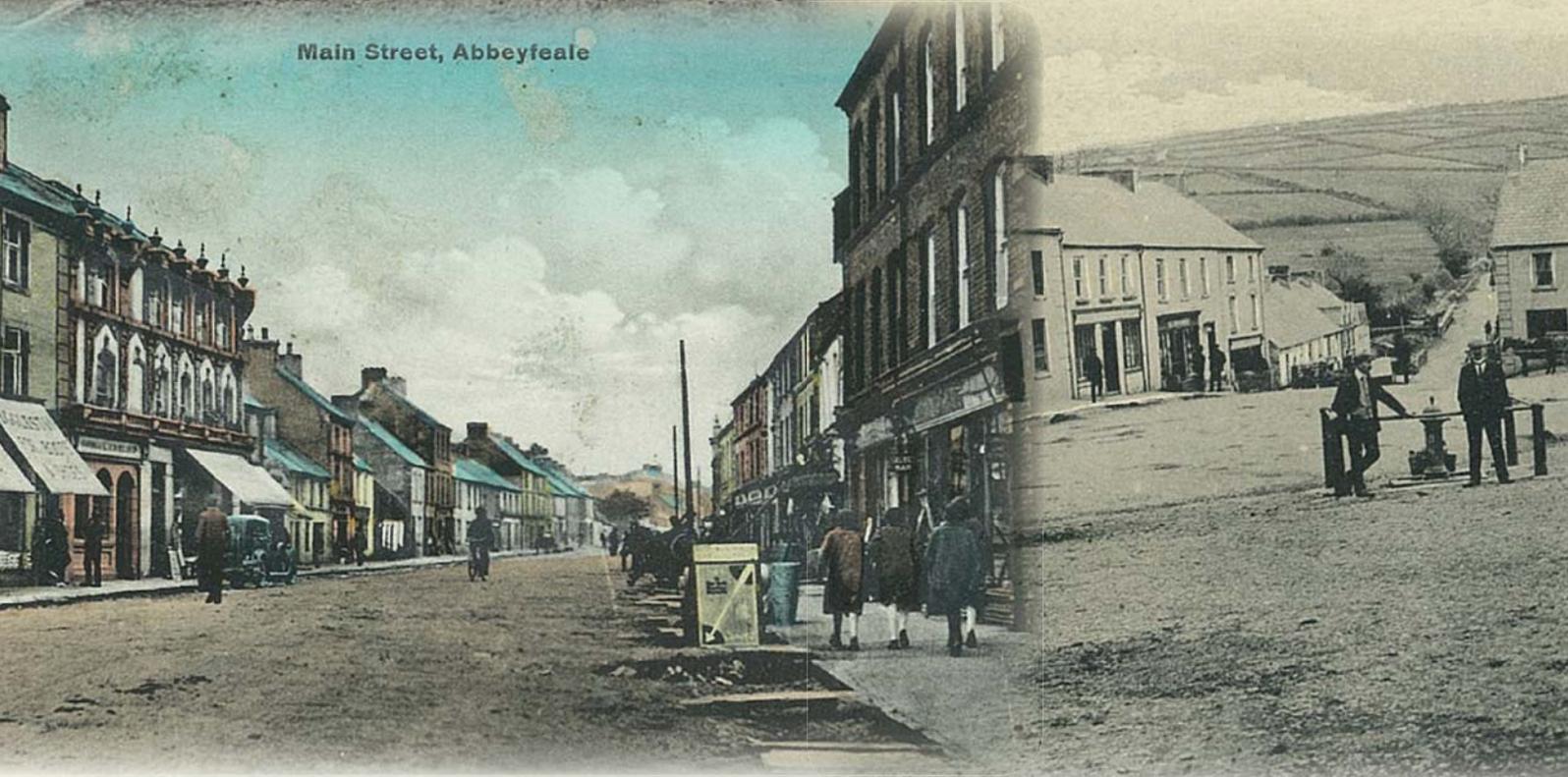


Echoes of Abbeyfeale





THE SQUARE. ABBEYFEALE.



Main Street, Abbeyfeale



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This is part of the culture project 2015.
 “Echoes of Abbeyfeale”

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We hope you enjoy reading these articles again, many of which have been published in various editions of “ Macalla Na Mainistreach” over many years.

We hope this work will be helpful to future generations of Abbeyfeale people as they look back on our proud heritage.

CALENDAR OF HISTORICAL EVENTS - ABBEYFEALE PARISH	
1178	O'Donovan whose territory was around Abbeyfeale driven out of the area.
1188	Abbey of the Cistercian Monks founded by Brien O'Brien
1215	Death of Thomas Fitzgerald, head of the Geraldines, who had settled in Co. Limerick
1418	Romantic adventure of Lord Thomas Fitzgerald, sixth Earl of Desmond, who married Catherine McCormack and forfeited his inheritance. He and his wife fled to France.
1420	Death of Lord Thomas at Rouen, Normandy
1572	First mention of "Port na dTrí nArd" or Portrinard – now known as Purt Castle
1579	Garret Desmond, the Earl of Desmond, proclaimed traitor to the Crown.
1580	After the slaughter of 400 people in the woods of Clounleharde, Sir William Pelham, Lord Justice, camped near Purt Castle in his search for the Earl of Desmond.
1580	Destruction of Abbeyfeale Cistercian Monastery by Pelham's forces
1581	Dr. Nicholas Saunde, one of the leaders of a Catholic Crusade against the intolerance of Queen Elizabeth, died in the Geraldine Camp at Cleanglass, Tournafulla.
1584	Garret Desmond murdered, his severed head sent to Ormond in Kilkenny.
1584	Commission was appointed to survey the forfeited lands of the Earl of Desmond. Hy-Conaill was divided into 16 tuaths. Abbeyfeale was in the Tuath Meaghan and was divided into 25 quarters.
1587	The lands of the Earl of Desmond were given to Undertakers. Sir William Courtenay of Powderham Castle, Devon was granted the castles and lands of the parishes of Newcastlewest, Monagay, Abbeyfeale, Athea and parts of the parishes of Ardagh, Kilscannell and Killeedy=10,500 English acres.
1627	Sir William Courtney sold part of his estate (Purt) for £400 and granted Caherlevoy to Dominic Roche for £40.
1654	Civil Survey shows the Abbey of the Feale belonged to Lady Ann Southwell, Abbey was shown in the Survey as roofless church with a lofty tower and pointed spire, a nave with a south door and two east windows.
1659	Census of Abbeyfeale : Town 39; Purt 13; Dromtrasna 38; Caher 18; Kilconlea 10; Knockbrack 30. Total 148
1690	Lieutenant MacAuliffe, who fought with Sarsfield at Limerick was interred in the Old Cemetery at the Square. Inscription on Memorial Stone now obliterated.
1692	A local Raparee, Mac Sithigh, took part in the defence of Limerick and inspired Robert D. Joyce's poem "My name is Mac Sithigh from Feale's Swelling Flood"

1704	Fr. James O'Connor was the first Parish Priest to register for Abbeyfeale.
1705	Sir Thomas Southwell, landlord of Rathkeale, received a patent to hold fairs in Abbeyfeale on 29 th June and 24 th September.
1739	Field- Marshal Peter Count de Lacy was born at Killaculleen, Tournafulla. His son served with Napoleon who later decorated him and praised the Irish soldiers. This de Lacy was a relative of Bishop Robert de Lacy who was born at Dromada, Athea.
1759	Death of Bishop de Lacy of Athea.
1766	Census of Catholic and Protestant population of Abbeyfeale: Catholic 1781; Protestant 2
1770	Major Richard Ellis of Monaghan acquired Abbeyfeale and surrounding lands until lands were passed on to tenants under the Land Acts.
1799	Fr. David O'Sullivan P.P. Abbeyfeale attacked by a raiding band of Whiteboys in his Presbytery at Ballaugh
1804	Lord Courtney rented Kilconlea consisting of 1,012 acres for £290 to Dan Harnett for 31 years.
1804	Dromtrasna Harnett sold to Dickson for £6,500.
1804	Dromtrasna Collins sold to Hickson for £6,500.
1804	Dromtrasna O'Brien sold to Thomas and Edward O'Grady for £1,700.
1804	Ballybehy sold to Edward Harte for £8,800.
1804	Ballybehy Hartnett sold to Edward O'Grady for £7,400.
1809	The Duke of Richmond, having been appointed Lord Lieutenant visited Abbeyfeale during his tour of Ireland.
1814	Daneen Dan Harnett born at Knockbrack .
1818	Captain Rock, a local blacksmith, founded "The Rockites"
1821	Captain Rock had his camp at Knocknaboul.
1822	Execution of Captain Rock after Limerick Spring Assizes.
1823	A group of Whiteboys declared Ireland a Republic at Abbeyfeale Square
1827	New road completed between Newcastlewest-Abbeyfeale & Castleisland
1840	Wages in the Abbeyfeale area were :Farm Servants – male £5 per year, with board; Female 50/- with board; Labourers 8d per day in summer, and 6d per day in winter
1841	The population of Abbeyfeale Parish was 4,793.
1844-47	Abbeyfeale St. Mary's Parish Church was built
1844	The first event of 1848 Rising in Limerick took place when Daneen Dan Harnett and followers held up "Her Majesty's Stage Coach" at Glenashrone
1844	Daniel O'Connell stopped at Leahy's Inn,the Square on one of his journeys to and from Dublin.
1845	Famine in Abbeyfeale. Fr. Lyddy succeeded in procuring seed potatoes and turnip seed for the people.
1848	Daneen Dan Harnett and a group of Young Irelanders prevented Sandes from supporting Blennerhasset at Tralee and imprisoned him at Feale

	Cottage, where Bank of Ireland now stands.
1871	Sept. Convent of Mercy established in Abbeyfeale by Rev. M. Coghlan P.P.
1871	Nov. Fr. William Casey appointed Curate in Abbeyfeale.
1872	Dec. Fr. Casey formed the Temperance Society and Brass & Reed Band
1878	Mar. First Mass offered in the new Convent Chapel.
1879	Sept. Branch of Land League formed in Abbeyfeale.
1880	Dec. First Passenger train arrived in Abbeyfeale.
1881	Apr. Five local men arrested for assaulting bailiffs and police who were serving eviction writs.
1882	Mar. Eviction of tenants on Surgeon Edward O'Grady's Estate, Ballaugh.
1883	Fever epidemic in Abbeyfeale.
1885	Apr. At a meeting in Athea Fr. Casey advocated the use of "boycott" to achieve Land League aims.
1887	Sept. At a monster Land League meeting in Abbeyfeale Fr. Casey called on people to join the "Plan of Campaign"
1891	Sept. Parnell addressed a crowd at Abbeyfeale railway station.
1901	Dec. Reinstatement of tenants to the O'Grady Estate, Ballaugh.
1901	Dec. Letter of congratulations from Michael Davitt to Fr. Casey re the Ballaugh tenant settlement.
1902	St. Mary's Graveyard blessed and opened by Fr. Casey.
1906	Feb. Founding of Gaelic League in Abbeyfeale by Fr. Casey.
1907	Dec. Death of Fr. Casey
1908	Jan. Burial of Fr. Casey in St. Mary's Church.
1910	Dec. Unveiling of monument to Fr. Casey in the Square, Abbeyfeale by Bishop Murphy of Mauritius, a native of Knocknagoshel.
1920	Sept. Patrick Harnett and Jeremiah Healy murdered by the Black & Tans at Killarney Road, Abbeyfeale.
1920	Sept. Fr. Casey's Temperance Hall burned by The Black & Tans. Most of the Band's instruments were destroyed. The Band never again regrouped
1928	Jan. Official opening of St. Ita's Hall.
1937	Sept. St. Ita's College founded
1951	Sept. Official Opening of Abbeyfeale Vocational School by Mr. S. Moylan T.D. Minister for Education. School blessed by Very Rev. P. Canon Carroll.
1953	Mar. Branch of Macra na Feirme founded in Abbeyfeale
1953	Dec. First ever Munster Festival of Music/ Fleadh Cheoil na Mumhan held in Abbeyfeale Vocational School.
1955	Oct. Adult UCC extension Diploma Course in Rural & Social Science opened at Abbeyfeale Vocational School.
1962	Reilig Íde Naofa blessed and opened by Canon P. Lynch P.P.
1963	Mar. Glór na nGael Trophy presented to Abbeyfeale for the first time.
1963	May Abbeyfeale Tidy Town's Committee formed at Vocational School.
1964	Oct. 2 nd Glór na nGael Trophy presented to Abbeyfeale
1966	Sept. Consecration of Rev. Timothy Cotter as Bishop of Maiduguri, Africa.

1968	Jan. Work commenced on the building of St. Joseph's Sec. School.
1968	Dec. Exhumation and re-interment of four former P.P.'s in St. Mary's Cemetery, Abbeyfeale
1968	Church of Assumption blessed and opened by Dr. Henry Murphy, Bishop.
1974	Opening of Abbeyfeale Cattle Mart, also Irish Filters Factory.
1975	Feb. Following the demolition of St. Mary's Church and the building of St. Mary's School on the site – teachers and pupils moved to the new school.
1979	Oct. Pope John Paul 2 came to Limerick.
1984	Abbeyfeale Races.
1989	Nov. Opening of Abbeyfeale Sports Complex.
1991	Nov. Death of Monsignor Dan Gallagher.
1995	Apr. First "Fleadh by the Feale" festival.
1995	May Official opening of Páirc an Athar Ui Chathasaigh.
1999	Apr. Official opening of Abbeyfeale Town Park.
2001	Apr. St. Ita's Voluntary Housing & Day Care Centre opened in Abbeyfeale.
2002	July Thomond Archaeological Society led by Mr. Liam Irwin did a History Walk of Abbeyfeale town.
2002	Sept. Rev. John O'Shea appointed P.P. Of Abbeyfeale in succession to Canon James Neville, who had retired.
2003	Aug. Convent of Mercy closed. Sisters moved to Mountmahon
2005	Apr. Pope John Paul 2 died. Pope Benedict xv1 was elected to succeed him.
2005	Oct. A new bridge built over the Allaghaun. The original Goulburn bridge was built in 1827.
2006	Feb. In a fundraising effort towards Parish Church renovations, the Celtic Tenor entertained a huge audience
2007	Feb. The Centenary of the death of Rev. William Casey was honoured by live broadcast of a commemorative Mass on RTE from Abbeyfeale Church. A special edition of "Macalla na Mainstreach" was also launched.
2008	Sept. Fr. Leo McDonnell, curate in Abbeyfeale was appointed curate in St. John's Parish, Limerick.
2010	Aug. Abbeyfeale Parish Garden was blessed by Canon O'Shea and formally opened by Mr. Seán Kelly MEP
2011	Mar. Abbeyfeale Vocational celebrated 60 years of Vocational Education 1951 - 2011
2011	Mar. A final "Gathering" of past-pupils was held in St. Joseph's Sec. School.
2011	May The closure of St. Ita's Sec. School was marked by a special Mass in the Church of the Assumption, Abbeyfeale.
2011	May Final Leaving Cert Mass in St. Joseph's Sec. School before closure.
2011	June the Blessing and official opening of Dromtrasna NS
2012	July Harnett Clan "Gathering" from July 20 th – 22 nd .

2013	Feb. A new section of Railway, extending from Abbeyfeale Railway Station to the Kerry border was officially opened to walkers.
2013	Feb. Local drama group staged comedy "Widows' Paradise".
2013	Apr. Ordination of Dr. Brendan Leahy at St. John's Cathedral as Bishop of Limerick
2013	July Abbeyfeale Parish "Gathering" was celebrated from July 15 th . - 21 st .
2013	Nov. Bene Merenti Medal presented to Seán Broderick by Bishop Brendan Leahy
2013	Dec. Fr. Joe Foley appointed Curate in Abbeyfeale.
2014	Jan. Coláiste Íde agus Iosef staged their first show "Cinderella".
2014	January Death of Rev. Eddie Morrissey, retired P.P. of Salford Diocese.
2014	Feb. Gales and lashing rain caused much damage to trees and property.
2014	Feb. Installation of water metres in Abbeyfeale Town.
2014	Feb. Drama "Separate Beds" staged in GAA by local Drama Group.
2014	Rathkeale Pipe Band led the St. Patrick's Day Parade at 4p.m.
2014	Mar. A series of Lenten lectures was given by Fr. Eugene Duffy, Sr. Clare Slattery and Bishop Brendan Leahy during three weeks of Lent.
2014	Apr. Annual Lenten Walk from Dromtrasna N.S. to Killeenagh Bl. Well
2014	Apr. Canonization of Pope John XX111 and John Paul 2.
2014	May. Fleadh by the Feale Committee celebrated the 21 st . May Bank Holiday Festival.
2014	May. Abbeyfeale Parish Pastoral Council decided to embark on a Project "Abbeyfeale Parish Life and Culture Past and Present".



Michael Coughlan P.P.
Abbeyfeale



Canon Murphy P.P.
Abbeyfeale who was
responsible for getting St.
Ita's Hall built.



Rev William Casey
P.P. Abbeyfeale



Rev. George Butler
Bishop of Limerick



Most Rev. Edward Thomas Dwyer
June 29th 1886 Most Rev. Edward Thomas
Dwyer was consecrated Bishop of Limerick.
Died 19th August 1917.
He was succeeded on 10th March 1918 by
Most Rev Denis Hallinan.
2nd March 1924 Most Rev Dr. Keane
consecrated Bishop of Limerick Bishop Keane
died 19th March 1945

Pre-Christian Ireland

The Celts had their origin in modern Germany, Austria, Bavaria and Bohemia. By 200B.C. the Celtic people dominated Europe, stretching from Galatia in Asia Minor to Spain, as well as Britain and Ireland. They were particularly associated with the lucrative mines of Hallstat near Salzburg. They were also associated with the early use of iron. The Celts were an artistic people, which they expressed in metal, bronze and gold. Their curvilinear style became known as Celtic Art. The Celts were intelligent, courageous, spirited and warlike. They took a special delight in the spoken word, and had a high regard for their lyric poets – the Bards. They are our Irish ancestors.

Though we know of their artistic and military capabilities, there is but scant material available by which we can analyse the system of religious worship practised by our pagan Irish ancestors. It seems there were many pagan gods but no supreme god. There were no settled general forms of worship. There were no temples, but there were altars of some kind. Most likely these were erected in the open air. “To seek out and watch and love nature in its tiniest phenomena as in its grandest, was given to no people so early or so fully as to the Celts” (Kuno Meyer) Sun, wind, water fire, oak trees and pillar stones were the gods most frequently invoked.

Special rituals were associated with water. “Scoth an Tobair” was the first water taken from the well on May morning. It was supposed to have healing and fertility powers. In Pagan Ireland; the wells were visited at special times of the year: Imbolic on February 1, Beltaine on May 1, Lughnasa on August 1 and Samhain on November 1. These were all special turning-points of the Celtic year when the gates of the Otherworld were opened. This is specially true of Samhain, where the veil between the living and the dead was at its thinnest point, and often visions of the good people were seen in sacred places.

The cult of holy wells is very ancient, dating back to remote pre-Christian times. There are more than 3,000 holy wells in Ireland, but not all of them are centres of devotion. In many cases there remains only the tradition that the well is holy. In others, the well itself is grassy, dried up, or obliterated by land reclamation or road building.

Following the coming of St. Patrick to Ireland, changes in worship rituals occurred. These changes were slow and laborious. St. Patrick and his clergy were battling against the powerful hold the Druids held on the Irish people. Above all St. Patrick proved to be a diplomat and a pragmatist. Knowing that the worship of the elements was integral to the pagan worship already practised in Ireland, Patrick did not object to people visiting these ancient sites of worship, but he “Christianized” these visits. A great sensitivity to the presence of God in creation is a hallmark of early Irish Christianity. Legend has it that on Easter morning Patrick lit the Easter Fire on the Hill of Slane before King Laoghaire had lit the fire at Tara. Patrick and his companions were summoned to appear before the king to explain why they had usurped the right of the king to light the first fire. On the journey between Slane and Tara, Druids and their supporters lay in wait to ambush Patrick and his followers. At the point where they were passing there would – be assassins, Patrick and his companions appeared as a doe followed by fawns. The hymn they were chanting became known as “The Cry of the Deer”. It is obvious that the author experiences himself as a person of the Universe. He is supported by the “Light of the sun, Radiance of the moon, Splendour of fire, Speed of lightening, Swiftness of wind, Depth of the sea, Stability of earth, Firmness of rock”. Furthermore, we find the most beautiful ancient Irish prayers placing an emphasis on the natural environment. God is spoken of as “Rí na nDúl” - the God of the Elements – of earth, fire, air and water.

“Go mbeannaí Muire is go mbeannaí Dia thú,
Go mbeannaí na hAspail agus na Naoimh thú,
Go mbeannaí an ghealach gheal is an ghrian thú,
Is go mbeannaí mé féin is an ghrian thú,

(Ó Laoghaire, D,Ár bPaidreacha Dúchais.)

Dwellings in Ancient Times

In Begley’s “History of the Diocese of Limerick Ancient and Modern” we read the following: “The houses of the inhabitants were built of very perishable and fragile materials but rich and costly according to the rank of the occupier. All that now remains of them are the circular mounds popularly known as forts. Many of these forts are found in Abbeyfeale Parish. “Rath, Dún and Lios” were the terms usually applied to them. The general outline of these forts has been preserved by the farmers on whose lands they are situated.” Where stone was plentiful many of the dwellings were built of that material. These stone forts were known as Cahers – and gave their name to the townlands where they were found, hence the names Cahirhayes and Cahirlane in Abbeyfeale Parish.

Amusements in Ancient Times.

The Aenach (Aonach) or Fair was the most popular gathering at which all grades of society met for pleasure and enjoyment. Horse racing was a great attraction at this fair. Before the establishment of the Cattle Mart in Abbeyfeale a number of important fairs were held annually – principally the June and October fairs. The November fair was known as the “Port Fair” because it had originally been held at Port. It is said that these particular fairs were held near the grave of a quasi -historical personage and had their origin in funeral games. Another explanation could be the historical link to the monastery at Abbeyfeale. It is said that a site for the monastery was originally intended at Port but this plan was never achieved and so the site was known as “Leath Mhainistir” a half monastery.

In 1705 Sir Thomas Southwell obtained a patent for two annual fairs and a weekly market to be held at Abbeyfeale. Most likely, this marked the end of the popular Port Fair.



Abbeyfeale in the 1920's

The Name “Abbeyfeale”

The name Abbeyfeale or Mainistir na Feile has its source in folklore and fact. With regard to the folklore aspect - it is said that one of the Milesians named Lughaidh Mac Lotha settled in that part of Co. Limerick where Abbeyfeale now stands. Lughaidh was married to a beautiful princess named Fial. One day Fial was bathing in the river, which at that time was called Dubh Glaise or Blackwater. She saw a stranger approaching in her direction. Thinking to escape his notice, and not realising that the man was her own husband, she moved further into the river and was drowned. Lughaidh was heartbroken and had the river re-named Abha na Féile in memory of his dead wife Fial.

The ancient Irish writer Seathrun Ceitinn has the following story:

“Fuair Fial, bean Lughaidh Mhic Lotha bás de náire ar bhfeicsin a nochtá dá céile ar dteacht ó snámh di; Gona uaithi a gairmtear Inbhear Féile don abhainn ó shoin i leith”

Mainistir na Féile.

The first Cistercian Monastery in Ireland was at Mellifont in Co. Louth. Another foundation was made at Manister, near Croom, Co. Limerick and another at Abbeydorney in Kerry. The Cistercian Monastery at Abbeyfeale was founded by Brian O'Brien of Thomond in 1188. A monastery was usually built near a river and thus guaranteed a plentiful supply of fish and clean water. It was the custom of monks to settle in remote areas and since the district around the present town of Abbeyfeale was densely forested at that time, it presented a natural choice.

By the year 1209 Abbeyfeale had become a cell or sub-station to the Abbey at Manister in Co. Limerick. A cell had usually only a few monks in residence. The monks looked after the Abbey and Chapel and recited the Divine Office. The lay brothers tilled the surrounding fields. There, they grew corn and vegetables. Some writers hold that the Abbey continued to function as a Cistercian Cell from 1209 -1350 when it became a lay grange. Mass would have been said up to 1350.

In 1638 the Hibernian Rolls describe Abbeyfeale as the “Abbey or cell of Nephellagh”- the word “Nephellagh” being a corruption of the Irish “na Féile” In 1680 the Lord Justice Pelham, on his journey through County Limerick from Askeaton, camped near Purt Castle and plundered all the surrounding district, including the Abbey at Abbeyfeale. Due to the ravages of death and destruction inflicted on the local people it is most likely that the Cistercian monks had by now ceased to minister to Abbeyfeale. In 1587 Elizabeth 1 granted Abbeyfeale to the Undertaker Hungerford. In 1664 Lady Anne Southwell was granted the lands. Fairs were established in the town.

In the early 1800's a thatched church, incorporating the walls of the ruined Abbey served the Faithful of Abbeyfeale Parish. This was replaced in 1847 by the Famine Church which then stood in New Street and which was demolished in 1968 and replaced by St. Mary's Boys N.S.

Abbeyfeale – The Cistercian Connection

Le Nioclás Ó Lionáird

The Cistercian foundation of 1188, situated on the bank of the River Feale, was the “fons et origo” of the settlement that later developed into the thriving modern town of Abbeyfeale. It is said that the Benedictines (of which the Cistercian Order was an offshoot) sought out the mountain tops but the Cistercians favoured the valleys for their foundations. The Feale Valley was but one of many such locations for Cistercian monasteries, including Monasteranenagh, near Croom.

The patron of Abbeyfeale is usually given as Brian O’Brien, a Dalcassian, the sept that broke the power of the O’Donovans as rulers of their territory in West Limerick, when Brian Boru killed O’Donovan, Chief of Uí Fídhgente and Molloy, king of Desmond, in separate battles about the year 978. This was in retribution for the heinous murder of his brother, Mahon, king of Thomond, a short time previously. Mahon was murdered while a guest of O’Donovan and Molloy, at Redchair, Co.Limerick, on the Kilmallock to Fermoy road, and in the presence of the horrified Bishop of Cork. The venerated Gospel of St.Finbarr was bespattered with the blood of the slain king. After the foul deed, Molloy’s comment to the startled Bishop was simply “**cure yonder man,**” before he spurred his horse away. It is presumed that referred to Mahon’s soul as he had received a mortal wound.

Thus it was that the O’Briens held sway in West Limerick for nearly twenty years after the arrival of the Normans in Limerick in 1175. Their foundation at Abbeyfeale, unlike their Norman-sponsored monasteries, was most certainly Irish in personnel and in character and little of the adverse influence of the Anglo-Norman clergy permeated. This anti-native Irish influence is best exemplified by the Anglo-Norman Cistercian religious who openly:

“asserted the doctrine that it was no more sin to kill an Irishman than a dog or any other animal...” and they would not for this, refrain from the celebration of Mass for a single day... monks of the Cistercian Order at Granuard and Inch... publicly appeared in arms and slaughtered the Irish, and yet celebrated their Masses notwithstanding.

Truly, the Lord worked in mysterious ways! While generations of Abbeyfeale persons have accepted without question that there was a full Cistercian Abbey at Abbeyfeale, evidence of such is well-nigh impossible to discover. To establish the extent of the foundation would require a full-scale archaeological investigation of the site of the abbey in the old graveyard in Abbeyfeale. This, being the burial place for local families for many generations and still in use, could not be countenanced. The evidence available on the question, while emanating from an impeccable authority, is very much in the negative. I can but reproduce it here and allow our readers to judge for themselves:

Abbeyfeale is frequently, but incorrectly styled a Cistercian abbey. Even Cistercian authorities themselves (Jongelinus, Vischius, etc.) say that a Cistercian house was founded here in 1188 and that this was afterwards united with Maigue. Ware and Allemande both speak of the “cell” and the “chapel” of Feale. Having weighed the arguments for and against, Janaushek very justly concludes that the alleged abbey was merely the church of Feale, which was served by monks from Maigue.

There remains no evidence of Cistercian grange, farm or mill – all essential elements of a full abbey, in the townland names around Abbeyfeale. Contrast this fact with the naming of Newgrange, Co.Meath, Graiguenamanagh, Co.Kilkenny and even Grange, Mainistir,

Co.Limerick – all evidence of the naming of townlands, farms , etc., after their Cistercian owners. While this might disappoint some, the fact is, that Abbeyfeale was favoured by a Cistercian foundation. However small in terms of worldly possessions or prestige, it is a proud boast. It is very likely, from the subsequent readiness of the carpetbagger English gentry to acquite the Abbey after the Reformation, that there must have been some valuable lands attached to it.

The spiritual benefits of bringing the masses and the Sacraments to the surrounding inhabitants , the care of the sick and the poor, accommodating the wayfarer, and the uplifting example of holy men in savage times can never be quantified in terms of mere piles of stone- or to quote St.Bernard, the greatest Cistercian of all, “**A meaningless hull of stone.**” Was it just a coincidence that Abbeyfeale would produce such great numbers of servants of God in all parts of the world in later centuries?

This all points to the probability that Abbeyfeale was a cell or minor house- the few monks from Monasteranenagh very likely living in domestic quarters over their church- usually a chamber over a vault. The lands would not need to be extensive- a garden would suffice for the vegetables and the herbs used in curing the sick with some adjoining lands for animals. Fish abounded in the nearby River Feale, though the eating of fish was forbidden by Rule in the early years of the Order.

There would be no need of a mill on the River Feale, no elaborate barns or farm buildings. There is no reference to Abbeyfeale in the several books on the Cistercian monasteries in Ireland as an abbey in the mould of, say, Monasteranenagh, while the foundations at Abbeydorney (1154), Middleton and Holy Cross (both 1180) are very well recorded. Remarkably, these three foundations are the only recorded daughter-houses of Monasteranenagh. Abbeyfeale is not referred to as a daughter-house at all. Perhaps it was a separate foundation for the twenty-one years until 1209, when it became a cell of Monasteranenagh. Sadly, the recorded accounts’ of the Cistercians at Abbeyfeale are ambiguous and tend to superimpose the idealised Cistercian standard on an unknown and undocumented quantity.

So what is actually recorded in reputable accounts of the Cistercians in Abbeyfeale? The late Beirtí Ó Núnáin, the Abbeyfeale teacher, historian and *Fíor-ghaeilgeoir*, recorded an interesting snippet concerning the planning of the Abbey site. This states that the site was originally at Purt, outside the town at a spot known to the old people as “*leathmhainistir*” (half-monastery), even though it was said that the building never got under way despite the good intentions. Was this land part of O’Brien’s gift to the new Abbey in 1180? Could these lands be the same lands near Port castle granted to the Undertaker, Hungerford, in 1587 by Elizabeth, along with the Abbey and its adjoining lands? We can only guess.

Having an Irish chief, O’Brien for patron and very likely populated by monks from Monasteranenagh, a foundation with a decidedly anti-foreigner attitude, Abbeyfeale would have been very much on the “Irish side” in the bitter division between the Anglo-Norman and the Irish Monasteries- the notorious “Conspiracy of Mellifont” of which much is written. This descended to outright war and a minor battle took place at Monasteranenagh between the monks and the Cistercian Chapter representative , Stephen of Lexington, who performed a general visitation in 1228 with the aim of restoring obedience to the General Chapter and observance of the rule of the Order in the Irish houses.

Stephen visited all the foundations, travelling to all the disaffected monasteries, including

Monasteranenagh (where he met armed resistance from the monks who manned the abbey roof). Presumably, if he subdued Monasteranenagh, he therewith subdued the cell at Abbeyfeale. His mapped journey of visitation indicates a route that did not approach Abbeyfeale but shows a visit to Abbeydorney to the south. In his letters, Stephen left copious records of his visitations with the problems he encountered and the solutions he applied but made no mention of Abbeyfeale!

About the year 1229, Abbeyfeale, among many other foundations was placed with Monasteranenagh under supervision of Margam Cistercian Abbey on the South Wales coast (a foundation of 7,000 acres with over 5,000 sheep in 1291). It was intended to deprive the Irish foundations of their autonomy and end their disobedience to the foreign Anglo-Norman rule and to subjugate their rebelliousness. It would seem that the Margam monks were doing quite nicely as farmers at that time. I wonder what impact their enforced adoption of Abbeyfeale had on both foundations, or are there any records of the connection? None are apparent.

Abbeyfeale is noted in *The Black Book of Limerick* as having been “destroyed by war” in 1306. This was most likely a localised skirmish in the endemic pursuit of Land (plus ca change...!) As a result, Abbeyfeale was exempted from the Diocesan taxation. Significantly, it was described as a “chapel” only. The Hibernian Rolls in 1638 style Abbeyfeale as the “abbey or cell of Nephellagh” (“na Féile”). In 1580, the Lord Justice, Pelham, who camped by the Feale at Port Castle, on his way from Askeaton to Dingle in pursuit of the ever-fleeing Earl of Desmond, destroyed Abbeyfeale in order to prevent succour or comfort, spiritual or temporal, to his quarry.

The brutalities and hardships endured by the ordinary people of Munster were inestimable- it has been claimed that the Earl would have done a far more merciful deed had he surrendered at the outset-or else had made a dignified (but hopeless) stand and fought to a noble end. Instead, he suffered an ignoble hacking to death (and subsequent decapitation for the reward money) at the hands of those execrated scoundrels, Black Donal Kelly and Moriarty in a woodland hovel. For their part, the Moriartys claimed that the Earl’s men had rustled their cattle in West Kerry- first having roughly handled one of their womanfolk, whom they left entirely naked, al fresco and we presume, mortified and goose-pimpled. We can only wonder which of these outrages hurt the Moriartys the most and prompted the “stripping” of the Earl’s old grey head. Maybe it was simply the reward money in coveted English coin of the realm; cattle and women were probably of equal value anyway, and both pretty much easy to come by.

In 1587, Elizabeth 1 granted Abbeyfeale to the Undertaker, Hungerford. This almost certainly was the last of the Cistercians’ overt ministry. In 1654, Lady Anne Southwell was the owner, from her it went to the Pigotts by marriage. Little is known of the latter. The sketch of the ruins at Abbeyfeale made in 1655 depicts a lofty tower surmounted by what appears to be a rather squat type of needle-spire (a slender spire set well inside the tower top). This is hardly a remnant of the Cistercian edifice as the Order’s rules expressly forbade the construction of towers, an ostentatious show of pride and standing in the world, if not in Heaven. This rule, however, was broken by many of the most powerful foundations towards the middle of the fifteenth century.

It is also likely, that the land-hungry Hungerford found it necessary to construct it as a tower-house for the protection of the new occupier of Abbeyfeale. The conversion of abbey building to fortified residences by their new owners, and their looting of the abbey possessions, was a fairly commonplace practice after the reformation and the subsequent dissolution: the

confiscation of lands and the robbery of the monasteries of Clonard, Abbeylara, Fore, Bective and Tintern are examples of this. Indeed common English soldiers even carried off the very glass from the windows of far-famed Clonmacnoise!

The building of Abbeyfeale most likely would have undergone alteration and repair- possibly enlargement and definitely destruction – by war in the early 1300s and by Pelham in 1580 – in the period of almost 500 years between the foundation in 1188 and the sketch of 1655. This sketch may not bear much resemblance to the actual Cistercian constructions. The tower is very likely a later addition of the Middle Ages, a period when most of these towers were constructed, and is situated as an adjunct to the main building. It may have had as much a defensive or domestic role as that of use as a belfry. Bells were somewhat frowned upon by the Cistercian Rule- their quantity and location in an abbey was strictly prescribed by rule- if not always obeyed. After the dissolution of the monasteries, however, the greater Cistercian foundations were found to have many valuable bells, which were forfeited to the plundering head of the new religion and his minions, along with much silver plate and other such trappings of the world.

In the dissolution of 1539-1541, Abbeyfeale would have been too isolated or insignificant as a religious threat or, indeed, lacked sufficient booty or loot to attract the covetous Undertakers. Maybe, like Middleton Cistercian Abbey, it secured a lease of 21 years from the Crown, and maintained a secretive religious life, safe in the shelter of Port Castle and the then powerful Earl of Desmond- until 1580 and Pelham, at least. There is no known record of such a lease. In any case the crown did not grant Abbeyfeale until 1587, as we have seen. Significantly, this was just four years after the death of the Earl of Desmond.

It is unlikely that the buildings were re-instated after Pelham's depredations, in light of the regime of oppression and prohibition on Roman Catholicism- ironically in the name of what was termed freedom of conscience and religious freedom. It is also stated that the abbey may have been in the hands of the Carmelites for a time after the Cistercians but no convincing evidence is shown for this. It is very strange that the Penal Catholic thatched church was built in the late 1700s on the site of the abbey. It seems that the penal laws were not as strictly enforced in Abbeyfeale as in other places at this time. Who were then the owners of the site? They were most unlikely to be Catholics. Why did they allow a new Roman Catholic edifice on their property ensuring the continuance of the old faith? When did the people of Abbeyfeale feel confident enough to return from celebrating Mass at *Carraig an Aifrinn (the mass rock)* at Ballaugh and recommence Roman Catholic worship in the hallowed spot where the Cistercian monks once ministered devoutly? Again, we can only speculate.

Much of the history of the Cistercian foundation at Abbeyfeale remains unknown – I fear that it may never be known. Those best suited and placed to carry out extensive research seem to have drawn a blank. Perhaps the reason for this is that Abbeyfeale was in fact a simple country chapel manned by monks from Monasteranenagh, dedicated to their task and unconcerned with the world, or the politics of religion that beset the greater foundations. This would explain the lack of records or historical impact that they made.

Abbeyfeale

By Beirtí O Núnáin

Baile na Laoch is na nOllamh

“Let us proceed across Luachair hither,

A journey which is fit for poets,

To the cold and festive Cleanglais,

Of the green irriguous wooded land” – O’Herrin.

The district in which Abbeyfeale is situated, would in remote times, have been included in the ancient Gaelic tuath or territory of Claonghlais, of which the Ó Coileains were lords. The name of Ó Coileain has been anglicised Collins, and the name Claonghlais, today almost unrecognisable in its misleading English spelling, Cleanglass, is now so narrowed down in its application that it is borne by no greater an area than just one Electoral Division in South-West Limerick. In ancient times the territory around Abbeyfeale was then called “*The territory of Hy fidhgente*” – so called from Fiacha Fidhgente, a descendant of Oiloll Olum through his eldest son Eoghan Mor, who fell in battle in A.D.250. A Tuath embraced a large track of country such as Hy Fidhgente. It was called a tuath more, and the sub-divisions simply called tuaths. The territory was later divided into two parts :Hy Conaill and Hy Cairbre Eva. Hy Conaill derives its name from Conaill, the third in descent from Fiacha, and was situated in the present baronies of Upper and lower Connelloe, Shanid and Glenquin, in which Abbeyfeale is situated. They were renowned for their skill in music and had the honour of supplying the court of the King of Cashel with harpers. When the glory of Cashel was no more, they sung the praises of the Earls of Desmond, and when the princely chiefs of that house passed through their territory, they were bound to entertain them for a day and a night, a custom that prevailed to the time of Elizabeth. Lands held by the rhymers of the Earl in the mountain of Slewlocra (Sliabh Luachra) are named Brosenaghe (now Brosna) and the lands adjoining Mountcollins, Templay Egleantane (Templeglantine) and Ballywroho (Ballymurrough, in Templeglantine Parish).

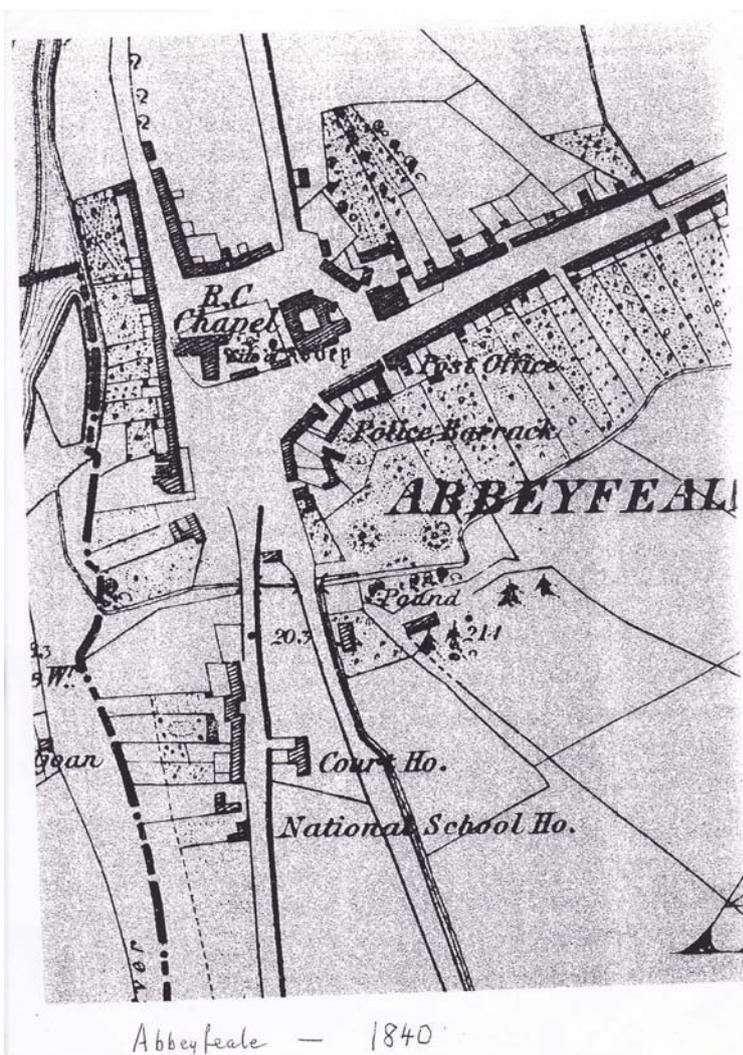
In the year 1155, Cuileann of Cleanglais, the Lord of Hy Conaill-Gabhra, fell by Ui Cinnfhaelaidh (Kinealy). In 1266 Mahon O Cuilean (O’Collins), the last of the Lords of Claonghlais, was slain. He seems to be identical with “Macchulan” O’Kelly de O’Chonyl, who, with other chiefs, received letters from Henry III to join him in an expedition of Scotland in 1244. After Mahon’s death, the Geraldines seem to have appropriated his territory and the branch of the family that settled down there were known as the Lords of Cleanglass.

According to the Leabhar Gabhala, or Book of Invasions, the River Feale takes its name from “Fial, the wife of Lughaidh who was drowned in its waters, on the approach of her husband while she was bathing.” The town of Abbeyfeale takes its name from the River Feale and from the abbey of the Cistercian Monks which was founded in 1188 by Briain O Briain. This monastery afterwards became a cell to the famous Abbey of Mainistir an Aonaigh. Mainistir na Feile – The Abbey of the Feale.

In a list of Manors of the Earl of Desmond, we find enumerated the Manor of the Fort of the Three Enemies. This strange-sounding place name is an Anglicisation of Port na dTri Namhaid, or Port Castle, which is the subject of another article in this magazine, where Port Castle and the abbey of the Cistercian Monks will both be dealt with more fully.

Above the town to the south, Abbeyfeale Hill gradually ascends to a considerable altitude, and commands an excellent view of the town and parts of five countries on a bright day. This hill forms part of a continuous range running as far as Drumcollogher, and was known up to the time of Elizabeth as the Luachra Mountains. In the olden days when roads were unheard of around Abbeyfeale, labourers followed this course of “Cláí Dubh an Ratha” when they tramped the weary spaces between this area and the better lands of the east, particularly at harvest time. Above a mile distant from Kilconlea, there is a place called Carrighleagh in the parish of Knocknagoshel. Here on an elevation that commands a distant view of the surrounding countryside, were erected in ancient times ten or twelve huge stones, standing perpendicular about ten feet high. These were either erected as a memorial to some early Irish Chieftain or marked some old territorial boundary, on the great ridge, corresponding to the Luachra range in Limerick.

In Lewis’s Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, compiled in the 1837 the note on Abbeyfeale parish says: “The village, situated in a wild mountainous district, was almost inaccessible. But since the construction of the new lines of road, great alterations have taken place; great improvement in the conditions of the people has resulted from the facilities thus afforded of taking their little produce to market and the inhabitants are now industriously and profitably employed. Here is a large and commodious hotel, and some respectable houses, but the greater number are thatched cabins. The village itself is small. Fairs are held on the 29th June and 24th September, chiefly for cattle, sheep and pigs.”



Abbeyfeale - 1840

Abbeyfeale in 1840's

PURT CASTLE

The Munster Geraldines or Fitzgeralds, were one of the most important of the great Norman families who rose to power in the centuries after the Normans invasion of 1169. Other powerful Norman families were the Kildare Fitzgeralds, the Butlers and the de Burgos. The first of the Fitzgeralds or Geraldines to settle in Co. Limerick was Thomas Fitzgerald who died in 1215. At the height of their power the Geraldines who had the title "Earls of Desmond" ruled over approximately half a million acres of land that extended from Kerry, through Limerick and Tipperary to Waterford. There were Geraldine castles in Kilmallock, Askeaton, Newcastle West, Rathkeale and Loch Gur. Their principal tenants were Lacys, Dalys, Mac Sheehys and McEnerys. In a list of the Manors of the Earls of Desmond, compiled in 1572, we find listed "The Manor of the Fort of the Three Enemies" known in Irish as "Port na dTri Namhaid." It is thought that this was a corruption of the name "Port na dTri nArd" Today it is simply called Purt or Port. The remains of this castle are still to be seen on the banks of the River Feale. From a military point of view, this castle was of very little importance except it marked the pass in the hills to Tralee. It is described in the Desmond records as a round castle in 1583. It had evidently been rebuilt as it was originally a square tower 40ft.x13ft. externally, and 20 ft. high. The walls are 6 ft. thick.

A striking tribute to the prestige of the Desmond Family is the letter from York from King Edward of England to the First Earl of Desmond asking for military assistance against the Scots. Most likely this military assistance was responsible for a subsequent interesting find by Mrs. Enright of Church Street, Abbeyfeale in 1929, when she broke a sod of turf and found the following coins:

1. A silver groat minted in the reign of David 2 of Scotland.(1329 -1371)
2. A silver half groat of Edward 3. (1327 -1371) and minted in London.
3. Three pennies and three half pennies probably of the same reign as the silver groat but too blurred to be certain.

The turf in which the coins were discovered was cut at Knocknaboul, Athea. On his return from Scotland, the Earl of Desmond was attacked by a Kerry Chieftain. The coins found at Knocknaboul probably belonged to one of the Earl's soldiers who had returned from Scotland but was slain by the army of the Kerry Chieftain.

Tradition states that from this castle, Thomas, son of the Earl of Desmond, set out on a boar hunt. The hunt continued until darkness fell. On attempting to return home, Thomas lost his way in the dense forest. Weary and hungry, he eventually saw the light of a humble cottage. It was the home of one of his tenants named McCormac. Lord Thomas rode to the door and asked for a drink. His request was attended to by Catherine, daughter of the cottier. She was a young girl of great beauty. The young Earl fell in love with Catherine and paid many subsequent visits to the cottage. Despite the opposition of his family, he married Catherine. He was disinherited, as a peasant's daughter could never become the Countess of Desmond. Thomas bade farewell to Ireland in 1418 and set sail for France, where he settled in Rouen in Normandy. He died just two years later in 1420.

Thomas Moore, the author of "Moore's Melodies" had connections with the Abbeyfeale area as his father was a native of Clon Braon, Moyvane. Perhaps it was during a visit to his ancestral home that he heard the tragic story of Thomas Fitzgerald and Catherine McCormac, and was moved to compose the poem "By Feale's Wave Benighted"

By The Feale's Wave Benighted.

By Thomas Moore.

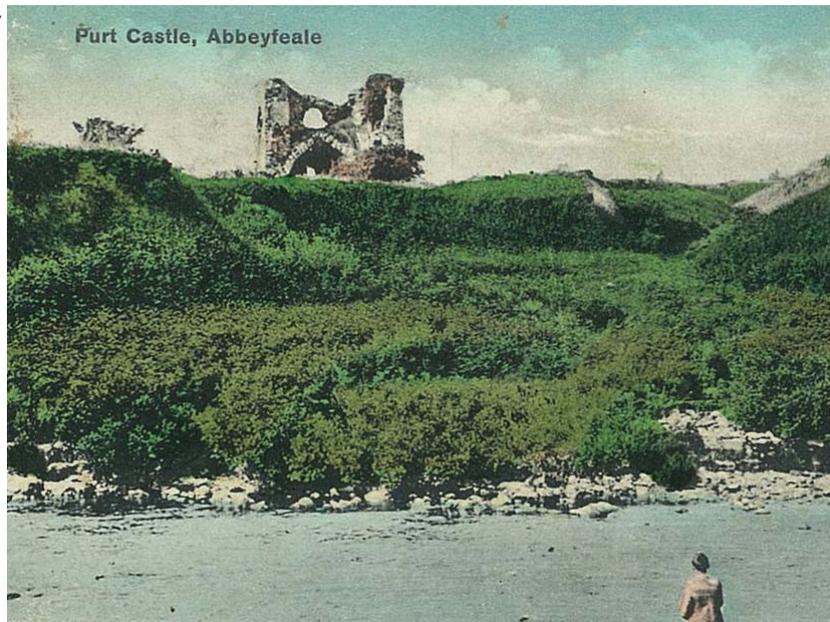
By the Feal's wave benighted,
Not a star in the skies,
To thy door by love lighted
I first saw those eyes;
Some voice whisper'd o'er me
As thy threshold I cross'd,
There was ruin before me,
If I loved, I was lost.

Love came and brought sorrow
Too soon in its train;
Yet so sweet that tomorrow
'Twere welcome again;
Tho' misery's full measure
My portion should be,
I would drain it with pleasure
If poured out by thee.

You who call it dishonour
To bow to this flame,
If you've eyes look but on her,
And blush while you blame;
Hath the pearl less whiteness
Because of its birth?
Hath the violet less brightness
For growing near earth?

No man for his glory
To ancestry flies;
But woman's bright story
Is told in her eyes;
While the monarch but traces
Thro' mortals his line,
Beauty, born of the Graces
Ranks next to divine!

The Earl of Desmond was declared a traitor to the English Crown on Nov. 2nd 1579. Sir William Pelham arrived in Ireland to fill the vacant office of Lord Chief Justice. He immediately set out for Munster to capture the rebel Earl. He was assisted by Ormond, the Queen's General in Munster and by Sir Nicholas Malby, President of Connaught. On Sir William Drury's death at Waterford in 1579, Malby took over in Munster and soon afterwards burned Rathkeale and laid waste the countryside as far as Askeaton. From Newcastle West, Desmond wrote letters to all the Irish Chieftains to rally round him on Nov. 29th 1579.



Pelham and Ormond joined forces at Rathkeale and marched, fought and plundered their way through the West of County Limerick. Near Shanagolden, four hundred people were slain when they took refuge in the woods of Clounleharde.

On March 16th 1580 Pelham passed through Athea. He encamped for the night at Purt Castle. This was when the Cistercian Monastery of Abbeyfeale was plundered and destroyed.

Sir James Fitzgerald brother to the Earl, was captured, hanged and quartered. Garret Fitzgerald was now the sole surviving member of the family except for his son who was a prisoner in the Tower of London. Communications from Queen Elizabeth were sent through Ormond, to the Earl in the hope that he might surrender. In answer to one of these communications, the Earl addressed the following letter to St. Leger, while resting at Purt Castle, on April 28th 1583.

“Where I understand that the Earl of Ormonde giveth forth that I should submit myself before him as attorney to her Majesty, you may be sure he doth report more thereof than I have sent him either by word or writing. But this I have offered n hope to prove the unreasonable wrongs and injuries done to me by her Highness’s officers in this realm from time to time, unguilty in me behalf as God knoweth. I am contended upon these conditions, so as me country, castles, possessions and lands, with me son, might be put and left in the hands of such her cruel officers as have me wrongfully proclaimed and as hereby thinking her majesty and I may agree, if not I may have to put safe in the hands of me followers again and I do deliver me son and me said possessions back to her highness’s officers”.

At Abbeyfeale, April 28, 1583.
Garret Desmond

The Earl now became a fugitive seeking refuge in the area between Abbeyfeale and Castleisland. Eventually he was captured in the Vale of Glenageenty in the Parish of Ballymacelligott, by the Moriarty clan. He was beheaded and his head sent to Lord Ormond. His body was buried by a few close friends in a small chapel called Killnamanagh near Castleisland. His grave is marked with the following inscription:

“Here at Glenageenty, Gerald Fitzgerald, the last Earl of Desmond, was beheaded on 11November 1583. His body was buried at Killananma Graveyard, near Castleisland”.

The Desmond Rebellion had ended. Munster was ravaged. Starvation, misery and poverty stalked the land. It was said that “The lowing of a cow or the voice of a ploughman was not to be heard from Dingle to the Rock of Cashel”

After the death of the Earl of Desmond, the lands owned by the Earl were forfeited. A survey of the forfeited land, prior to their confiscation shows the following ownership:

Lands in Templeglantine owned by the Rhymer Daly.

Lands in Kilkinlea and Caher owned by the Rhymer Daniel Mc Auley.

In 1591 Purt Castle was granted to Sir William Courtney. In 1613 it was held by Sir John Jephson, in 1655 by James Bourke and in 1669 it was confirmed to N.Bourke.

War broke out again in 1641 and dragged on for years. When the Cromwellian War ended, those who advanced money towards the war effort as well as the soldiers who fought were paid by the simple expedient of granting them conquered lands.

A survey, known as the Civil Survey, was carried out. According to that Survey we learn the following:

The lands of Dromtrasna, Ballybehy and Kilkinlea are owned by Courtenays.

Knockbrack is owned by Nicholas Lillis.

Abbeyfeale is owned by Lady Southwell.

Purt is owned by Ulick Burke.

Cragg Caher is owned by Dominick Roche.

The Courtenays disposed of all their Abbeyfeale lands in 1804. New owners such as O'Grady, Dickson, Hickson and Carte took over.

Handmills are mentioned in early surveys of the Abbeyfeale area. This shows that the milling of corn was a well- developed craft. There was also a charge for pannage ie the rent paid for the pasturage of pigs in the local woods.

POPULATION.

Up to the end of the 18th century, the population of Abbeyfeale was small. The Census of 1659 taken by Petty's surveyors shows the following:

Town	39 people
Dromtrasna, Killinagh, Bolighbeheene	38“
Purt	13 “
Kilkinlea	10 “
Knockbrack	30 “
Caher	18

That information gives us a total of 148 in population for the Abbeyfeale area.

Port Castle , Fortified Post of the Desmonds Le Beirtí O Núnáin

And though the last were dead and gone.

How many a field and town

From Thomas Court to Abbeyfeale,

Would cherish their renown.

When Thomas Davis sat down in the office of “the Nation” to write his great tribute to the Geraldines , he thought of Abbeyfeale . Let us recall some of the extracts from the history of this fortified post of the Earls of Desmond.

The Earls of Desmond who were kinsmen of the Claonghlais Fitzgeralds had close links with the Abbeyfeale district. In a list of manors of the Earl of Desmond, compiled in 1572, we find enumerated the manor of the Fort of the Three Enemies. This strange-sounding, place-name is an Anglicisation of “Port na dTri Namhaid”, sometimes erroneously written as Port an Aird or Portrinard, and today known as Port. The remains of the Manor of Port are situated on the banks of the River Feale overlooking the river. From this castle at Port, the Geraldines held a commanding view of the open plain of Kilmorna, and to the east to the hill overlooking Abbeyfeale.

Strange as it may seem, notwithstanding the centuries of wars and turmoils , there are no records of any battles being fought in or around Abbeyfeale . It would appear that in those times the place was not of much importance from a military point view, or the place being probably inaccessible may account for this. This castle was built probably to prevent the passage of troops from Kerry to Limerick.

At the unexpected death of John , fifth Earl of Desmond , his son, and heir, Thomas, was a minor. The king granted the wardship of his estates to James, Earl of Ormonde, in 1402. A few years later, however, the king granted Thomas pardon for all offences committed and special livery of all his castles. In 1411 he issued a precept to his treasurer to collect and levy several sums of money amounting to £700, being the profits of assizes held in his Court of Ciarraighe (Kerry).

He soon after went to England and returned in 1414 , bringing a great many Saxons to devastate Munster. Of Lord Thomas, the sixth Earl, is related a romantic, yet authentic story known to many Irish readers. He was very fond of hunting and while on one of these expeditions in some of the lonely glens of Abbeyfeale, he was benighted on his homeward way. Wearying and thirsting , he urged his steed forward through the tangled wood. At last, through the gloom he discerned close by a humble cottage , which proved to be the dwelling of one of his clansmen , or tenants , named MacCormac. Lord Thomas rode to the door, halted and asked for a drink. His summons was attended to and his request supplied by Catherine, the daughter of the cottier, a young girl whose simple grace and exquisite beauty struck the young Earl with astonishment – and with warmer feelings too! He stayed the night in the cottage and became quite charmed with the daughter of his humble host. Subsequently, he visited the cottage many times and in due course, despite the wishes of his family, married Catherine MacCormac. His worst fears were quickly realised for this union was considered unworthy of the head of the noble house of Desmond, his friends followed and subjects deserted him in disgust, swearing that a peasant’s daughter should never become the countess of Desmond :

What comfort in a mine of gold,
What pleasure in a Royal life,
If the heart inside lay dead and cold
And could not wed my Irish wife?
I knew the law forbade the bands,
I knew the King abhorred her race,
But I was set to join her hands,
And see the glory in Catherine's face.

In vain he pleaded. An ambitious uncle, James, eventually seventh Earl, taking advantage of this misunderstanding , made war on his nephew , and succeeded in expelling him three times from his estates after a feeble resistance . Subsequently , he was forced to resign his estates at Callan, near Kenmare, in 1418 , to his uncle. He did so, declaring that he would give up lands and titles rather than part with his peasant wife.

After suffering such severe treatment from his friends he bade an eternal adieu to Ireland and sailed with his young wife for France, where he died two years afterwards at Rouen. Normandy, in 1420. This romantic incident furnished out national melodist, Thomas Moore, with the subject of that old Irish ballad : “ By Feale's Wave Denighted”.

Garrett Desmond, the Earl of Desmond, was proclaimed a traitor to the English Crown on November 2,1579 . Sir William Pelham, who has arrived from England , was appointed in Dublin to fill the vacant office in Ireland, of Lord Justice. He immediately set out for Munster increasing his forces as he went along to capture the Rebel Earl.

Desmond, with a price on his head , had now no alternative but to join his brother and fight for his existence. From Newcastle West he wrote letters to all Irish Chieftains to rally round him. On November 29, 1579. Pelham and Ormond joined forces at Rathkeale and marched, fought and plundered their way through the west of the country. Near Shanagolden, four hundred people were slain when they took refuge in the woods of Clounleharde , and on March 16, 1580 , Pelham passed through Athea. He encamped for the night in or near Port Castle about a mile from Abbeyfeale.

This was the time that the Cistercian Monastery, established in Abbeyfeale by Brian O Briain in 1188, was destroyed by Pelham , who killed, plundered and burned everything and everybody he came across. At the mouth of the River Feale, however a number of his horsemen and soldiers were drowned when swept out to sea, while crossing on his way to Tralee. Pelham made another raid in the locality, travelling over the Luachra Mountains in June, but Desmond eluded capture near Castleisland.

The Geraldines, though hotly pursued , were still powerful in the field. When Desmond fled from Castleisland, the Countess returned to Newcastle West. She then wrote to the authorities in England to complain of the cruel manner in which the Earl was treated. In answer to her complaint, Pelham received instructions from the Queen to receive the Earl with mercy, if he delievered up his brothers , Sir John and Sir James. The Geraldines inflicted considerable damage on the enemy at various points throughout West Limerick and North Kerry but avoided direct contact with them. However, Sir James was captured, hanged and quartered.

Lord Grey , the new Lord Deputy, camped at Rathkeale in his fight against the Geraldines and had on his staff, Walter (afterwards Sir Walter Raleigh). When camp was broken up the army commenced their march to Kerry; a number of natives came to view the remains of the camp and were immediately set upon and slaughtered by Raleigh, who remained behind in hiding.

Dr.Nicholas Saunder, who lived through the religious changes in England had to flee the country at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. He was present at the Council of Trent and afterward became one of the leaders of the Catholics and an enthusiastic advocate of a Catholic Crusade against the intolerance of Elizabeth. On June 17, 1579, he arrived in Ireland and joined up with the Geraldines, encouraging them in their battles with the enemy. He stayed in all their camps in West Limerick and North Kerry. In February 1581, his health began to fail and he died in the Geraldine camp in March, at Claonghlais, now Cleanglass near Tournafulla.

It was not until June that the English heard of his death and many false reports circulated amongst themselves as to how he died. Some preferred the version that he was found dead with his breviary and bible under his arm, but we learn from a more reliable source that he asked his companion Dr.Ryan, Bishop of Killaloe, who was in hiding with him, to anoint him. He was secretly buried next night, being borne to his grave by four gentlemen of whom one was father of O'Sullivan, the historian. This caution was necessary lest anybody should betray his grave to the enemy who had the reputation of displaying their cruelty even against the dead. "Dr. Saunders was the supporting pillar of the Catholic Faith and the chief counsellor of the Geraldines during the war."

A tradition still lingers in Ballycommene, the western part of Cleanglass, that a priest was buried in the locality under similar circumstances and perhaps it may be a vague memory of Dr.Saunders' funeral.

History records that John of Desmond continued his fight against the enemy and destroyed a number of towns in Munster, and returned each time in great triumph with his spoils to his camp at Claonghlais. On one occasion he slaughtered four hundred of the enemy in one engagement, However, the end soon came, and at last Sir. John was surrounded at Castlelyons when he accidentally rode into the enemy, the day being dark and misty. He was mortally wounded on January 2, 1582, and his body was sent to Cork and placed over one of the city gates.

Garrot Desmond was now the sole surviving member of the family, except his son who was a prisoner in the Tower of London. Yet, he kept up the fight and Ormond was again appointed Lord Deputy with the sole job of capturing the Rebel Earl. Communications were sent from the Queen through Ormond to the Earl, in the hope that he might surrender.

In answer to one of these communications the Earl addressed the following letter to St.Leger, while resting at Port Castle, near Abbeyfeale, on April 28,1583, which is simply a restatement of his case with regard to surrender:

" When I understand that the Earl of Ormonde giveth forth that I should submit myself before him as Attorney to Her Majesty , you may be sure he doth report more thereof than I have sent him either by word or writing. But this I have offered in hope to prove the unreasonable wrongs and injuries done to me by her highness's officers in the realm from this time to time, unguilty in me behalf as God knoweth. I am contended upon these conditions, so as me country, castles, possessions and lands, with me son, might be put and left in the hands and quiet possessions of me Council and followers and also me religion and conscience not barred.

With a pardon, protection and passport for me own body, to pass and repass, I would have gone

before Her Majesty to try all those causes just and true in me part as still I do allege if I might be heard to have indifferency, and likewise hoping I might have more justice, favour and grace at Her Majesty's hands. When I am before herself than at the hands of her cruel officers as have me wrongfully proclaimed, and as hereby thinking Her Majesty and I may agree, if not I may have to put safe in the hands of me followers again, and I do deliver me son and me said possessions back to her highness's officers."

At Abbeyfeale, April 28, 1583
Garret Desmond.

Reports were received daily of the sad plight of the Earl and his capture was expected at any moment. He was now confined to Kerry, and with a few trusted friends and the secret sympathy of the countryside, the Earl wandered from place to place, enjoying a certain amount of freedom and security in the areas between Abbeyfeale and Castleisland. He was a pathetic fugitive from his English enemies. However, being camped in the Vale of Glenageenty in the parish of Ballymacelligott, near Tralee, he was set upon by the enemy. There was no escape and he was murdered, beheaded: his head being cut off and secured and sent to Ormond in Kilkenny.

His body was buried by a few friends and followers in a small Chapel called Killnamanagh, beyond Castleisland. The spot where he fell can still be pointed out.

Truly, for many years, the English understood his martial powers, some admitted his courage but all combined to blacken his character. He and his brothers sacrificed their lives and fortunes for faith and fatherland.

By the death of the Earl of Desmond, the Geraldine stronghold was completely broken up. A commission was appointed in 1584 to forfeit the land and Hy-Conaill (the part of West Limerick surrounding Abbeyfeale) was divided up into sixteen tuaths, each tuath being divided up among several families. The immediate area surrounding Abbeyfeale was in the Tuath Meaghan, and was divided into twenty-five quarters. The Manor of Port an Aird, or the Fort of the Three Enemies was built on a parcel of land called Ballymahine on Sliabh Luachra, and in the Parish of the Monastery of the Feale, Mainister na Feile, now Abbeyfeale, and partly in the Parish of Tepleclay, i.e. Athea Tirrelogh MacEdward Oge Mac Sheehie was constable of this Manor.

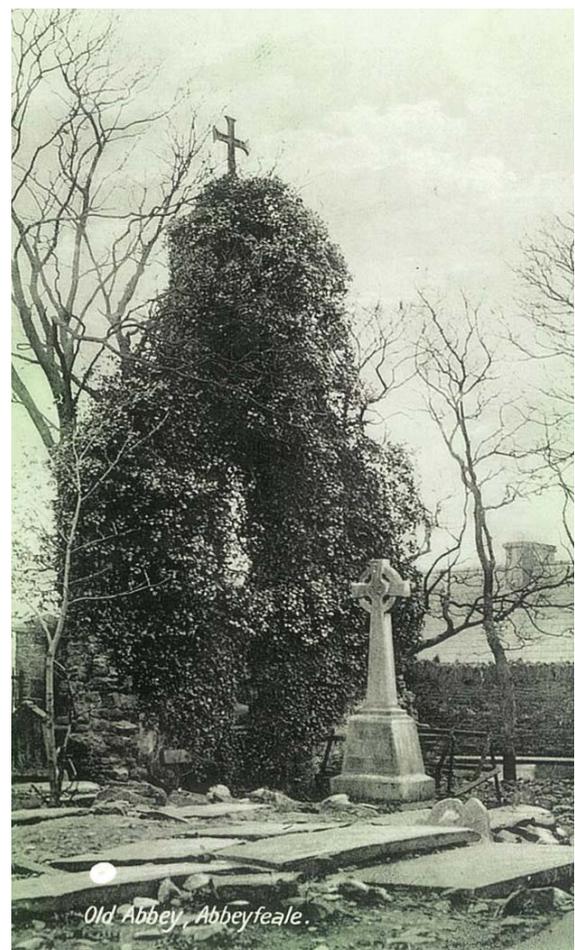
Rising of 1641

Despite poverty and oppression of every kind, the Irish spirit of Rebellion remained and so we hear of another uprising in 1641. The aftermath of this Rebellion was to spell many changes for Irish people. In August 1649, the New Model Army led by Oliver Cromwell came to Ireland to re-occupy the country following this latest Rebellion. The Cromwellian Conquest was largely completed by 1652. This army was raised and supported by private individuals in England, who subscribed money on the security of the 2,500,000 acres of Irish land to be confiscated at the close of the Rebellion. This was a form of "investment" for those who had money at that time. The dispossessed landowners were to be transported to Connaught. "To hell or to Connaught"!

To facilitate the re-distribution of the conquered lands an accurate survey was required. This was undertaken in 1655 and 1656 by the army who were under the guidance of William Petty,

an English Scientist. This Survey became known as “The Down Survey”. It was also known as the “Civil Survey”. It refers to the mapping of Ireland carried out by William Petty and his army helpers. Apparently the Survey was called the “Down Survey” by Petty because the results were set down in maps “admeasurement down” as it was then called ; it is referred to by that name in Petty’s will. The Down Survey is about 87% accurate. In the mapping of the Abbeyfeale area, attention was paid to the ruins of the Cistercian Abbey, these ruins were mapped in detail.

Though the purpose of the Survey was to deprive Irish people of their ancestral lands, there is at least one positive aspect where Abbeyfeale is concerned. We have a 1655 drawing of the Cistercian Monastery showing the surviving gables and Monastery walls. Without the “Down Survey” we would have no such detailed drawing available.



ABBEYFEALE CHURCH OF IRELAND PARISH CHURCH

“The church, a small edifice in the early English style, with a lofty square tower, was erected near the village in 1812 for which the late Board of first fruits gave £800. There is neither glebe house nor glebe”

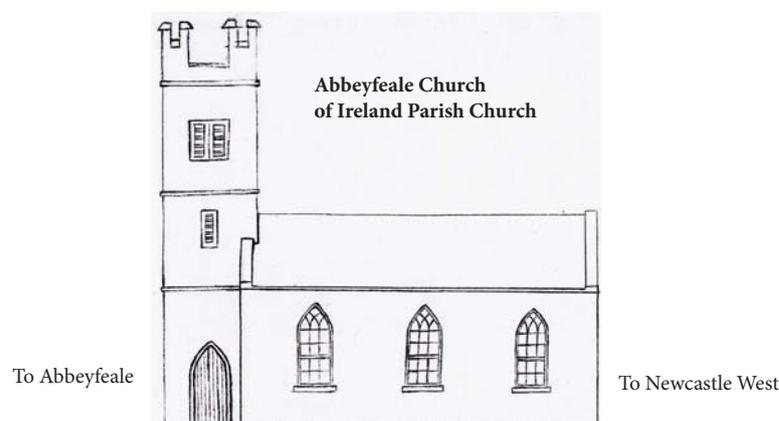
It was thus that Francis Lewis described the Church of Ireland parish church in Abbeyfeale. This church was more familiarly known to local people as the “Protestant Church”. Richard Ellis, the local landlord, who lived at Glenashrone, gave the site for the church and graveyard. Most likely, this land originally belonged to the O’Connor family of Mountmahon, as the small plot is bounded on all sides by O’Connor land. This Protestant church was used for worship up to the 1920’s. Since there was no resident rector in Abbeyfeale, the incumbent rector travelled from Fealebridge rectory to officiate at Service in Abbeyfeale. The journey was made by horse and carriage. The building now known as “The Westering Inn” was originally the Fealebridge rectory. The church and graveyard at Fealebridge were situated across the main road from the “Westering Inn.”

In the minutes of Board Meetings held in Abbeyfeale in connection with the running of Auxiliary Workhouses in the area and dated 11 October 1848 the name of Rev. Mr. Norman occurs. On that same record, the name of Rev. Daniel Lyddy also occurs. He was parish priest of Abbeyfeale from 1824 to 1849 and got the Famine Church built to replace the thatched church in the Square. In Guy’s Directory of Munster, 1886 the name of Rev. M. O’Connor is given as Protestant rector of Abbeyfeale.

The attendance at Abbeyfeale Protestant Church was composed mainly of military and Peelers, and so became a target for local agrarian agitation and aggression. Because of the activities of Captain Rock, a blacksmith named Sean Fitzmaurice and a native of Templeglantine and the Rockites, extra military were drafted into Abbeyfeale and Newcastle West. The Rockites targetted the Protestant Churches because of their connection with the military. At least half a dozen churches in Cork, Kerry and Limerick were set on fire. On the night of the 8th February 1822 a Rockite party attacked the Protestant Church in Abbeyfeale and caused considerable damage.

When services ceased at the Church it lay unused for many years.

Hannie Teresa O’Connor of Mountmahon, aunt to Billy O’Connor R.I.P. married David (Son) Ward. Both were teachers at the Boys’ National School in Abbeyfeale. As a marriage gift, Hannie Teresa was given six acres of her father’s farm. At that time the Protestant Church was no longer used as a place of worship. David and his wife purchased the building, demolished it and used the stone to build the present two –storey building beside the Protestant graveyard.



Diocese of Limerick - South Elevation of Abbeyfeale Church (James Pain)

Rev. Danial Lyddy Parish Priest of Abbeyfeale 1828-1849.

Rev. Daniel Lyddy was born in 1795. He was appointed Parish Priest of Abbeyfeale in 1828. This was a time when Irish people still struggled under the shackles of the Penal Laws. These Laws were eventually repealed in 1829. Diocesan Records have no mention of the birthplace of Fr. Liddy. He first comes to notice as a curate in Patrickswell. There, as Begley's History of the Diocese of Limerick noted, "with great success he devoted all his attention to the education of the children of the parish. In 1824, according to the wishes of the Catholic Association, he forwarded to that Body, a report of how the education of the youth was flourishing under his charge. In different parts of the parish he had seven teachers, whose names together with the attendance of the pupils was given." It is worth reminding ourselves that this account refers to a time before the present National School System was established in 1831. In late 1824 Fr. Lyddy was appointed as a curate to St John's Parish in Limerick City. His zeal for the betterment of his parishioners was undiminished and eventually he was promoted to the position of Parish Priest in Abbeyfeale.

Coming to Abbeyfeale from Limerick city was a challenge which he readily embraced. His attention was directed firstly to the condition of the thatched church in the Square. This church incorporated stones from the Cistercian Abbey. However, graves had been opened very close to the walls of the church and as a result the walls were in a near – collapsed condition. Many public meetings were held in an effort to find a solution. A site was donated by Mr. Richard Ellis, the local landlord. Here, the new St. Mary's Parish Church was commenced in 1844 and completed in 1847. It was a work of community co-operation. Money and material were scarce, yet Fr. Lyddy achieved what seemed impossible at a time when the Great Famine stalked the land. St Mary's Parish Church stood as a memorial to the work of Fr. Lyddy until its demolition in 1968.

Education was always a priority for Fr. Lyddy, so we can presume that immediately when the work of the church was completed, Fr. Lyddy turned his attention to building a new school to replace the building which stood on Bridge Street near the location of the present library. The new school occupied an adjoining site to St. Mary's Parish Church. It stood at the corner between Church Street and the Duagh road. In later years Fr. Casey's Brass Band had its practices in this school. The practice hall was burned down by the Black and Tans as an act of retaliation.

The development of all that concerned the well being of his parishioners was always a priority for Fr. Lyddy. His attention was now focused on the farming community. He succeeded in establishing a monthly cattle fair which greatly convenienceed all involved in cattle rearing. Allied to this effort was his work in procuring seed potatoes and turnip seeds for his parishioners in an effort to supplant the useless crop infected by blight. To his great credit Fr. Lyddy was summoned before the House of Commons in London to give evidence on the state of Ireland and the working of the Poor Law system here. His highly competent account earned him the gratitude of the Committee in London. Fr. Lyddy labours were valued and recognised at the highest Diocesan level and merited a promotion to a larger parish. Thus he arrived in Ballingarry towards the end of 1849. Poverty, distress and hunger faced him from all sides in his new parish. With his customary courage and determination he set to work to effect as much relief as possible for his destitute parishioners. The challenge was more than his physical strength could answer. After a year of struggle, he had to retire from active ministry and died on the 2nd July 1851. His most fervent wish was to be re-united in death with his beloved Abbeyfeale parishioners. His wish was granted and his final resting place was St Mary's Parish

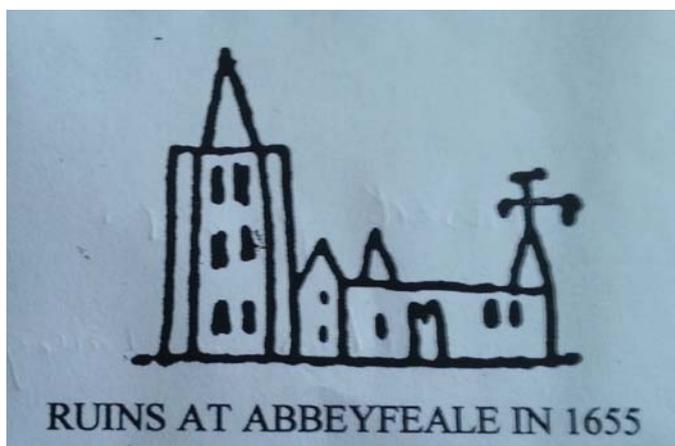
Church where his grave occupied a special position in front of the main altar. The following rather quaint tribute to the late Fr. Daniel Lyddy, expressed in the stilted and archaic English of the 1850's was printed in the Limerick Chronicle of July 1851.

Rev. Danial Lyddy.P.P. Ballingarry, Co. Limerick died on the 2nd July 1851. He was aged 56 years.

Obituary death notice from the Limerick Chronicle 1851 read as follows:

“Yesterday morning, aged 56 years Rev. Danial Lyddy, P.P. Ballingarry, a clergyman, greatly and deservedly respected by the laity of the diocese of Limerick died. The dignity of the priestly office, in his person shone bright, unchanging lustre-it was fed by a lamp of Christian Charity and strengthened by sincere attachment to the hallowed duties of his apostolic mission. The remains of the revered Gentleman will be interred tomorrow in the new chapel, Abbeyfeale, which is a monument to his piety and zeal for the glory of God.

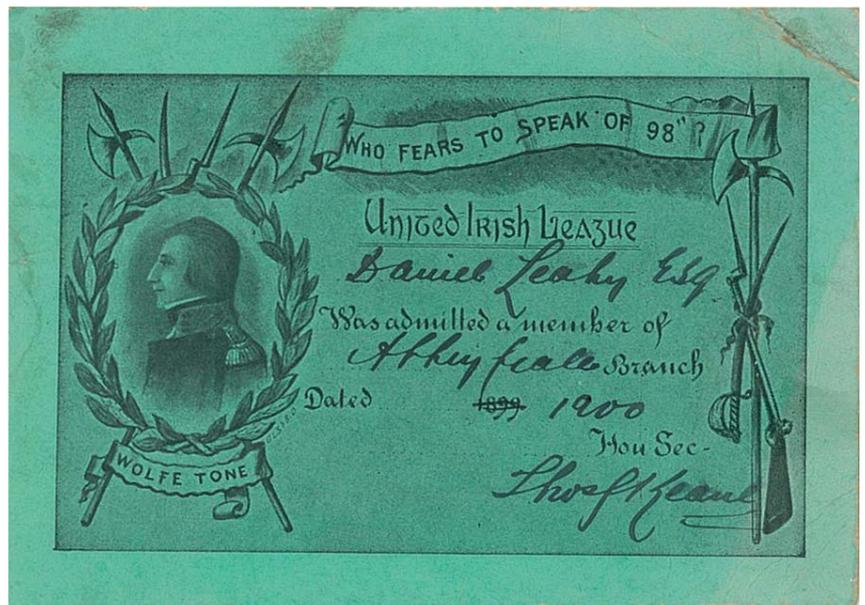
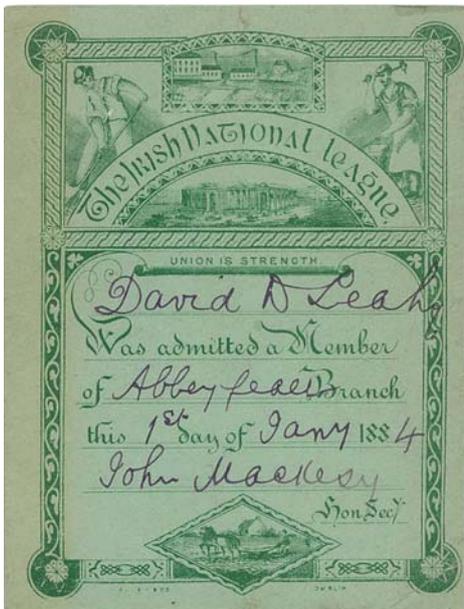
A Correspondent writes:-“For many months past, his disease, which was an infection of the heart, assumed a very serious aspect, leaving but little hope to his numerous friends, that a life so precious would be spared. With perfect calmness and resignation did he, during this trying period, await the awful moment, when it may please the Almighty, Disposer of events, to summon him out of existence. In him the poor have lost a father-religion and morality, a zealous and gifted advocate. In him were combined the urbanity of the gentleman, the learning of the scholar and the unostentatious piety of the Christian”.



Captain Rock and the Rockites.

Twenty years after the Rebellion of 1798 a blacksmith, named Sean Fitzmaurice and his assistant came to prominence because of their opposition to the oppression of the poorer classes. Fitzmaurice lived on the road between Abbeyfeale and Templeglantine. About the year 1819 he decided to abandon his work as a blacksmith, called himself Captain Rock and formed a society which he called Rockites. He appointed Morgan, a hedge schoolmaster “on the run”, as his secretary of war and named him Captain Starlight. The Rockites acted in true Raparee fashion – robbing the better off landowners and coming to the aid of the oppressed. Hoskins was the agent on the Courtenay Estate. Hoskin’s son, Alexander was murdered by the Rockites at Droichead an tSolais near Barnagh.

As the mail road from Limerick to Tralee ran through Abbeyfeale, Captain Rock was forced to move his headquarters from Abbeyfeale to Knocknaboul, Athea. A detachment of the 40th Regiment under Captain Cox and a 3rd Company under Captain Crotty were sent to Abbeyfeale. Military Law and Curfew were enforced in the locality. Eventually Captain Rock, Captain Starlight and other prominent Rockites were captured and tried at the Limerick Spring Assizes in 1822, and were executed three days later. Shortly after this, a band of his followers met in the Square, Abbeyfeale and declared Ireland a Republic. Having gained local support they marched to Newcastle West where the Parish Priest tried to deter them. Unfortunately he was shot dead by one of their supporters. After this unpleasant incident the group dispersed and no longer figured in local history.



THE RISING OF 1848

Daneen Dan Harnett was born at Knockbrack, Abbeyfeale about the year 1814. Daneen and others had been imprisoned for preventing Maurice Sandes, a landowner, from proceeding through Abbeyfeale to Tralee. Sandes was going there to record his vote for an opponent of Daniel O’Connell in a Parliamentary Election, for the Clare Seat. Maurice Sandes was a native of Sallow Glen, Tarbert. He was held prisoner at Feale Cottage – where the present Bank of Ireland now stands. That incident happened in 1829.

Daneen Dan, O’Gorman and William Smith O’Brien were involved in the 1848 Rising.

The Kerry Evening Post of August 1848, confirms for us the fact that the Rising of 1848 was not confined to Tipperary. It gives the following account of the Rising:

“From accounts received last night, we learned that the insurrectionary spirit has extended itself to Abbeyfeale. Accounts from that locality were looked on with much anxiety by this evening’s Mail. The Limerick Coach arrived (in Tralee) an hour late, and it was soon known that an Insurrection had broken out in Abbeyfeale. An armed band of peasantry stopped the mail coaches just at the point where they meet (at Glenashrone) and robbed them of the up and down mails.the alarm is considerably increased when we take into account the manner in which the outrageous act was committed.” The particulars are as follows:

“When the two coaches drove to within about 6 perches of each other, an armed gang of about 200 called upon them, with levelled guns, to pull up. After robbing the mail coaches, they allowed them to proceed to their destination – Limerick and Tralee. The insurgents, then sounding their horns, leisurely walked off the road through the mountains in the direction of Brosna”.

A reward was offered for the capture of Richard O’Gorman, the leader of the Rebellion, and for Daneen Dan. The Kerry Evening Post of 12th August 1848 states “Our latest from Abbeyfeale shows that the breaking up of the Tipperary Insurrection, and the arrest of Smith O’Brien, has deprived the insurgents in Abbeyfeale of all hopes of success. A strong force of military and police are now stationed in Abbeyfeale”

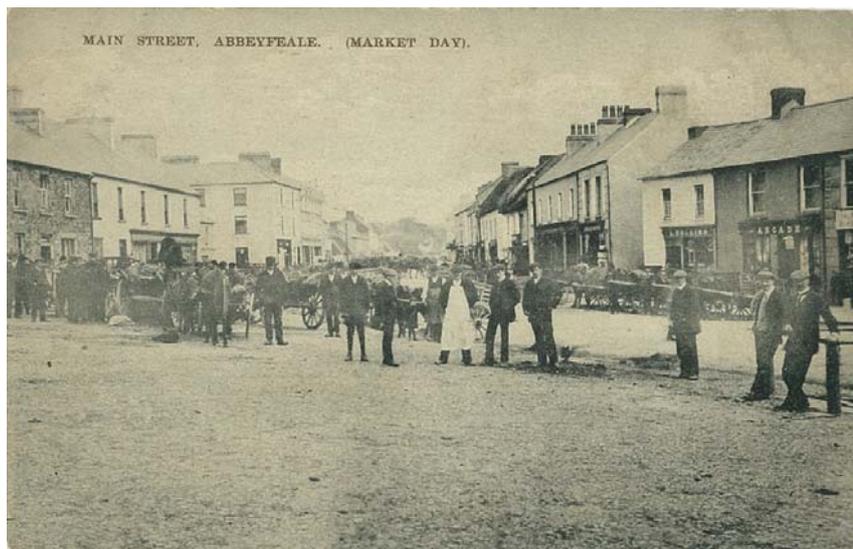
Richard O’Gorman escaped to America where he was eventually appointed a Judge of the High Court in New York. After many narrow escapes Daneen Dan Harnett also made his way to America disguised as a priest. The clerical suit was lent to him by Father Synan of Crecora. Not long after his arrival there he met his death in an accident.



Market Day.

In his Topographical Dictionary, Lewis tells us “Abbeyfeale was not at all a centre of trade and the like” (1840). He continues “The village. Situated in a wild mountainous district was almost inaccessible”but since the construction of the new lines of road (1836), great alterations have taken place; great improvement in the condition of the people has now resulted from the facilities thus afforded of taking their little produce to market; and the inhabitants are now industriously and profitably employed.”

We know that agriculture was now assuming considerable importance in the Abbeyfeale area at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1705 Sir Thomas Southwell was granted a patent for two fairs in Abbeyfeale Town - 29th June and 18th October, as well as a Saturday Market. The rapidly increasing population of the Abbeyfeale area from the middle of the eighteenth century was caused by a combination of factors. The Penal Laws and the lack of industry in the area forced the local people to depend on the land for sustenance. The Napoleonic War in France pushed the price of corn to new heights. Land was subdivided and further portions were reclaimed. After Waterloo, the price of produce fell, but land rent remained high. This led to agrarian unrest. In this respect Abbeyfeale led the offensive against unjust rents. Whiteboys and Rockites used Abbeyfeale as a base for operations because of the inaccessibility of the surrounding area. The most notable character was certain Captain Rock.



FAMINE TIMES IN ABBEYFEALE

The following is an extract from the “Limerick Chronicle” Saturday, June 27th 1848.

Note: the Chapel mentioned in the following article is the thatched chapel which stood in the Square in the area directly in from the main gate of the graveyard.

“Meeting at Abbeyfeale.

At a meeting of the Parishioners of Abbeyfeale, held in the Chapel, on Sunday, June 21st, for the purpose of taking into consideration the destitute state of the Poor of the Parish – Capt. Vignoles in the chair,

The following Resolutions were adopted:

Resolved – That having ascertained that there are at present in the Parish over 100 Families, comprising 600 persons, in a state of absolute destitution, without sustenance, or any hope of obtaining it, during the present distressing season, it becomes our bounden duty to assist, as far as our means will allow us, in keeping them from absolute starvation, and enabling them to support themselves and their families, for a few weeks longer.

Resolved: - That with this in view, a Public Collection be made by the Parishioners at the Chapel, on next Sunday, and that the following Gentlemen be requested to act as

Collectors:- Rev. Mr. Lyddy, Rev. Mr. Meaney, Mr. David Leahy, Mr. John Harnett, Mr. Denis McAuliff, Mr. David Connell, Mr. Michael Collins, Knocknasna, Mr. David Twomey.

Resolved:- That our respected Parish Priest, the Rev. Mr. Lyddy, be requested to act as Secretary and Treasurer to this Meeting – and that he do write to the Landed Proprietors, and other persons connected with the Parish, to solicit their subscriptions.

Resolved:- That the Rev. Mr. Lyddy do convey to our esteemed and worthy Chief Magistrate, Mr. Cooke, the extent and severity of the privations which the poor are labouring under in this district, with a view of submitting them to the Government, in the anxious hope that they may send such relief as the severe and appalling distress of the people would require, and their patient suffering and forbearance would entitle them to.

Resolved:- That the above Resolutions be published in the “Limerick Chronicle” and “Reporter” Newspapers.

S. Vignoles, Chairman.

Captain Vignoles having left the Chair, and Mr. Cooke being called thereto,

A vote of thanks was passed to Capt. Vignoles, not only for his dignified and proper conduct in the Chair, but for his kind and humane exertions for the relief of the poor, since he had come amongst us.

H. Cooke, Chairman.

March 1848.

A public meeting was held in Abbeyfeale for the purpose of taking into consideration the destitute state of the poor in the district. Mr. Patrick Hayes presided. It was proposed by Mr.

John Creagh Harnett, seconded by Rev. Timothy Harnett, P.P. Duagh, that the Rev. Daniel Lyddy, P.P. Abbeyfeale, act as Secretary to the meeting.

Mr. Oliver Fitzmaurice, Duagh, proposed and Mr. James H. Dalton seconded “That this meeting views with the deepest alarm, and concern the destitute condition of the poorest orders of this district, the labourers and some of the farmers, many of whom are at the present moment without any subsistence or employment, or the means or opportunity of procuring either one or the other”.

Mr. John Harnett proposed and Mr. Maurice H. Collins seconded: “That the state of the potato crop in this district at the commencement gave every hope of subsistence and support for the spring and summer months, yet we have ascertained with the deepest dismay, that within the last two months, the disease has made frightful ravages and is every day increasing, without any prospect of being arrested. Instances have come before us, founded on personal observation, where poor families two months ago, after having made up their potato crop with care, found a few days ago that they had not one bushel in twenty fit for use.

Resolved: - That we solicit the Government to devise means of employment for the famishing poor of the district for the ensuing four months”

The magistrates and cess payers in consequence, recommended the building of a bridge across the Feale at Abbeyfeale, connecting the counties of Limerick and Kerry. The magistrate’s recommendation added “that the list, handed in of the awful number of 30 persons, who met their death by drowning in that part of the river Feale, must bring to every human mind a melancholy evidence of the sad necessity for this bridge.

On the proposal of Mr. David Leahy, seconded by Mr. William Harnett, it was decided to forward a memorial embodying the resolutions and recommendations to the Lord Lieutenant”

(Extract from the Limerick Chronicle 1848)



Soup Pot from Grove Workhouse

ABBEYFEALE TEMPORARY FEVER HOSPITALS.

In 1838, the Parliament of Great Britain passed an Act of Parliament “for the more effectual relief of the destitute poor in Ireland”. At that time Ireland had no Government of its own. Laws for this country were enacted by the Parliament of Great Britain. Some of these laws - particularly the Trade Laws – favoured the British economy, but left Ireland poverty stricken. The Census Commissioners of 1841 stated that more than half the population of Ireland lived in windowless mud cabins consisting of one room. The staple diet of an Irish person at that time was the potato.

Wheat was exported. On a half acre of land a man could plant enough potatoes to feed himself and his family. Prior to the Great Famine, it is estimated that 45% of all holdings in Ireland were less than 5 acres.

Following the enactment of the Poor Law Act, Poor Law Commissioners were appointed to see that the provisions of the Act were put into execution. Initially, these Commissioners lived in London but from 1847 onwards, as famine took hold in Ireland, the Commissioners resided in Ireland. They devised a plan for administering relief to poor and hungry people. By mid 1841, Ireland had been divided into 130 administrative districts. These were known as Poor Law Unions. Each district or Union had its own Workhouse. A Poor Rate was levied on the landowners of each Union. As a further responsibility, each Union was in charge of striking its own rate. A Rate Collector was appointed by the Board of Guardians to collect the Poor Rate. This money was used to run the Workhouse. Therefore, the success of the Workhouse System, depended, among other things, on the efficiency of the Rate Collector. There was no Health Board or Local Government administration – as we understand it today- in operation at that time.

Limerick County was initially divided into four Unions - Limerick Union, Newcastle Union, (the word “West” was omitted in early documents), Rathkeale Union, and Kilmallock Union. Newcastle Union was set up in 1838 - one of the first in Ireland, comprised the following Electoral Divisions:

Abbeyfeale,	Clouncagh	Kilmeedy
Ardagh	Ballingarry	Dromcollogher
Mahoonagh	Castletown	Killagholehane
Monagea	Rathronan	Killeedy
Newcastle		

On the 10th January 1839, the following Magistrates were elected as ex – officio Guardians of Newcastle Workhouse:

Alfred Furlong, Newcastle; Eyre Massey, Glenduff Castle; Thomas Locke, Castleview; William Cox, Ballyine; John W. Shelton, Rossmore; William Smith O’Brien, Cahermoyle; Brian Sheehy, Maine.

On the 2nd February 1839 the following were voted for by the rate – payers of the Union as members of the Board of Guardians:

Nicholas Meade, Dromin; John Dowling, Newcastle; Patrick Kennedy, Ballypierce; Cornelius John Curtin, Killaculleen; Henry O’Brien, Lissureland; M. Sheahan, Ballinakil; John Corbett, Danganbeg; John Curtin, Glanduff; James Leahy, Ballycommane; Patrick Hayes, Abbeyfeale; John Harnett, Newcastle; Daniel Donovan Liscordan; Philip Barry, Lisinisky; Roger K. Sheehy, Liskinnett; John Cox (Junior), Ballyneale; James Lynch, Granagh; Edward Lloyd, Heathfield; Edmund Hannigan, Castleishen and David Kelly Farrihy.

In 1841 the records show that Newcastle Workhouse had accommodation for 550 inmates. The name “paupers” was usually assigned to inmates in the Records of the Workhouse.

It is likely that an Auxiliary Fever Hospital had been set up in Abbeyfeale by 1845 or 1846, but since the Volumes containing the Minutes of Board Meetings for the years 1846 and 1847 are missing, we have no access to records which deal with the preliminaries of the setting up of such a Hospital. The first reference to Abbeyfeale in the Minutes of the Board of Guardians Meetings is dated 3rd May 1848 and concerns the resignation of the Relieving Officer for the area. A further reference in Board Minutes is as follows:

“Meeting of 11th October 1848 decided that the following should be asked to consent to their names on the Committee of the Fever Hospital for Abbeyfeale district: Reverend Mr. Norman, Reverend Mr. Lyddy (P.P. Abbeyfeale) and Mr. Patrick Hayes. (he resided where the Bank of Ireland now stands)

Meetings of the Board Members to adjudicate on applicants for outdoor relief were held every Friday. Outdoor relief was distributed at various locations. One such location was “Droichidin na Carraige on the road between Abbeyfeale and Mountcollins.

There were four Auxiliary Fever Hospitals in Abbeyfeale.

1. At Killarney Road, Abbeyfeale, we do not know the exact location.
2. At Bridge Street, Abbeyfeale where the present St. Ita’s College stands.
At Knockbrack, a two –storey house which was later reduced to a one –storey dwelling and is presently lived in by a member of the McCarthy family.
3. At the entrance to Collins Park where the road branches to the left from St. Ita’s Road. This two –storey building was demolished in 1980



The Grove Workhouse

The term “Temporary Fever Hospital” can be a misleading one for those of us who are accustomed to a regulated medical centre. Temporary Fever Hospitals were unregulated. They were usually rented two - storey buildings. There was a central well on each floor and inmates slept on raised platforms on either side of this central well. Bedding was straw. One building could accommodate as many as 50 inmates. Food was meagre – molasses with water and stirabout for breakfast; gruel and potatoes for dinner. Milk was rationed and given only to children. A Medical Officer was appointed at the rate of 5 shillings per day. A Compounder of Medicines was also appointed at the rate of 3 shillings per day. Having to depend on the “Workhouse” was a last resort for a starving people.

From 1872 onwards the Poor Law Commissioners were replaced by a five – man, Local Government Board. Gradually the authority of the Board of Guardians shrank, until they had responsibility only for Poor Law Relief and the Dispensary System. The Boards of Guardians were abolished in 1923.

Soup Pot

A soup pot which was used at the Temporary Fever Hospital, situated adjacent to St Ita’s Rd. and the entrance to Collins Park, can still be viewed. The pot was acquired by Batt Harnett and carefully preserved by him at his house which was formerly known as Leahy’ Inn.



The Former Workhouse at Knockbrack

LEAHY'S INN, THE SQUARE, ABBEYFEALE.

David Leahy left his home in Ballycommane, Tournafulla some time before the year 1808, turned his back on the land and decided to become an entrepreneur, though the word was unheard of at that time.

The original Leahy home was a thatched building, built in 1813. The thatch was soon to be replaced by a slated roof. The building served as an Inn and Livery Station. Daniel O'Connell, the Liberator, was a frequent visitor to the Inn. He used the services of the Inn and the Livery Station on his many journeys to and from Derrynane. During the years 1835, 1836 and 1837 O'Connell stayed overnight in Leahy's Inn on a few occasions. More frequently, during those years, he used the services of the Livery Stables, where horses were fed, watered and rested while replacement horses were provided for the journey ahead. Each horse in the Livery Stables had a name. In the old records those are named as Jack, Major, Nancy, Grey, Tinker, Mouse, Humpy, Tiedy, Murphy, Fox, Polly, Dolly and Silky. Important people were given four horses to their carriage.

A letter written by Daniel O'Connell in January 1836 to Mr. Leahy, The Square, Abbeyfeale reads as follows:

Tralee,
15 January
Friday.

Sir,

I will be at your house about two o'clock on Sunday – have four horses ready for me by two o'clock – take care that the drivers have mass. I will not arrive until after last mass and will not allow any man to drive me who miss mass.

Truly Yours
Daniel O'Connell

On November 4th 1836, Daniel O'Connell had the services of a driver and four horses from Abbeyfeale to Newcastle. The four horses were Jack and Major, Nancy and Grey. O'Connell paid one pound and eight shillings for this service. His driver was paid seven shillings. We are indebted to the owner of Leahy's Inn for meticulous book-keeping. He was Mr. David D. Leahy, son to Daniel Leahy. In 1832, at Leahy's Inn a gentleman got dinner for one shilling; lodging for one shilling; breakfast for one shilling and two pence; livery for two shillings and sixpence; oats and feed for horse eight pence; for the weary traveller a glass of punch cost two shillings.

A thriving and extensive business was carried on at the Leahy house from 1860's onwards. There was a drapery which included a men's and ladies section; a haberdashery and a bakery and grocery section. A large staff attended to the needs of the customers. The 8th generation of the name Daniel Leahy passed to his eternal reward in recent times; the names Daniel and David had rotated with each succeeding generation.



BIANCONI'S CONNECTION WITH ABBEYFEALE.

Charles Bianconi was born at Tregolo in Northern Italy on the 24th September 1786. He was apprenticed to a picture seller and arrived in Dublin in 1802. When he had served his apprenticeship he set out selling coloured prints and gilded mirrors. He came to know the Hayes Family whose daughter he was later to marry. Having the experience of having to trudge many miles as a penniless salesman, Bianconi resolved that one day he would provide cheap and reliable public transport. When the Napoleonic War ended, horses and feeding were cheap. This was Bianconi's opportunity. On the 6th July 1815 he started to run a one horse car between Clonmel and Cahir. Within twelve months this service was extended to Thurles, Limerick and Waterford. By the end of 1825 he had secured a number of mail contracts, and his vehicles were covering 1,174 miles per day. By 1857 his "Bians" were covering routes in 22 counties.

Since there was a great friendship between Daniel O'Connell and Bianconi we could safely believe that it was Daniel O'Connell who advised Bianconi to open up the mail route from Limerick to Tralee, and from there to Cahirciveen. About the year 1850 Eggleston's house was built by Richard Ellis who intended it as a hotel. It was in this vacant area, which extended as far as Enright's house and prior to the building of the hotel that Bianconi had his Abbeyfeale stables.

On the 31st August 1831, Bianconi, with the encouragement of Daniel O'Connell, became a naturalised British subject. He was thus eligible to own land and to hold public office in Ireland. When Daniel O'Connell became Governor of the National Bank, which he founded in 1835, he appointed Bianconi as one of the directors. On the 21st February 1846, from Longfield House and estate which Bianconi now owned, his daughter married Daniel O'Connell's nephew.

When railways were built they provided a faster transport service. About 1857 Bianconi gradually phased out his horse – drawn transport. He became a shareholder and later a director of the Waterford and Limerick Railway Company. He died on the 22nd of September 1875.

ROADS

Responsibility for the upkeep of roads in Limerick rested with the members of the Grand Jury. Since none of its members came from the Abbeyfeale area, there was consequently less interest in the area. Travel in Sliabh Luachra remained difficult until the appointment of Sir Richard John Griffith to superintend relief works in the district in 1822. His name will always be remembered in connection with "Griffith's Valuation" which listed owners and extent of property involving landlord and tenant. Following a famine in 1822, it was decided that the construction of roads should assume priority, both for reasons of employment for a starving population and also for free access for the military. The principal routes which he dealt with, were from Newcastle West through Abbeyfeale to Castleisland and from Listowel through Newmarket to Charleville.

In his Topographical Dictionary, Lewis deals with Abbeyfeale in the following terms:

"The village, situated in a wild mountainous district was almost inaccessible but since the construction of the new lines of road (1836) great alterations have taken place; great improvement in the condition of the people has resulted from the facilities thus afforded of taking their little produce to market; and the inhabitants are now industriously and profitably employed"

In 1705 Sir Thomas Southwell was granted a patent for the two fairs in Abbeyfeale Town – 29th June and 18th October, as well as a Saturday market.

FOLK ART

Folk Art was a device used by plasterers to “dress up” and make more visually attractive a building which might otherwise have presented a very plain appearance. Many fine examples of this Folk Art are to be found in North Kerry and West Limerick. The great exponent of the art in that area was a man named Pat McAuliffe. He was a plasterer by trade, but also a man gifted with great artistic skill. The method was comparatively easy – especially for a plasterer with flair and certain courage to explore and invent. From the many examples of his work it is evident that Pat McAuliffe had these qualities in abundance. Using plaster he was able to imitate all the classical details of important buildings. These imitations are found in window surrounds, the outside corners of buildings, name boards and cornices. Pat McAuliffe’s work survives mostly in Listowel and Abbeyfeale.

Pat McAuliffe was born in 1846 and before his death in 1921 he had left an extraordinary, exotic and fascinating legacy of exterior plasterwork. There are several superb examples of McAuliffe’s work in Abbeyfeale. Outstanding is the house once owned by the O Mara family and situated in New Street facing the Duagh Road. Here we find Celtic interlacing, classical egg and dart and a further design of circles penetrated by arrows. Some would say that McAuliffe’s work at its best can be seen at the shop on Main Street, presently owned by Paudie Fitzgerald and formerly owned by Patrick O Connor. Here McAuliffe uses a variety of scene and language, including a Biblical scene and words in Latin, French and Irish. It is doubtful if he was familiar with these languages. One inscription reads “Vita brevis. Ars Longa” (Life is short. Art is forever). An Anglo –Saxon agricultural fertility charm has the following invocation:

“Hail to thee Earth, Mother of Man.
Be fruitful in God’s embrace,
Filled with food for the use of men”

Another scene, a Biblical one, depicts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. At one time people knew this O Connor house as “Angel House” as Pat McAuliffe had designed a plaster angel and placed it aloft on the outside of the building. Our rainy Irish climate, however, ensured that the Angel was frequently dripping water. In an effort to conserve the building and diminish the constant drip, the Angel was removed from its perch. Thus also, one further example of McAuliffe’s work has vanished forever. Various other designs on the front walls of Abbeyfeale buildings can be seen on the houses presently owned by Damian Daly and Caroline Griffin and situated on Main Street.



THE SISTERS OF MERCY IN ABBEYFEALE.

Rev. Michael Coghlan D.D. was P.P. of Abbeyfeale in 1868 when he applied to the Mercy Sisters in Limerick City to establish a Mercy Community in Abbeyfeale. They, however, were overstretched in meeting the needs of the time in Limerick City. Undeterred, he next applied to the Mercy Sisters at Holy Cross Convent in Killarney. They were willing to send Sisters to Abbeyfeale. On the 23rd September, 1871, four Sisters set out in a horse –drawn carriage to travel to Abbeyfeale via Listowel. Having spent the night at the Presentation Convent in Listowel, they set off early next morning to begin a new life at Abbeyfeale. The date was September 24th 1871 – feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

Thanks to the kindness and generosity of the O’Sullivan Family (They owned a drapery business where A.I. B. now stands), a house, known as St. Joseph’s, was provided for the Sisters. That house later became St. Joseph’s Secondary School. That house was demolished in 1968 when the new St. Joseph’s secondary School was built and occupied. Those pioneering Sisters walked down to the mixed Primary School which was situated where the present Chinese restaurant stands at the junction of New Street and the Duagh Road. This school was a two –storey building, Girls were taught in the upper rooms and boys were taught in the downstairs section. Nora and Mary Babington, grandaunts to Kathleen Wrenn of New Street, taught the girls at that time.

Father Coghlan was anxious that the girls would be taught in a separate school, and plans were drawn up in 1873 for this building on lands supplied by the Leahy Family of the Square, Abbeyfeale. This school was opened in 1875. Father Coghlan next turned his attention to the provision of a new Convent. This was completed in 1878. A Sisters’ Chapel and Public Chapel were added in 1892.

By the early 1930’s the Primary School, built in 1875 was too small to accommodate the numbers of pupils attending school. A new Primary School was built in 1937. A similar problem with accommodation was experienced by the teachers at St. Joseph’s Secondary School. A new school was built and opened in 1968. The Primary School was renovated and extended in 1985. A new Post Primary School under the Trusteeship of County Limerick V.E.C. was built and completed in 2011.

Catherine McAuley, the Foundress of the Mercy Sisters founded her Congregation with just two Sisters – herself and her cousin Mary Ann Doyle. Little did she expect that her Mercy Congregation would become the largest female Congregation in the Church. Expansion and down –sizing are words which feature in modern business vocabulary. Down –sizing is the experience of the Abbeyfeale Mercy Sisters. They are grateful that their efforts over the past 140 years have contributed to improved educational facilities for the Abbeyfeale area.



The Sisters Of Mercy in Abbeyfeale
By Sr. Delia Curtin

On July 23rd 1868, an Abbeyfeale man wrote the following to his sons in the U.S.A. “we have a very warm season, the hottest that came for the last forty years. The lands are red with the dirth of drought . We had no rain since the first of April last. Cattle are nearly dry for the want of grass. Even they have not water without going a long distance”. This description has happy reminders of the beautiful Summer and Autumn of 2003, enjoying to the full by everyone in Ireland. Luckily there was no threat of drought such as was experienced in 1868. That was a time of few happenings –apart from agrarian unrest. Henry Ford had not yet invented the Model t-car. Charles Bianconi provided the horse-drawn long car and coaches which plied between Limerick and Tralee, and changed horses at Leahy’s Inn. The Limerick to Tralee Railway did not open until December 20th 1880. Telephone and T.V. were unheard of . A horse-drawn mail coach delivered the all-important letters as it travelled via Abbeyfeale to Tralee. Communication was limited. Yet, despite these limitations of communication, the Parish Priest of Abbeyfeale at that time (1868) –Rev. Michael Coghlan D.D, was able to make known his wishes to establish a Mercy Sisters’ Community in Abbeyfeale. Firstly, he applied to the Mercy Sisters in Limerick City. They, however, were overstretched in meeting the needs of the times in Limerick City, and were unable to oblige him. He next applied to the Mercy Sisters Holy Cross convent in Killarney. They were willing to come to Abbeyfeale. And so it was that on the 23rd of September, 1871, four Mercy Sisters set out, in a horse drawn carriage to travel to Abbeyfeale via Listowel. Having spent the night at the Presentation Convent in Listowel, they set off in the early morning to begin a new life in Abbeyfeale. The date was September 24th feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

A warm and generous welcome awaited them in Abbeyfeale. Thanks to the kindness of the O Sullivan family (who owned a drapery business where the Allied Irish Bank now stands) , a house , known as St. Joseph’s , was provided for the Sisters. That house later became St. Joseph’s Secondary School, and was demolished in 1968 when St. Joseph’s Secondary School was built. Those pioneering Sisters taught in the Primary School which was then situated where the “Bargain Stores” later stood and where presently a Chinese restaurant now stands. As far as we can ascertain, this school was a two storey building. Girls were taught in the upper rooms and boys were taught in the ground floor rooms. Nora and Mary Babington, grandaunts to Kathleen Wrenn of New Street were teaching the girls at that time.

By 1873 plans were being drawn up for a new Girls’ Primary School. Lands had been provided through the generosity of the Leahy Family in the Square. This school was opened in 1875 and still stands in good repair. Not content with having got a new school built, Fr. Coughlan, a most energetic man , now set about getting a Convent built. This was completed in 1878. A white marble plaque attached to the altar in the old parish church had the following inscription

This altar is erected
By the people of Abbeyfeale
In Memory of
The Rev.M.Coghlan D.D.
Who was their Parish priest
For 28 years and
Who built the Convent of Mercy Here.

R.I.P

A sisters' Chapel and a public Chapel were added in 1892. The first Mass in this Convent chapel was celebrated on May 24th 1893 by Rev. Timothy Curtin – a native of Tournafulla. He was curate in Abbeyfeale at that time.

By the early 1930's the Girls' Primary School, that opened in 1875 was too small to accommodate the large numbers attending. School Fund raising was a major preoccupation at that time. Sales of work became a regular feature. Eventually, a new Primary School was built in 1937. Soon, St. Joseph's Secondary School proved entirely inadequate for the numbers who now availed of free transport to school and who were eager to benefit from the education system. A new St. Joseph's Secondary School was opened in 1968. The primary School was further extended and renovated in 1985.

Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Mercy Sisters began her Congregation with just herself and her cousin- Mary Ann Doyle. Little did she expect that her Mercy Sisters would become the largest female Congregation in the Church. Expansion and downsizing are words which feature in modern business vocabulary. A marvellous expansion has occurred in the provision of education facilities for the young people of Abbeyfeale. The Mercy Sisters are grateful that their efforts over the past 132 years have contributed to this great improvement. Sadly, down-sizing is the present experience of the Abbeyfeale Mercy Sisters. The convent of Mercy, built in 1878, has now become too large and difficult to maintain. The only viable option for the present community was to move to a smaller residence. The last public Mass was celebrated in the Convent Chapel on the 26th of June 2003. The Abbeyfeale Mercy Community has re-located to a smaller residence at Mountmahon.



Ornamental trowel used in the laying of foundation stone of Convent Chapel.

REV. WILLIAM CASEY, PARISH PRIEST OF ABBEYFEALE 1871-1907.

William Casey was born at Castlequarter, Kilbehenny, Co. Limerick in 1840 to John Casey and Johanna Kiely. William had two sisters, Mary and Norah, and two brothers, Owen and Patrick. The Caseys were substantial farmers and all survived the Great Famine. John Casey's brother, Rev. Daniel Casey was P.P. of Glanworth, Co. Cork.



Owen married Catherine Hurley and lived at her parents' farm at Longueville, Ballynoe, Co. Cork. They had six children, including Fr. John Casey, C.C. Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, and Father Pat Casey, C.C. Mallow, Co. Cork, who later became Bishop of Ross in 1935, and died and was interred at Skibbereen, Co. Cork, in 1940.

William spent time at Melleray and became a priest for the Diocese of Cloyne. He was sent on temporary duty to Abbeyfeale in 1871 and was later appointed P.P. of Abbeyfeale.

Mary married T. Hurley, a farmer of Curraglass, Ballynoe, Co. Cork. They had four sons including Father Pat Hurley, Macroom, Co. Cork.

Patrick, who was to inherit the family farm at Castlequarter, died at an early age and the farm went instead to Norah. Norah married Tom O'Donnell, Lyre, Galbally, Co. Limerick.

William Casey received his early education at a local National School and later went to Mount Melleray and St. Colman's College in Fermoy. He was ordained for the Diocese of Cloyne. He came twice to Abbeyfeale on temporary placement before coming permanently on the 18/11/1872.

On the death of Fr. Michael Coghlan, P.P. Father Casey was appointed Parish Priest of Abbeyfeale. There, he remained for the rest of his life. Soon he made his mark in the life of the parish. He got a wall built around the newly built Convent of Mercy. Riding on horseback he made a daring rescue of four young men who were trapped by the rising waters of the flooded River Feale. He became a member of the Board of the Temporary Fever Hospitals. He contracted fever while visiting those who were seriously ill.

His efforts on behalf of the tenant farmers are well documented. A succession of bad harvests had left tenant farmers struggling to pay an exorbitant rent. Agrarian unrest spread. Evictions were an everyday occurrence. Father Casey became a friend of Michael Davitt who had founded the Land League. One of the earliest branches of the Land League was founded in Abbeyfeale. He held regular Land League mass meetings in the Square, Abbeyfeale on Sundays. He advocated the three F's; Fair Rent, Freedom of Sale and Fixity of Tenure. As some tenants were evicted, particularly from the O'Grady estates, their homes were levelled and burned. The Landlords who owned lands in the Abbeyfeale area were as follows:

1. Edward O'Grady owned lands at Ballaugh also known as Ballybehy.
2. Falkiner Collis –Sandes owned lands at Kilmanihan –Brosna.
3. Lord Headley owned lands at Knocknagoshel.
4. Richard Ellis owned lands at Abbeyfeale Hill and was also landlord of Abbeyfeale Town
5. William Creagh – Harnett owned lands at Moynsha, Duagh.

Father Casey, with the assistance of the Land League provided frame houses, known as Land League Huts to those who had been evicted.

Fr. Casey was a lifelong teetotaller and founded a Temperance Society whose meetings were held at the National School at New Street. It was named the Temperance Hall and also accommodated the Abbeyfeale Brass Band which was also founded by Father Casey.

Father Casey died on the 29th December 1907. His body was originally interred in the Famine Church built in 1847. When that Church was demolished in 1969 his body was re-interred in St. Mary's Cemetery, Abbeyfeale.

MICHAEL DAVITT 1846-1906: Founder of The National Land League

Michael Davitt was born in 1846 at the village of Straide, Co. Mayo, the son of a tenant farmer. With the seven year old Michael and his two sisters, they were evicted from their holding in 1853 and forced to emigrate.

The Davitt family settled at the industrial town of Haslingden, Lancashire, where the young Michael was obliged, like many other children at the time, to go work in a mill in order to supplement the meagre family income. In 1857, at the age of 11, Michael lost his right arm in an accident with the mill machinery. He was no longer fit for robust manual labour and turned to books with eagerness. He read widely and acquired knowledge, proving eventually to be a valued contributor to John O'Leary's Fenian newspaper, the Irish People. Joining the Fenians in 1865, Davitt came unscathed through the Fenian uprising of 1867, during which he led 2,000 men who assembled for an attack on Chester Castle. He became organising secretary of the I.R.B. in 1868. However he was arrested in 1870 in London and tried for his activities as a Fenian arms agent. He was convicted by the evidence of the notorious informer, Corydon, and sentenced to 15 years' penal servitude, first in Millbank Penitentiary and then in Dartmoor Prison. Davitt and his fellow prisoners experienced starvation and appalling conditions in prison. The full extent of the horror is depicted in his Leaves from a Prison Diary.



On his release from prison in 1877, Davitt returned to Ireland. The creation of an organisation with the immediate intention of bringing about the eradication of landlordism became Davitt's aim. He directed his activities to this end. In August 1878, he visited America in order to bring back his mother and sisters to Ireland, Due to the demand of Irish – Americans to meet and hear him, the visit became a widespread tour. Davitt also met John Devoy, the exiled Fenian, and worked to combine agitation for self – government and land reform. Devoy was an active propagandist for the alliance of Fenian revolutionists and parliamentary agitators with the destruction of landlordism and eventual Irish independence being the goals.

In Boston, Davitt outlined the principles and plans for the new agitation, which came to be known as the New Departure. He lectured widely and laid the foundations for Irish – American support for the proposed struggle for the land in Ireland. This support, when translated into hard cash, was instrumental in initiating, sustaining and invigorating the campaign, as well as aiding evicted tenants – and played no little part in the eventual resolution of the land question. As a result of these developments at home and abroad, the tenant farmers were, so to speak, compelled to agitate, and agitate they did.

In August 1879, Davitt founded the National Land League of Mayo. In October 1879, this became the Irish National Land League, with Parnell as its President. With the enforced passing of the Land Acts between 1881 and 1903 the rights for which Davitt had fought had now become a reality. Landlordism had been defeated and eradicated.

Davitt died on the 31st May 1906, at the age of 60, following a dental operation. He was buried in his native Straide, Co. Mayo.

“The Blessed Well” at Killeenagh.

Killeenagh “Blessed Well” is a spiritual place of seclusion, peace and prayer. The word “Killeenagh” is the Anglicised version of the word “Cillíneach”, which means a children’s burial ground. In the early 1900’s the “Blessed Well” was a 3 foot square uncovered hole, lined with stones and overlooking a fast-flowing stream. The ground was raised at the back of the well and this was the area where religious objects - medals, rosary beads, crosses, bits of cloth etc. were deposited. Around the well, but very close to it was a grove of stunted blackthorn bushes. In the vicinity of the well is a “Fort” - enclosed by a clay fence and a dense growth of blackthorn bushes. Forts marked ancient settlements of people.

There was a thriving village in this area at one time – having a church, a graveyard and a well. Most likely the Church was a small, stone, thatched structure, which catered for the 37 people from the village of Dromtrasna. The eastern end of the village extended to the Allaghaun. The name “Tón a’ Bhaile”- (the end of the village) was the old Irish name for the farm presently owned by Billy Riordan. The ancient road from Killeedy to Abbeyfeale ran close to the “Well”. Prior to 1822 this road passed through the farmyard of the late Nessan Leahy, and crossed the Allaghaun at the boundary between Leahy and Lane farms. It then followed the border between farms until it met the “Butter Road” from Glin at the point where the Brown family home stands. The road from the Allaghaun to this point was known as “Bóithrin na gCeard” because of the many tradesmen who lived along the route. All these habitations disappeared in the 1840’s. In more recent times the remains of thirteen such houses were discovered along the Leahy farm boundary.

Looking at the geographical position of Killeenagh Well, one begins to question the oral tradition which claimed that Bishop Erc of Kerry brought the young St. Brendan - later known as Brendan the Navigator – as far as the Blessed Well at Killeenagh. Perhaps the solution lies in the system of roadway known as Cláí Dubh an Rátha, the chariot route that ran from Dingle to Cashel - “Caiseal Rí” - the ancient seat of the Kings of Munster. “Cláí Dubh an Rátha” was a single lane chariot/carriage route, so named because of the high fences of black peat which enclosed it on either side. At various distances along this route, at both left and right sides were lay bys where charioteers could allow passage to each other. It was along this ancient route that the Spalpeen Fánachs – the itinerant labourers – travelled in search of employment with the wealthy landowners of east Limerick and further afield. We are told that this ancient road from Dingle ran via Dromtrasna and through Dromcollogher to Cashel of the Kings. It was along this road also that “rhymers” (musicians) from Brosna and West Limerick went to entertain the Kings of Munster at Cashel. Bishop Erc and the young St. Brendan would have travelled along this ancient route to meet St. Ita.

St. Ita had chosen Killeedy as a site for her monastic settlement. At that time a monastic settlement consisted of beehive shaped huts, covering a wide area and expanding as the community increased. She ran a school for small boys at Killeedy. If we accept the Oral Tradition that Bishop Erc of Kerry brought the young Saint Brendan – later known as Brendan the Navigator – as far as the “Blessed Well” at Killeenagh, there to hand him to Saint Ita to be trained at her school for boys at Killeedy - the meeting of both parties was no problem. Brendan was then just one year old, but he remained for five years under her tutelage, because “She was prudent in word and work, sweet and winning in her address, but constant in mind and firm of purpose” She had a special devotion to the Child Jesus. A hymn attributed to her comes down to us in the original Irish. The opening lines are as follows:

“Íosagán, oiltear liom im ‘dhístearan,Is bréag uile ach Íosagán”

In the late 1960’s Sonny Cotter (owner of the “well” field) and Denny McCarthy undertook a major renovation at the well. The well itself was deepened and lined. A prominent edifice composed of stones from the demolished Famine Church was erected as background to the well. This helped to identify the location of the well for visitors.

The wells in ancient Ireland were meeting places. A community always lived nearby. There was healing, reconciliation, cleansing and life at the well. Christians took three sips of water in honour of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and prayed. “God bless me and keep me from this day ‘til this day next year”. The well had become a fountain of spiritual life for them. At the well the Creed, Pater, Ave and Gloria were recited as people made the “rounds” ie. circling of the well. People came to the well on a pilgrim journey. They drank from its water. They asked in prayer for healing. A little offering was left behind – a coin, a pin, a cross which they formed from rushes, a rag. The holy water was brought home for the protection of family and animals.

Perhaps the “Blessed Well” at Killeenagh was a substitute when no church services were allowed during Penal Times. Whatever the reason, the “Blessed Well” holds a position of prominence in the folk memory of Abbeyfeale people. As children they accompanied their parents on balmy May evenings to “to do the Rounds at the Well”, to sip its icy cold water and leave a small token when leaving. Usually the token took the form of a rush- cross - easily formed from the abundant rushes nearby.

A memory still persists in Dromtrasna of very ill people being brought on a “clár”(a rough board substituting for a stretcher) to the “Blessed Well” at Killeenagh, in search of healing. It was their faith in the healing powers of the “Blessed Well” which motivated these people to undertake the arduous task of bringing a patient over fields and fences in a desperate search for a cure, at a time when medical help was unavailable.

The “Blessed Well” is not without its reputed cures. We were told of the man with the crippled leg, who spent an all-night vigil there and walked home for breakfast perfectly cured; of the boy who suffered from violent headaches but was cured by applying the well water to his head. Well water was sometimes used as holy water by pious people, when none was available. So is Lourdes’ water. There is further evidence of a cure for two women following a visit to the Well – one regained her eyesight and the other was cured of cancer.

Visits to the “Well” were seen by some pious people as an opportunity to do penance. Nellie Doody was a very spiritual woman who has long since gone to her eternal reward. She died on Good Friday 1938. During her life she used to visit various Blessed Wells in West Limerick, which were within walking distance of her native Templeglantine. She was known to carry a ladder on her back from Killeenagh Well, up the steep incline to the nearest farmhouse. It was her way of imitating the Carrying of the Cross. It was also a custom in the area for expectant mothers to visit the “Blessed Well” prior to giving birth, to beg a special blessing on themselves and their newborn child. Apart from the recitation of the Rosary and the making of the rounds, we are not aware of any particular prayers associated with Killeenagh Well.

Life itself is a pilgrimage that never ends. We travel a little further each day as new vistas open before us. In a society where traffic, noise, pressure of time and work deadlines make people long for an oasis of peace – what more fitting way of recovering a balance in life itself than by visiting a “Blessed Well”. Killeenagh Well is one such place. There, at any time of the year,

but particularly during the Saturdays of May, one experiences a reverent silence, broken only by the rustle of Rosary Beads, the shuffling of feet, the call of the cuckoo, the lowing of cattle in nearby fields and the murmur of a nearby stream. It is the same source of contentment, which moved the 10th century Manchan (who lived west of Kerry) to pray as follows:
“I wish, O Son of the living God,

For a secret hut in the wilderness, that it may be my dwelling.
A very blue shallow well to be beside it.
A clear pool for washing away sins through the grace of the Holy Ghost.
A beautiful wood around it on every side,
Facing the south for warmth, a little stream across its enclosure,
A few wise disciples, humble and obedient,
Praying through the long ages to the King who moves the sun.
A lovely church decked with linen, a dwelling for God of Heaven;
Then, bright candles over the holy Scriptures.
And for me to be sitting for a while praying to God in every place”



SAINT ITA OF KILLEEDY

St. Ita is known as “the foster-mother of the saints of Ireland.” She was born about the year 470 in the Déise territory of Co. Waterford. It is said that her father Kennfoelad, was a descendant of the one time King of Ireland -Felim the Lawgiver. Kennfoelad was a Christian and so also was his wife Necta who was mother to St. Ita. According to the custom of the times Kennfoelad hoped to form a powerful alliance by marrying his daughter to a neighbouring chieftain. Ita had other ideas. She wished to go to a place of seclusion and peace and there dedicate her life to God. Much to the dismay of her father she set out in search of the seclusion she longed for. She found her ideal site at the foot of Sliabh Luachra (rushy mountain) at a place called Cluain Credail, later known as Ceall Ide and now known as Killeedy. She was offered a generous tract of land by the local chieftain but would accept only four acres. A monastic settlement of that time consisted of individual beehive huts clustered around a central larger hut. As the numbers of religious increased, more individual huts were built. The 4 acre plot of land was intensively cultivated by St. Ita and her companions. She is regarded as the Patron of Smallholders.

St. Ita founded a school for small boys at Killeedy. It was customary for people of noble birth to send their sons to be fostered at Killeedy. Apart from Brendan The Navigator, Ita is reputed to have fostered the following:

(a) Mochoemog, who as a youth was sent by Ita to complete his studies at St. Comghall’s monastery at Bangor, and later founded his own monastery at Leith Mochoemog in Co. Tipperary.

(b) Cumman of Clonfert, grandson of Fiachra, King of west Munster. Cumman studied at St. Finbarr’s school in Cork and later became renowned as the ascetic Bishop- Abbot of Clonfert.

(c) Fachna, who later founded a school at Ros Alithir on the southern coast.

According to tradition St. Ita acquired another property in the townland of Seconglass in the parish of Mountcollins. There she had a dairy farm. The milk and butter from this farm was transported by donkey to Killeedy. As well as dairying, the community also did gardening and weaving.

In the townland of Caherlevoy, Mountcollins there is a small well dedicated to St. Ita. It is called Tobar na gCrann – the well of the trees. Rounds are paid at this well commencing on the Saturday previous to May Eve and continued during the month of May.

St Ita had a special devotion to the Holy Trinity and her life was spent largely in penance and asceticism. She is reputed to have told St. Brendan that the three things most displeasing to God are: the face that hates mankind; the will that clings to the love of evil; and putting entire trust in riches. She also named the three things most pleasing to God: the firm belief of a pure heart in God; the simple religious life; and liberality with charity.

Ita also had a special devotion to the Child Jesus. A hymn attributed to her has been handed down to us in its original old Irish form. The translation is as follows:

“ Little Jesus (Íosagán)
is nursed by me in my little hermitage.
Though a cleric should have great wealth,
all is deceit but little Jesus.

The nursing(fostering) done by me in my house
is not the nursing of one of low degree.
Jesus with the people of heaven
is by my heart every night.

Young little Jesus is my lasting good.
He gives without remiss.
The king who rules all,
Not to pray him were to regret.

It is noble, angelic Jesus,
no ordinary cleric,
who is nursed by me in my little hermitage,
Jesus son of the Hebrew woman.

The sons of nobles, the sons of kings,
although they come into my country,
not from them do I expect profit;
dearer to me is little Jesus.

Sing a chorus, daughters,
for him to whom is due your little tribute.
Little Jesus is in his court above,
although he be in my bosom.



“Cillíns”

Historians often describe the period between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries as “medieval”. In early medieval times, Ireland had many settlements of people, but these were rural only. Evidence of these early Irish dwellings is highly visible all over the Irish countryside. These dwellings are now known as “ringforts”. The circular earthworks are what remains of the farmsteads of the first dairy farmers. Ringforts were erected on good land, close to a river, in a wooded area which provided the people with fuel, fishing, grazing, shelter and running water for themselves and their livestock of sheep, cattle and pigs. There

are approximately 40,000 ringforts in the Irish countryside. Ecclesiastical (church) enclosures were sometimes situated beside these ringforts, but these were much fewer in number.

There was one such ecclesiastical enclosure at Kilkinlea (Kilconlea). The word Kilkinlea means “Church of Chonleith”. This enclosure dated from early and medieval times. The 12th century Church reformation led to the abandonment of many of these ecclesiastical sites throughout the country. However, the sites were often retained as burial grounds for children. They were known as “Cillíns”

In Dineen’s Irish-English Dictionary “Cillín” is defined as “a little Church, a small cell, a churchyard set apart for infants”. The word “Cillin” could also derive from the Latin “Cella” - meaning “little church or oratory”. Most likely most of these sites had an earlier religious association. We also learn from the same Dictionary, that “Cillíneach” (Killeenagh) is “a place set apart for the burial of unbaptized children, generally near a Lios (or fort)”

In Co. Kerry, 51% of “Cillíns” were sited within the confines of a pre-existing archaeological monument. More often than not, these were early medieval enclosures that had long since fallen out of use.

There was also a practice during the medieval and later period of history of segregating children in one part of a cemetery. This practice also coincided with the denial of Baptism rites to premature infants and the establishment of the doctrine of Limbus Infantus more familiarly known as Limbo. This was due to the lack of definition, at that time, as children as full social beings. The thinking was “How can children join the society of the dead, if they haven’t been officially admitted to the society of the living?” In the 16th and 17th centuries and up to the early 1900’s unbaptised children were not permitted to be buried in consecrated ground. Thankfully, Church teaching has changed in this regard. Now science and medicine have combined to define the human being at a much earlier stage of life and the social attitudes of the past are relegated to the past.

There are thousands of “Cillín” sites all over Ireland. They were sometimes associated with limits or boundaries between areas or overlooking an ecclesiastical site. There are at least five visible “Cillíns” in Abbeyfeale Parish. On the Ordinance Survey map their position is sometimes marked by a cross but more frequently by the word “Cillín”. This simple sign conveys nothing of the immense tragedy and sadness associated with the loss of a child. The last known burial at such a “Cillín” in Abbeyfeale Parish was in the year 1922.

“Cillíns” are a reminder of the pain parents were forced to endure at a time in Irish History when babies were as likely to die as to live. It was a time of poverty, of non-existent pre-natal maternity care or medical attention. It was also a time of private grief – where the pain of losing a baby through premature birth, lack of assistance at birth or other complications – was

not shared with neighbours, or even discussed in a family setting. The foetal remains were taken quietly and privately to the nearest “Cillín”. There was no community concern for, or even knowledge of the grief of a young couple. And so the “Cillíns” are a reminder of harsh times and private sorrow. Coupled with this pain was the great question for grieving parents, of where the child’s soul would rest. There was mention of a place called “Limbo” - nobody was sure of its location ! And so the unbaptised children were buried in unconsecrated ground. It was a time of harsh interpretations of God’s justice and forgiveness. Today there is more emphasis on the love and compassion of a merciful God. Thankfully there is no mention of Limbo !

Apart from the very visible “Cillín” at Kilconlea, there are smaller but visible “Cillíns” at the following locations :

At Glenashrone in the lands of Christy Colbert

At Meenkilly, in the lands of Jim and Seamus Lane. In earlier times this was a Famine Graveyard. In the 1840’s a number of adults who died of fever or starvation were also buried there.

At Cragg, in the lands of Eddie O’Connell

Though Killeenagh derived its name from its association with a children’s burial ground, there is presently no visible evidence of such a burial site. A ringfort and a field known locally as the “Church Field,” indicate the existence of earlier dwellings and most likely a medieval ecclesiastical site close by.

“Cillíns” are part of our historical past. They remind us of the harsh times experienced by families. They also remind us of the high infant mortality rate that was part of the everyday life in the not – so – distant past. They make us aware of the advances in medical science in regard to neo -natal care. They draw our attention to changed social attitudes. The simple cross or the word “Cillin” on an Ordinance Survey Map will always remind us of their existence.

“Do phóg mé do bhéal is a Dhia nárbh fhuar é!
Och! Is fuar í do leaba sa chillín uaigneach.
‘S a uaigh fhódghlas ina bhfuil mo leanbh,
A uaigh chaoil bhig, ós tú a leaba,
Mo bheannacht ort ‘s na mílte beannacht
Ar na fódaibh ghlasa atá os cionn mo pheata.”



THE LEEN FAMILY OF LEEN'S HOTEL

Leen's Hotel was the birthplace of the three Leen brothers Daniel, Edward and James, all of whom became distinguished writers and Retreat Masters. Their parents were Daniel Leen and Margaret Barrett. The three brothers received their early education at the local Boys' Primary School before continuing their education at Rockwell College in Tipperary. This college was under the ownership of the Holy Ghost Fathers as they were known at that time. The name has since been changed to "Spiritans." Later, the three brothers joined the Spiritan Order. They each became distinguished academics in the fields of Theology, Philosophy, Mathematics and Education. Books by Dr. Edward Leen include the following: "What is Education," "In the Likeness of Christ," "Progress Through Mental Prayer," "True Vine and Its Branches" and "Why The Cross"

Archbishop James Leen. C.S.Sp.

James Leen was born in Abbeyfeale on January 1st 1888. His parents were Daniel Leen and Margaret Barrett. His sponsors at Baptism were John Flynn and Margaret Flynn. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Timothy Curtin who was curate in Abbeyfeale at that time. Having finished his Primary Education in Abbeyfeale, James Leen was sent to Rockwell College to continue his studies. As the Boys National School on New Street was not built until 1913, we presume that he attended the old school which was situated where New Street meets the Duagh Road. Then in 1911, he presented himself at the Novitiate of the Holy Ghost Fathers, as they were then called. The name was later changed to the Spiritan Order. His intellectual gifts were quickly discerned by his superiors. At the National University, he took an honours B.A. in mathematics in 1913. He was then sent to the French Seminary in Rome where he successfully received a Doctorate in Theology in 1921. He was ordained to the priesthood in Rome on July 11th 1920 at the age of 32. The path of study which he had followed was done through obedience, but in reality, his longing was for the apostolate in the Foreign Missions.

From his ordination, until his appointment as Bishop, he taught Theology in the French Seminary, and later in the Irish Scholasticate. On July 15th 1925, Fr. Leen was appointed Titular Bishop of Hippo-Zareth and Co-Adjutor of Port- Louis in Madagascar (an island off the east coast of Africa) with the right of succession. This new appointment made him the world's youngest Bishop at the time, being only 37 years old and with only five years of experience in the priesthood. On the 13th of September 1925 he was Consecrated Bishop in the Chapel of his beloved Blackrock College in Dublin.

After a short break, it was time to set out for his new mission field. He set foot on the shores of Mauritius on December 13th 1925, in the midst of a storm. It was just a few months later that he was summoned to the palace, where his predecessor, Bishop Murphy, a native of Knocknagoshel had just died. On June 3rd 1926, the young Bishop Leen was enthroned in his Cathedral. On August 1st 1933 on the occasion of the re-building of the Cathedral of Saint Louis- one of his boldest and most successful enterprises, he was raised to the rank of Archbishop as a mark of person distinction.

James Leen wasn't the only member of his family to achieve academic distinction. Two brothers – Rev. Edward Leen, C.S.S.P., M.A.D.D of Blackrock College, Dublin and Rev. Daniel Leen C.S.S.P. of Philadelphia were both writers of spiritual books and highly regarded Retreat guides.

Archbishop James Leen died at Saint Helene on Monday December 19th 1949. In his farewell speech, addressed to the people of the diocese, and read from the pulpit in all the churches of the Island on November 20th 1949, Archbishop Leen said “ it grieves me much to be separated from you, my dear children , whom I love with a paternal affection ; to leave this Island where I would love to take my last rest”. In a strange way the Lord granted his wish. Just before he was due to leave for Rome, Archbishop Leen fell gravely ill. He is buried in the Island of Madagascar among the people he had served with love and devotion. His motto was “Fortis in Fide” – Strong in Faith. Interestingly, the people of Mauritius were able to benefit from the ministry of three bishops who could be regarded as “neighbours” in their homeland. Bishop John Murphy, a native of Knocknagoshel, was succeeded by Bishop James Leen of Abbeyfeale. He in turn was succeeded by Bishop Daniel Liston, a native of Foynes. One could safely say that West Limerick and North Kerry were having an influence far exceeding their natural and national importance – all because of the faith, commitment and total dedication of three natives who had sacrificed all earthly ambitions in the service of the master.



*The Rt. Rev. James Leen, C.S.Sp., D.D.,
D.Ph., Coadjutor-Bishop-Elect of Port-Louis,
Mauritius.*





Education in Abbeyfeale

Abbeyfeale Parish Schools

Hedge Schools



There were five hedge schools in the Abbeyfeale parish, situated in the following townlands: Mount Mahon, Ballybehy, Kilconlea, Knocknasna and Caherlane where the teacher was a man named- Corbett.

Knocknasna:

The teacher in the Knocknasna school was a man named Philip Casey, and he was paid at the rate of from 1/1 to 2/6 per pupil, per quarter. The school was a mud and stone structure, and was thatched. According to the Protestant returns it had 66 pupils, two of whom were Protestants and the rest Catholics. The boys numbered 48 and the girls 18. The Catholic returns give the returns as 90 including 2 Protestants. Of the 90 Catholics, 60 were boys and 30 were girls.

Ballaghbehy:

The school in Ballaghbehy was taught by a William Kirk. Here the scholars paid from 1/8 to 8/- quarterly. The school is described as being “in a wretched mud house, thatched”. The pupils numbered 50, 35 boys and 15 girls – that was according to the returns of the Protestant authorities. But according to the return of the Catholic authorities there were 90 pupils attending the school- 60 boys and 30 girls.

Kilconlea:

The Kilconlea school was taught by a Richard Harnett, and his pupils paid him from 1/3 to 3/4 a quarter. He taught school “in a miserable cow house,” and had according to the Protestant returns, 42 pupils, 34 boys and 8 girls. The Catholic returns said he had 69 pupils, 49 boys and 20 girls.

Mountmahon:

The fourth school in the parish that of Mountmahon, was taught by a John Mulvihill. His pupils paid him from 10d to 1/8 a quarter. The school building was a cow house. According to the Protestant returns it was attended by 45 pupils, 35 boys and 10 girls. The Catholic returns said it was attended by 40 pupils, 25 boys and 15 girls. All teachers in Abbeyfeale parish were Catholics.

Primary Education around 1840

Though we know of the five hedge schools in Abbeyfeale parish in 1824, we do not know about education in Abbeyfeale town at that time. In 1828 Fr. Daniel Lyddy was appointed P.P of Abbeyfeale. Prior to his coming he had been a curate in Patrickswell “Here, with great success he had devoted all his attention to the education of the children of the parish” (Begley).

We can be certain that on his appointment to Abbeyfeale, education of the young became a priority. It would be logical to assume that within the next twenty years or so he had overseen the establishment of the first Primary School in the Town. We do know that in the 1860’s and perhaps for many years earlier the Primary education of Abbeyfeale girls was provided by two dedicated sisters – Nora and Mary Babington. The school building was situated at the site occupied in later years by the Bargain Stores, at the junction of Church Street and the Duagh Road. Following the design of some Primary Schools at that time it was a two storey

building. Boys were usually taught in the ground floor rooms and girls in the upstairs rooms.

The Misses Babington were great aunts to Kathleen Wrenn RIP and the Enright family of New Street. Mr. Babington, their father was sacristan in St. Mary's Church. The Babington home was situated in the area now occupied by Mann's car park and O'Connell's house. Mr. Babington trained and initiated his successor in the duties of sacristan. His successor was the late Connie O'Rourke of the Square.

Music as well as the other obligatory subjects was taught by the Misses Babington. So music has a long tradition in Abbeyfeale's education story. The Misses Babington later emigrated to New Zealand. They were a vital link in the story of education in Abbeyfeale town.

Convent of Mercy Primary School.

On the 24th September 1871 four Sisters of Mercy came from Holy Cross Convent, Killarney to Abbeyfeale. They were about to open a Branch House from Killarney in Abbeyfeale. Their presence was a response to a requests from the Bishop of Limerick – Most Rev. George Butler and from the P.P. of Abbeyfeale – Rev Michael Coughlan D.D. The four Sisters were Sr. M. De Sales Bridgeman, Sr. M. Evangelist Lombard, Sr. M. Dominic Sheehan and Sr. M. Brendan O'Connell. In a few weeks the female National School was placed under the Sisters' charge. This was the old school which was situated at the junction of Church Street and the Duagh Road and near St. Mary's Parish Church (the 1847 Famine Church) Surprisingly, in those early months, the average attendance at the school was 250 pupils. In a very short time the classrooms were found to be too small and unsuitable in many ways. The P.P. Fr. Coughlan, promised to get a new school built for girls. He spared no effort in fundraising. In July 1874 the foundation stone of the new school was laid by the Bishop of Limerick – Most Rev. George Butler. By December 1874 the building was almost complete. In January 1875 school re-opened in the new building. This building still stands. It was a 2 storey building consisting of 4 large classrooms. A stairs led from the entrance hall to the upper rooms. Each classroom accomodated 2 teachers – each working at opposite ends of the room. It was a time of, blackboard and chalk, pencils and nibs, homemade ink and for the pupils slates and marla. Except for a large map of Ireland, there were few visual aids. The school operated under the British Educational System. Inspections were regular and thorough.

The school which opened in January 1875 provided an excellent education for the following 63 years until pressure of pupil number demanded a more spacious building. This was undertaken in 1938. This was a 2 storey, 8 classroom building , having also a cookery room and indoor toilets. It was a big advancement on the 1875 building. The Department of Education gave a grant of £4,747.12 towards the new building. The school was formally opened and blessed by Very Rev. Canon Hogan P.P. He was assisted by Rev John Houlihan C.C. and Rev. William Meade C.C.

Forms of entertainment for children were rather limited in those days. A big novelty for the school children was listening to a radio which had been installed in the school by Mr. Jim O'Kelly, Principal of St. Ita's Secondary School at that time.

Scoil Mháthair Dé

By the year 1985, modern educational developments in art, craft, physical education etc. made enlargement of classrooms a necessity. Consequently partitions were removed and every two classrooms were joined to make one larger room. Sinks were installed in the classrooms. Two additional classrooms, a staff room and extra toilets were built. The old cookery room was renovated and became an All – Purpose Room. Gone were the long cookery tables, the range and the familiar equipment of the room where basic cookery classes and food preparation were held. The All-Purpose Room was used to provide classes in P.E., singing, music and dancing.

The title “Scoil Náisiúnta Clochar na Trócaire” was also changed to “Scoil Mháthair Dé”.

A further extension to Scoil Mháthair Dé took place in 2010. A new classroom and toilets were added as an extra storey over the existing All -Purpose Room. A school entrance hall was extended to create a light -filled foyer. This extension also incorporated a new Principal’s office. Mrs. Marie Gleeson has been Principal of Scoil Mháthair Dé from 1993 until the 31st August 2014. She has been succeeded by Mrs. Ann O’Callaghan, former Principal of Mountcollins N.S. Present and former teachers include Sr. Philomena Lenihan, Sr. Finbarr Walsh, Sr. Ita Cremin, Sr. Kevin Cremin, Sr. Lelia Lane, Sr. Albeus McCarthy, Sr. Louis Cowhey, Sr. Paul Curtin, Sr. Bernardine O’Connor, Sr. Sacred Heart Brennan, Sr. Bernadette Molyneaux, Sr. de Lourdes Golden, Sr. Assumpta Maher, Sr. Consilio O’Donoghue, Sr. Margaret Mary Morrissey and Sr. Delia Curtin.

As the number of teaching Sisters declined, lay teaching staff were employed. They brought with them their richness of experience to add a new dimension to the task of education of girls in Abbeyfeale. Among these female teachers, both past and present were Mrs. Mary Ita Barrett, Miss Mary Joe Flynn, Mrs Máire Collins, Mrs. Eileen O’Brien, Miss Mary Woulfe, Miss Triona Rohan, Mrs. Catherine Noonan, Ms. Sarah Fulham, Ms. Miriam Joy, Mrs. Mary Jo Healy, Mrs. Nora Gaire, Mrs. Máiréad Moore, Mrs. Barbara O’Sullivan, Mrs. Joan Shine, Mrs. Pilar McAuley, Mrs. Teresa Gilroy, Ms. Marie Woulfe, Ms. Marguerite Doran and Ms. Norma Gaire.

Knocknasna National School.

The old school was built in 1894. There were two rooms in the school. In both there was a porch at the entrance. These were where the coats were hung and there were two large turf bins. The children supplied the turf and some people supplied a rail of turf. The means of heating were two pot bellied stoves. The desks were wooden and up to fourteen feet long. There were two blackboards and two maps hanging from the wall – a map of Ireland and a map of the World. At the top of the room near the back window was an elevated area. The teacher’s desk was on this and the Master called the rolls. The playing pitch was across the road and was known as “Bridie’s ray” and later called “Kennelly’s ray”.

Under the one roof there were two separate classrooms. The boys’ school was in one section and the girls’ was in the second part. Each school had its own principal and assistant teacher. During its history it was amalgamated, de-amalgamated and again amalgamated when the new school was built. Amalgamation meant that one principal was appointed and that the other teachers were called assistant teachers. Before amalgamation there were two principals – one for the boys’ school and one for the girls’ school. The first principal of the boys’ school was Denis Fitzgibbon.

After Denis came Paud Mac McCarthy. Paud came from Caher. He lived in the Main Street in

Abbeyfeale. His son Eddie was later Principal of the Boys' Junior National School. Next was David O' Connor, better known as Davy the Master. Davy came from Meenkilly and married a local girl, Daisy Fitzgerald. They lived adjacent to the school. He retired to Taur in County Cork. The assistant teacher was Mrs Nora O'Connor (Nora Mac Carthy). Nora was a sister of Paud MacCarthy and married a local farmer. They lived in Rahoran. When Liam O Callaghan from Castleisland was appointed principal of the school, Miss Noreen Flynn was assistant teacher.

The new school was built in 1967 and the school was amalgamated. The land on which the new school was built was owned by Tom Murphy and was adjacent to the site of the old school. The old school was later demolished and all that remains is the boundary wall. A substantial donation was made by Sean Harnett, a past pupil from Lower Purt towards the building of the new school. Recently the school was renovated.

THE GIRLS' SCHOOL (Knocknasna)

The first principal of the girls' school was Nora Hanley who was married to Thomas D. O Connor, a butcher, and a brother to W. D. O Connor.

After Nora came Julie Fitzgibbon, a daughter of Denis Fitzgibbon. She was married to the chemist Humphery O Donoghue. They lived in New Street, Abbeyfeale. Julia was an aunt of John Fitzgibbon, who later became principal of Dromtrasna.

Her assistant was Mrs Leahy. Mrs Leahy was Margaret O Connell originally from Meenkilly, and she had two brothers – Tom and Pat, both of whom were teachers – Tom was in Meenkilly and Pat was in Dromtrasna. Leahy lived near Gorteen Bridge and was married to a local farmer Mr. Johnny Leahy.

When Julia Fitzgibbon retired, Mrs. Leahy became principal. A short time later, the school was amalgamated and Davy the Master became Principal of the whole school. The staff of the school then was; David O Connor (Principal), Mrs. Leahy (privileged assistant), and Mrs. Nora O Connor second assistant. At this time the school was a mixed school. When Mrs. Leahy retired, Miss Bridie Harnett was appointed, Bridie's family came from Purt.

During this time the numbers went up and at the same the school was deamalgamated and the school now became a four teacher school. The principal of the Girls' school was Miss Bridie Harnett and her assistant was Miss Mary Joe Flynn. After the retirement of David O Connor, Liam O Callaghan was appointed principal and Miss Noreen Flynn was appointed assistant. Caroline Griffin replaced Noreen Flynn as assistant. Pat O Callaghan was appointed principal in 1979. In 2007 Ms. Doloras Keane was appointed assistant and in 2014 Billy Quirke was appointed principal at Knocknasna.

Dromtrasna National School

Dromtrasna School was first recognised by the Board of Education 154 years ago, in July 1860. The school house was built by the people with stone and mortar, it was a small humble, one room dwelling with 33 pupils on roll. The furniture was basic and consisted of a few large desks and some ten foot benches. There were two outside toilets, one for boys and one for girls.

The Manager was Fr.Coughlan P.P. The headmaster was Master Doody who sat up high on a desk or "Rostrum" which elevated his position thus enabling him to watch over all his pupils. The first assistant was Mrs. Buckley from Devon Road, the second assistant was Patrick

O'Connor from Cahirlane, who was appointed Principal in January 1907 when Master Doody retired.

The Principal had to be paid four times during the year, one or two shillings depending on the family's means but indeed his income was often supplemented by payment in kind – butter, eggs and turf. Discipline in the old school was often severe but that was acceptable at that time.

In January 1907, with 105 pupils on roll and with promises of a new school (which opened seven years later in 1914), Master Patrick O'Connell was appointed Principal. Here he ruled until 1946. Doody's Academy lasted for 54 years. The 1914 School flourished and grew. In February 1917 Mabel Vaughan paid a "notified visit" to inspect the cookery class, Ms Galvin was the teacher at that time. Ms. Vaughan noted that "a second table is urgently needed, also a curb fender would be an advantage for the hearth. Bars are needed for the top of the fireplace". She also suggested that tin basins could be purchased for 6d each.

In 1925 an Inspector, Ms. Porter stated that "needlework is making very good progress" and "the buttonholes are very neat". In 1954 Master John Fitzgibbon became Principal. In 1957 Ms. Mary O'Donnell taught needlework from first to third class and her sister Ms. Ann O'Donnell taught fourth to sixth class. (Ann later became Mrs. Cotter). In January 1975 flush toilets were installed at a cost of £900.00. In 1978 20 bags of coal cost £58.00. In 1982 Master Dermot Walsh became Principal. In February 1984 an Advertisement for a third teacher cost £24.52. On September 25th 1985 Mrs. Cotter retired. In July 1988 a Telephone was installed at the cost of £120. The shelter was built in 1989. In the 1980s three prefabs were added as temporary classrooms. In 1990 the water was connected. In April 2007 the uniform became compulsory. In April 2008, 94 years after the move to the 1914 school, classes moved to temporary accommodation on Michael Lyon's land at the cross, the 1914 building and the ruins of Doody's Academy were demolished.

October 1st. Saw the retirement of Principal Dermot Walsh and the appointment of Mrs. Ann Rothery as Principal.

The new school opened on June 12th. 2010, the official opening took place on June 2011, on the 150th anniversary of Primary Education in Dromtrasna. It was a momentous occasion for the school staff and the whole community.

FEALE VIEW NATIONAL SCHOOL

Feale View N.S. celebrated its centenary in 1998. It was built in 1898 and officially opened on 2/12/1901, with approx 100 pupils. The then building consisted of the present two front rooms only.

The first teachers in this two teacher school were Timothy and Kate O' Connor. Our records show that a number of the pupils who started school in 1901 actually transferred from either Meenkilly, Knockbrack or the Boys and Girls school in Abbeyfeale.

Feale View continued as a two teacher school until 1924 when Miss Eileen Fitzgerald joined the staff. At that point in time, two teachers taught in the bigger of the two rooms, one at either end. This situation continued until 1933 when the school was extended and the back room added. Tim and Kate O' Connor retired in September 1933 and were replaced by Timothy

Cotter (Principal) and Bridget O'Connor (daughter of the retiring couple) and Miss Fitzgerald making up the staff. Miss Fitzgerald, now Mrs. O'Sullivan retired in 1952 and Mrs. Cotter took her place. When Mrs. Cotter retired in 1957, Miss Mary Carroll was appointed. Miss Noreen Sheehan joined the staff in 1958 replacing Miss Carroll. This situation continued for another year when in 1959 Master Cotter retired and P.J. Lane began his tenure. P.J. Lane, Noreen Lane and Mrs. Galvin continued to educate the young of Caher Lane, Kilconlea, Abbeyfeal Hill and Kilmanihan until 1975 when Mrs. Galvin retired and Mary Joe Flynn moved into Feale View.

Due to a decrease in numbers Feale View reverted to a two teacher school in 1978 and lost the services of Mary Joe Flynn.

In December 1993 husband and wife team, P.J. and Noreen Lane retired, their hard work and dedication a very hard act to follow. They have been replaced by their past pupil Mary Harnett as Principal and Ciarán Fitzgibbon, Abbeyfeale, Assistant.

By the year 2005 numbers had reduced in Feale View N.S. Ciaran Fitzgibbon's name was submitted to the Diocesan Panel in March 2006. He was appointed Assistant Teacher at St. Anne's N.S. in Rathkeale in September 2006. Feale View school was thus reduced to a one-teacher school.

Feale View school closed its doors finally on June 30th 2009. Mrs. Mary Harnett was appointed Assistant Teacher at Dromtrasna N.S.

Mary Barry – Harnett

SPRINGMOUNT NATIONAL SCHOOL.

Springmount school was built in 1867. It is known as Ard Na Glaise. There were two large rooms and a smaller room in the centre. John MacAuliffe was the first principal and was known as "Old Mac". John MacAuliffe was appointed in Father Casey's time. He built a house near the school. It is possible that his wife worked in the school as well. He was related by marriage to Biddy Barrett who owned a shop near the Technical School. She kept girls who were going to the Convent.

When John MacAuliffe retired his son-in-law Joe O' Kelly was made principal. Joe was from Feohanagh and was teaching in Athea where he met John MacAuliffe's daughter Bessy MacAuliffe, also a teacher. They were married and Bessy was appointed to Springmount School. Later Tessy MacAuliffe, a sister to Bessy, was appointed second assistant. Bessy taught in the middle room and Tessy taught in the infants' room near the house. Tessy taught laundry and cookery to the girls and taught boys singing and dancing.

Mary Fitzgerald from Devon Rd. was appointed third assistant teacher. Her father was John Fitzgerald from Dromtrasna and her mother was Julia Leahy from Millstream.

Mary Fitzgerald was trained in England. Mary taught in Meenkilly with Sean Harnett and Andrew Downey around the time of the Second World War. When Joe O' Kelly retired, Seán (Johnny) Harnett was appointed principal. Seán's father came from Ballaugh and was known as "Parnell Harnett". Seán was trained in Limerick and was the last principal. Master Harnett is remembered for the wonderful maps that he made, which for the times were most innovative. When Mary Fitzgerald retired, Bridie O'Sullivan became second assistant. Bridie's maiden name was Leahy and her brother Johnny taught in Dromlegach, in Duagh parish and in Cratloe. Bridie also taught in Templeglantine for a long number of years.

The last assistant appointed to Springmount was Mrs. Mary Leahy of Mountmahon. Mrs. Leahy later went to teach in The Boy's National School in Abbeyfeale. She was married to Willie Leahy and her eldest son George followed her in the profession and now teaches in Dublin.

An integral part of the school was the 'shop', where Julia O'Sullivan trained the senior pupils in the art of weighing tea and sugar. Paraffin oil, candles and groceries were sold there. Currant buns and 'Peggy's Leg' were some of the delicacies enjoyed by the children.

Agnes, her sister and formerly a nurse in New Zealand helped in the shop. When the Church stations were held in the school, the O'Sullivans provided breakfast in the shop for the neighbours and the priest went to O'Kellys.

Next to the shop was the 'Store' where Jerry O'Sullivan sold provisions – meal, flour etc. At the back of the shop was an orchard which was prone to visits from uninvited guests. Another happy memory for the students of Springmount was the Christmas cards drawn by Jack McAuliffe, which he gave to the children. Jack and his brother Patrick lived beside the school in Joe O'Kelly's house. They were brothers of Bessy and Tessy McAuliffe.

Jack worked for years in the Indian Civil Service and fought in the Western Front in France before retiring to Springmount. Patrick was a chemist in Galway and later worked in R.B.Woulfe's in Abbeyfeale.

Football was played in 'Curtin's Inch'. This was once owned by Maurice Curtin, a grand uncle of Kieran Curtin. Kieran kept up the tradition in his time and allowed the children access to the field. The inch was across the road from the school in front of the pump.

P.S. Joseph O'Kelly and his wife Bessy MacAuliffe as well as being educators themselves, had a family who were distinguished in the field of education. Professor Brian O'Kelly, (M.J. O'Kelly), was an eminent archaeologist and was responsible for the excavation of Newgrange. He has many books written on archaeology. He held the chair of Archaeology in University College Cork.

James O'Kelly founded St. Its's College in Abbeyfeale. Anna taught in her brother's school. Meave O'Kelly was a secondary teacher and married Sean Lynch from Macroom. Patricia was a secondary teacher and died at the age of 27. Sean was an engineer.

Pat O Callaghan

Abbeyfeale Boys' National School

In an 1840's map of Abbeyfeale Town, a National School is shown as occupying a site on Bridge Street near where the present Library stands. The Famine Church on Church Street was constructed in 1847 in times of dire poverty through the fundraising efforts of Rev. Daniel Lyddy, P.P of Abbeyfeale at that time. Since the school, which succeeded the one built on Bridge Street, occupied a site adjacent to the newly built 1847 church on Church Street, it is most likely that the school was built soon after the church was completed. Rev. Daniel Lyddy was a keen educationalist, so having got the parish church completed, his attention would have turned to school development in Abbeyfeale. The school was built, probably in 1848 or early 1849. It was a two storey building and backed on to the present St. Mary's Cemetery. The original doorstep of that school was where the door of the present Chinese Restaurant now stands. When the Sisters

of Mercy came to Abbeyfeale on Sept. 24th 1871 they taught girls in the upstairs rooms.

Abbeyfeale Boys' National School New Street 1913

The school was built on a site donated by the Ellis family, Glenashrone, for the education of the youth of the parish. The site included a field next to the school which was intended for a teacher's residence. However Mr. Hanley decided to build his own house at Railway Road. This he later sold to Garda Pat Lynch. It is now owned by Noel Lynch (Pat's son). The field for the teacher's residence was divided into three sites and sold.

The New Street school comprised two schools – Junior school infants to std. 11 and Senior school std. 111 to V1. Each school had a garden, and the pupils in the Senior classes were taught gardening by Mr. Hanley who was a keen gardener. In his early years he also taught Irish step dancing. He had a large collection of English books which he lent to his pupils. This was at a time when very few parents could afford extra reading material for their children.

Each school had two rooms and a hall where the pupils hung their coats and had their lunch. The toilets were built along the river wall and this building was known as "The Closet".

Every winter the teachers bought bog deal to start the fires. Each pupil was asked to bring one penny per year to pay for the bog deal, a parish collection paid for the turf.

After school hours the building was used for adult Irish night classes, among those who taught there were Seán de hÓra and Dónal Mac Cárthaigh. Dónal Mac Cárthaigh stayed at the Commercial Hotel (Murphy's New Street). They both taught classes by lamp light. These classes ended when the vocational school was built. A Mr. Doyle taught the violin there on Saturdays. The local branch of the I.N.T.O. also used the school for their meetings.

Andrew Downey retired at the end of November 1974 and was not replaced. In February 1974 the remaining teachers and pupils moved to Scoil Mhuire na mBuachaillí on Church Street. Billy O'Connor, Mountmahon, (nephew of Mrs. Ward N.T.) freely gave his time and the use of his tractor to move the contents of the school.

Springmount School was closed and the staff and boys were transferred to the new boys' school. The girls were transferred to the Convent N.S.

Junior & Senior School Teachers – 1913 – 1975

Pat McCarthy Main Street, Mrs. Ward Mountmahon, William O'Sullivan, Bridge Street, Mrs. Eileen O'Sullivan, Bridge Street, Eddie McCarthy, Main Street, Mary O'Donnell, New Street, Joseph Hanley, Railway Road, Denis McCarthy, the Square, Michael Lynch, Rathea, Listowel, David Ward, Mountmahon, Andrew Downey, Clash, Pat Feely, Mountcollins, Tom Browne, Knockbrack.

Scoil Mhuire Na mBuachaillí

Scoil Mhuire na mBuachaillí is a relatively new school. It opened on the 18th February 1975. It is constructed on the site of the old St. Mary's Church, built in "Black 47" the worst year of the famine. It is an all boys school situated on the banks of the Feale, adjacent to the Kerry border.

Originally it was a one storey, flat-roofed building consisting of 5 main classrooms with an Assembly hall and kitchen being utilised as extra teaching space. A further extension supplied the school with a heated strong room which protects valuable equipment – computers, photocopier, television and video etc. The walls of the centre court yard of the school have been adorned by pictures of well known cartoon characters painted by the children themselves and the courtyard itself has been transformed into a playground for the younger children with slides, merry go round and a spectacular activity centre. One of the internal walls of the school has a colourful mural depicting the entire history of Abbeyfeale from the drowning of princess Fial up to the present day. This mural was again painted by the pupils under the supervision of local artist Tommy Moloney.

As school numbers increased, the need for extra ground became apparent. Adjoining land was purchased in 1982 and developed out of school and parish funds into the magnificent playgrounds that exist today. Baskets were erected and the boys commenced basketball practice. Within a few years, Scoil Mhuire competed within the county and for three years in a row brought the laurels home to Abbeyfeale.

Scoil Mhuire has access to the facilities of the local, modern G.A.A. grounds and complex which they visit on a regular basis. Gaelic football has always been traditional in the school and the school has on many occasions won the West Limerick primary school league. In 1999 they had a comprehensive victory over Newcastle West at the Inch.

The school also boasts an excellent soccer team and under the guidance of Frank Nelligan has accounted very well for itself in schools events throughout the country.

In 1988 a uniform was introduced to the school. It meant that the parents would not have to purchase expensive clothes for the reception of the sacraments, as large families found it a drain on their resources. The parents readily agreed that it would be a great advantage. A crest depicting the outline of the old Church was designed and was embellished with the motto VINCET VERITAS which means truth conquers.

The school choir was started in the early nineties. It has become a common and much appreciated contribution at local events. They sing at Mass on the first Sunday of each month, have sung at funerals of Abbeyfeale people and have participated in numerous fundraising events for charity, especially at Christmas.

In the early nineties a Parents' Council was formed in the school. This Council has been very active organising extra-curricular activities. They have organised swimming lessons, French and German classes and trips to pantomimes at Christmas. They have also given valuable help to the teachers during the school concerts and on sports days.

The school presents an annual concert in order to defray school expenses and in doing so gives Abbeyfeale parish a great night's entertainment. Parents and local business people provide sponsorship as they readily recognise the value of fostering young talents. The concert often had a topical theme running through it. In the past, the themes of drug awareness, emigration, the famine, the 1798 rebellion and the local history of Abbeyfeale have featured. Along with the input from pupils, parents and teachers, the concert owed a great deal to Áine Nic Gabhann, a local music teacher, Marion Quirke for her dancing tuition and Mary Barrett for her skill in costume making and make up.

The bell from St. Mary's Famine Church was donated to the school by Mary Moloney. The

bell had been donated to the 1847 Church by her granduncle Michael Anthony Moloney. When that Church was demolished in the 1960's Mary Moloney had retained the bell in her own backyard. She kindly donated the bell to the school and with the help of a local highly skilled Doody family, the bell was erected in the school grounds. On the 14th October 1995, at a special Mass in the school grounds, celebrated by school manager Rev. Eugene Boyce, the bell was once again blessed and dedicated. The bell is rung every day by the pupils and brings back to the people of Abbeyfeale fond memories of times past.

St. Mary's Boys' National School first opened its doors in 1913 and moved to its current site in 1975.

Following Department funding and a very successful fundraising drive, a major refurbishment was completed in 2002. An innovative design by architect and past pupil, Conor Dennison, led to the addition of a second level to the original building. This comprised two new classrooms and resource rooms. This extra space upstairs afforded us a much needed assembly area downstairs. The extensive redevelopment, carried out by Nautic Construction, also saw the improvement of the ground floor layout and the provision of two new yards, front and rear. We are delighted with this new design which enables us at St. Mary's to cater for our pupils' needs.

Meenkilly National School

“The school building is in an extraordinary bad condition being kept from falling by props which break up the floor space and render organisation and supervision more difficult even than it was before”

This was recorded in the annual inspection report on the 3rd May 1915. The school which has since been demolished, consisted of one long room where three teachers attempted to carry out their daily duties. From the outside, the school looked like a cottage with a thatched roof, and the only unusual being three chimneys. Each year from 1905 the deplorable state of the school was emphasised by the inspectors and the teachers were profusely praised for their work in such unsuitable conditions. On the 13th November 1905, Mr. J. Martin in his report, concluded that the school was:

“old, the furniture was indifferent and altogether the building was not well suited for a school”.

Again, on the 27th and 28th November, 1906, P.J Fitzgerald emphasised the decrepit condition of the school:

“The accommodation is wholly inadequate and the light is bad”

He described the school as being so small that the pupils had barely enough room to pass each other. On the 21st and 22nd of June 1909, the same inspector again referred to the deplorable conditions of the school.

“The room is very much congested and the desk accommodation is inadequate and unsuitable”

Obviously the conditions in this school were deplorable. Mr. Denis Broderick, whose father was a teacher in the school, recounted to me a visit by an inspector named Charlie Donovan. As this inspector, with the roll book opened in front of him, looked through it, a “shower of soot” dislodged from the roof and landed on the roll book. Such were the conditions at that time.

Despite these conditions, the work carried out by the three teachers in the school was of an exemplary nature. The Principal was Thomas O’Connell from Meenkilly. He was trained in Drumcondra and taught 6th, 7th and 8th classes. In the Winter he had an assistant due to the increase in numbers of older pupils who would be needed to work on the farm in the Spring. Mrs. O’Connor taught infants and first class and she was trained in Dromcondra. A particularly interesting story was that of Seán Broderick (formerly Port) who taught 2nd to 5th classes. He, like the majority of young men in the late 1800s, gave up school at an early age to work at home on the farm. At the age of eighteen, growing discontented with his life on the farm, he returned to national school. A year and a half later, Mr. John McAuliffe from Springmount, Abbeyfeale, approached him to take a teaching exam in the neighbouring town of Listowel. Here a total of twenty applicants, both male and female, went for the exam. This consisted of an essay, questions on a given passage and grammatical questions. In the year 1889, which was approximately the year that Seán Broderick would have sat the exam, the essays were a choice of the following:

- (a) Any memorable place, city, castle or battlefield you have visited
- (b) The use of pictures in teaching
- (c) Colonisation

One feels that these titles, which were obviously topical at the time, give us an image of the early 1900s which was when the new school was built. Two days after sitting the exam, Seán Broderick was informed by Mr. Bateman that he had passed the exam and received a post in Meenkilly Old National School, to go on in 1913 to the new school.

These teachers had to work in extraordinarily bad conditions. Despite this, the proficiency of the teachers was praised in the inspector’s report as each year:

“The full course of the official programme had been intelligently taught”

In July 1911, an inspection was carried out in the school. The inspector, Mr. L. Daly, wrote a letter to Seán Broderick as follows:

“I am extremely pleased with the work of this school in spite of the terrible congestion – accomodation for 60, average for the last year was 95.2 – the work is of a superior character”

He outlined and applauded the very efficient running of the school, giving particular praise to articulation and neatness. He concluded on a very positive note, praising profusely the work of the teachers in the school:

“I make no suggestions. The teachers may proceed as they are working, for I do not think that they could do better than they are doing in existing circumstances”.

Mr. Daly’s inspection report deemed the school to be of an extremely high standard. Due to the deplorable conditions of this school, it was replaced with a completely new building in 1915. The new Meenkilly N.S. was built about 100 yards away from the previous old school and consisted of three separate school rooms as well as two cloakrooms. On the 29th January 1917, Mr. R.J.Little visited the school and concluded that:

“The school is now, for the first time, housed in a spacious bright and sanitary building, and the teachers’ labours will inevitably produce more satisfactory results, with less expenditure of their own energy and health”

In the school, each teacher received what was known as “The Teacher’s Pocket Diary and Almanach” from Browne & Nolan Ltd. This diary is extremely insightful about teaching life and education at the time. One of the initial pages consisted of a table where the teacher could work out wages per month, per week and per day, for example, Seán Broderick received £15 per annum, so by looking at the table he could work out his wages.

In the early nineteen hundreds, the school consisted of 180 pupils in winter and about 160 in the spring (due to the older children working on the farm). School started each day at nine o clock and finished at half past three. The young boys and girls would have worn “bibs” (type of dress) and the older boys wore trousers. All pupils were barefoot in the summer and wore hob-nailed boots in the winter. Each day the young children would bring a slate and slate pencil to school and the older children would bring “jotters” and a pen, which would have resembled the thickness of a refill of a modern day pen. These were dipped into the ink wells which were part of each desk. Lunches consisted of a bottle of milk and home-made bread and butter. As the method of heating the school was three open fires, each pupil would also bring a sod of turf. Some of the more affluent parents would bring a little cart of turf for the winter so their children would be exempt from the chore of bringing turf each day.

In this school, the first existing roll book is from 1921 for the boys and 1935 for the girls/ Between the 3rd and 23rd of May 1921, nine boys were enrolled in Meenkilly National school. From their enrolment, each year the pupils were given an exam in reading, writing, maths, drawing, grammar, geography, history, music and science. Meenkilly school won the Carlisle and Blake award for excellence in 1911. The individual teacher concerned was Mr. Thomas O’Connell.

Meenkilly Teachers:

Michael Curtin (Old School)

Jerry McCarthy (Old School)

Julia Browne (Old school)

Mary O Connell(Old school)

Denis Fitzgibbon(Old school)

Denis Ward (Old school)

Thomas O’Connell (Old School 1890) 1916 (New School)

John Broderick (Old School 1886) 1916 (New School)

Máire Bean Uí Chonchubhair 1934

Seán Ó hAirtnéide 1938

Andrew Downey 1940

Máire Nic Gearailt 1945

Seán Mac Curtáin	1948
Cáit Bean Uí Churtáin	1949
Harriet Bean Mhic Choitir	1951
Siobhán Nic Chathail	1953
Máire Ní Shúileabháin	1954
Pádraig S. Ó Liain	1955
Mícheál Ó Ceallaigh	1957
Máire P. Bean Uí Chléirigh	1959
Eibhlín Bean Uí Choileáin	1965

Caitlín de Bhulbh & Coláiste Mhuire, Abbeyfeale

Coláiste Mhuire, a secondary school for girls, was founded by the late Caitlín de Bhulbh in order to meet a pressing need in the West Limerick area. The Coláiste guaranteed facilities for girls to progress to Leaving certificate Examination, a facility which was lacking in the 1930's in the area. The venture was a great success and was due in the main to the initiative and drive of Kathleen Woulfe. Following the death in the 1980's, former pupil Kit Ahern penned the following farewell to Kathleen in the "Limerick Leader". While the piece was written 'as gaeilge', I give the English version on this occasion: "Since few persons have heard that Kathleen Woulfe had died and was buried in Reilig Íde, Abbeyfeale, I feel obliged to make it known to her old pupils, since I believe that each and every one of them is indebted to her. Around 1937/1938, there was no Leaving Certificate standard education available in the Abbeyfeale area. Kathleen courageously ventured and founded her own Secondary School in the town. It was little encouragement or practical assistance that she got from influential persons but she ploughed ahead with fortitude and soon had pupils from Athea, Templeglantine, Knocknagoshel, Brosna, Duagh and Kilmorna. A dwelling house in New Street was her school and the name she gave it was "Coláiste Mhuire". She had plenty of experience and practice at secondary teaching as she had spent some years teaching in similar schools in Kilcullen and Sligo. She was a Classical Scholar with an honours degree in Celtic Studies. She was also a great Irish Scholar and woe betide the girl who would neglect her Latin, French or Irish! Before she founded the school, she would go almost every year to a little town near Lourdes so that she would have the correct accent. The year she did not go to France, she would be found in Ballinskelligs, teaching and polishing her Irish. It is certain that her interest in those subjects greatly influenced her students and they talk about it to this day. The good example of Coláiste Mhuire was not lost on the surrounding area and it was not long before Jim O'Kelly and his wife founded a secondary school for boys, St. Ita's or Coláiste Íde Naofa. One after another, schools were founded in Dromcollogher, Glin, Shanagolden and Tarbert and it is certain that without them, very few pupils from ordinary

families in the areas would have had the advantage of secondary education. Heavenly rest to those teachers who made secondary education available, almost free of charge, to the communities long before there was mention of free State education for all. Kathleen placed great emphasis on art and it was in Coláiste Mhuire that many a girl heard of the “Mona Lisa” or Leonardo da Vinci, Paul Herry and Charlie Lamb. She understood well the importance of drama and music and many a concert was staged in Halla Íde in Abbeyfeale. She awakened interest in physical exercise and we had games of comogie each Saturday in Creagh’s Inch behind the River Feale. I had the privilege of being one of the first teachers in the school. There also was Mary Ward from Banard, Abbeyfeale , who retired on marrying Thomas McAuliffe from Knockbrack, Abbeyfeale. She later died at an early age. Noreen Ahern was there also, an excellent teacher and musician. She founded her own school afterwards in Limerick city called “The Crescent School of Commerce”. Noreen married Michael McNamara, now deceased. Their son is now in charge of the school and is well-known in radio and television circle also. Nora Murphy from Brosna spent some time with us before she joined the Blue Sisters in Milford House. Two other Kerrywomen who taught in the school were Siobhán Foley from Killorglin, who married secondary Schools Inspector, Seán O’Leary, and Ina Gleasure who married Matt O’Sullivan in Ballyheigue. Siobhán Feeney was from Portlaw, Co. Waterford, she was with us until 1946. She left when she married Michael Scanlan, N.T. in Killorglin. She continued teaching there. Another person who spent time in our school was Eileen Colgan. She went to the West when she married Frank Chambers in Westport, Co. Mayo. I cannot remember farther back than that. In 1941, I married Dónal Ahern and I gave up teaching in 1946. Dónal was teaching in Islandanny at that time. A couple of years later, we came to live with my aunt, Kathy Scanlon in the Ocean Bar in Ballyunion and Dónal secured a post as Principal Teacher in Beale, Ballyunion. Kathleen Woulfe was somewhat a loner or very individualistic type of person. She was also ‘elegant’ to a degree and was, justifiably, very proud of the Woulfe family who were banished from Limerick city to Cratloe in the West Limerick hills. She was very impatient with those who were inclined to be ‘up-starts’ or insincere. Her heart, however, was in the right place. God rest her noble, gentle soul”

Le Kit Ahern – (aistriú ón Ghaeilge le N.Ó L.)



Caitlín de Bhulbh R.I.P. on right
 Sonny Cotter R.I.P. centre
 Ms. O'Connor R.I.P. on left

AN GARDA SÍOCHANA

The Civic Guard was formed in the South of Ireland on the 21st February 1922. A new Irish Government had taken over from the British Administration. This was its new Police Force. The Civic Guard was restructured and renamed “An Garda Síochána” on the 8th August 1922. When the organizing committee, established by Michael Collins set about the creation of this new, armed police force, it took the R.I.C as its’ model. Following a mutiny at its Kildare training depot, the Garda’s firearms were removed. The structure of accountability of the new ~Garda Síochána also mirrored exactly the British System. The R.I.C. was directed by an Inspector General, appointed by the Government, which also appointed commissioned officers. *In the new Garda Síochána, the Inspector General was replaced by a Garda Commissioner. The Garda Síochána is under the control of Central Government. In this aspect it carries on the tradition established by the R.I.C.*

The first Garda Station in Abbeyfeale opened on the 22nd February 1923 in a premises owned by Mr. M.J. Moloney, in New Street. That first Garda Barrack building was later owned by the Clancy Family who ran an electrical shop there.

An old photograph of that first Garda group in Abbeyfeale names the members as follows:

Patrick James Marron	Sergeant
Date of birth	11 March 1903
Date of Appointment	22 February 1923
Home Address	Kilshalwey, Ballymote, Co. Sligo
Previous Occupation	None
Promoted Sergeant	1 May 1923
Stations of Service	Abbeyfeale, Clonmel, Depot Headquarters, Kilsheelan.
Date of Retirement	10 March 1966
Total Service	43 years 17 days
Date of Death	3 rd March 1986

Patrick Finley, 51	
Date of Birth	17 March 1897
Date of Appointment	27 th February 1922
Home Address	Clonduff, Rosenalis, Leix.
Previous Occupation	Farmer
Stations of Service	Abbeyfeale, Listowel, William Street, Ballinderry, Portumna.
Date of Retirement	16 th March 1960
Total Service	38years 19 days
Date of Death	21 November 1969

James Green, 1981	
Date of Birth	4 th November 1901
Date of Appointment	18 October 1922
Home Address	Co. Fermanagh
Previous Occupation	Farmer
Stations of Service	Abbeyfeale.

Date of Resignation 16 March 1926 (voluntary to emigrate)
Total Service 3 years 149 days

James McGuinness 2139

Date of Birth 24 August 1900
Date of Appointment 1 November 1922
Home Address Oram, Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan
Previous Occupation Farmer
Stations of Service Abbeyfeale, Banagher, Kenmare, Listowel.
Date of Retirement 29 March 1958
Total Service 35 years 149 days
Date of Death 3 October 1983

Timothy Lehane 4991

Date of Birth 26 November 1908
Date of Appointment 3 August 1923
Home Address Eyries, Castletownbere, Co. Cork
Previous Occupation Farmer
Promoted Sergeant 3 April 1937
Stations of Service Abbeyfeale, Limerick, Newcastle West,
Croghan, Enniskerry, Depot H Q,
Knocknagree, Kanturk, Castletownroche
Date of retirement 13 August 1937
Total Service 44 years 10 days
Date of Death 15 September 1988

Jeremiah Price, 6705

Date of Birth : 7 March 1897
Date of Appointment : 26 March 1925
Home Address : Muckross, Killarney,
Co. Kerry
Previous Occupation : Farm Worker
Stations of Service : Abbeyfeale, Tournafulla,
Depot H. Q.
Date of Resignation : 5 February 1930
(Incapacitation)
Total Service : 4 years 316 days

Conditions were cramped at the Station and on the 28th February 1924 the Gardai moved to the old R.I.C. Barracks at Barrack Street, now known as Bridge Street. However, the R.I.C. Barrack was in urgent need of repair and renovation. At that time W.D. O'Connor of Main Street had got two houses built in what is now Bridge Street. Both houses were two-storey buildings. On the 15th November 1926, the Gardai took over one house as a barrack and the second house as a residence for the local sergeant and his family. A new barrack on the Killarney Road, and adjacent to the town was built in 1968. Two nearby residences for Gardai were built at the same time. By the 1980's this barrack proved inadequate and on 5th July 2005 a modern, spacious and visually impressive building was officially opened by the Minister for Justice Mr. Michael McDowell, at the Priests' Cross, Abbeyfeale.

ST. ITA'S Hall

St Ita's Hall was known as the Parochial Hall. It was officially opened on New Year's Night 1928. Fund-raising for the Hall was organised by Canon Jeremiah Murphy, who had been appointed P.P. of Abbeyfeale in April 1924. The building of the Hall was a co-operative effort; all involved giving their service free. This new hall replaced the Temperance Hall, which was burned down by The Black and Tans. In the downstairs area, the late Mr. Jim Kelly and his sister Anna commenced their Post Primary School, later to become St. Ita's College in a new location.

Presently the Hall is a hive of activity-Legion of Mary, Bereavement Support, West Limerick Community development, Parents' & Todler Group and many others. In recognition of Abbeyfeale's proud association with the Irish Language the name over the main door reads "Halla Íde Naofa".



Food in Abbeyfeale Parish

Food is enjoyed on every day of the year. Fruits and vegetables such as avocados, mangos, melons, pineapples, yams, asparagus, and so on, unheard of in the past, are now in everyday menus. Even the once ubiquitous potato, arguably a cultural icon in our nation's history, is now giving way to such culinary impostors as pasta.

Usually, the main meal of the day was eaten in the middle of the day- this was essential to ensure adequate levels of energy and strength to complete a strenuous day's manual labour. The potato was the basis for all such meals. From a low base in the pre-famine years, the population in our western area grew steadily from the early 1700s onwards. Remote areas became occupied as of necessity, though the land was not of good quality. The potato, introduced in the late 16th century, became an ever more important part of the people's diet- so much so that by the end of the 18th century it was the main staple food item.

The reasons for the success of the potato in Abbeyfeale and surrounding parishes were several: it had a high productive power; it was eminently suited to spade cultivation in 'lazy-beds' made by turning '*taobh-fhóds*' - '*side-sods*' - which required only an energetic worker with a spade; it was capable of providing sufficient food for families- even from the small patches of poor land then held by labourers. Couples married younger, confident that the potato would sustain them and their families on even a little land.

As the population rapidly increased, demand for land to support additional families resulted in sub-division of holdings to the extent that original family small-holdings became fragmented. Everyone depended on the potato, and when tragedy struck with the failure of the potato crop from disease, the Great Famine devastated the countryside. It is stated that Abbeyfeale parish did not suffer as much devastation as other places did; there are no records of widespread deaths or starvation, as happened in other areas.

In olden days in our parish, food was basic, functional and limited in variety; reasons for this include economic demands, basic dietary requirements and land quality. Animals such as pigs, cattle and sheep had to be sold to pay high rents- meat was a luxury only the well-off could afford. Even rabbits, hares, fish and game-birds were the preserve of the landlord classes, and poaching them was a criminal offence which was rigorously prosecuted in the courts so that the gentry might have hunting and shooting for their leisure pursuits.

Daily diet was limited to the minimum required to fuel the exertions of necessary labour; no-one but the ruling classes could afford to eat or drink merely for pleasure. Finally, the land for the most part was suitable only for potatoes, oats and vegetables like turnips and cabbages. Tillage in general was limited, the soil being best suited to grass production and dairy farming.

Milk and milk products were the only viable option for ensuring payment of the rent, and the bare survival of the tenant farmers.

The surrounding parishes, including the adjoining parish of Duagh in Co. Kerry, were in much the same predicament. The food of the ordinary folk there was similar to that in Abbeyfeale. The personal story of Joseph O'Connor, whose family was evicted by Lord Listowel from their holding at *Cnoc Maol*, Duagh- the Bare Hill- near Abbeyfeale, is recounted in the 1984 book, *Hostage to Fortune*, that he ate 'spuds' three times a day, easing them down with sour milk, when he had it.

He had never tasted bacon, beef or mutton, save a rare sheep's-head or blood-puddings, despite spending all his time feeding pigs, sheep and cattle to make the £20 annual rent- until, finally, he was thrown out of his home and forced to join the Lincoln Regiment of the British Army. There, he first got such meat to eat, as well as proper clothing, foot-wear, a dry place to lay his head, and payment for his daily toil.

Much the same fare was available to the tenantry in Abbeyfeale Parish. Potatoes were the staple diet- usually boiled or roasted and eaten with milk and salt – or water and salt when milk was scarce. Oatmeal porridge, 'stirabout,' was widely eaten- usually with a pinch of salt. A little cabbage was eaten with the potatoes when in season; when available a herring or a piece of fat bacon, shared by all the family, would be rubbed on the potato for 'kitchen' or flavour.

Turnips were relatively new to the area. In Duagh parish, O'Mahony of Kilmeany had a Scotch gardener, and he it was who introduced turnip-seed to the tenants on that estate. Fr. Daniel Lyddy of Abbeyfeale likewise introduced Scottish turnip seed to the Abbeyfeale tenants. They proved to be a valuable source of food when potatoes were not to be had. Though quite tasty - and a welcome addition to the local food reserves- turnips were described as being 'of no food value and suitable only for fodder.' Turnips, however, have stood the best test, the 'proof' of eating, and they remain a popular item on the family table - and on hotel and restaurant menus in the parish.

Bread was mainly oaten; wheat-flour was available - at a price – from tillage areas like Newcastle West and Rathkeale but the cost was prohibitive to most. The oaten bread was made in thin, unleavened cakes. Ingredients were oatmeal and salt; water was added while hot so as to make a paste of the meal. It was rolled into thin cakes and baked on a griddle, a round iron plate of about 1' 6" in diameter. The griddle was supported over hot coals on a trivet, a three-legged metal stand. The bread was turned during baking to ensure each side was evenly baked- and eaten while still hot.

In the Famine times, Indian meal – 'yellow meal' —was imported to help feed the hungry Irish people. It was difficult to cook and digest as it was single-ground only, instead of the required double-grinding to make it possible to cook, and eat. Charles Edward, Trevelyan, Assistant Secretary to the British Treasury, refused to allow the expense of double-grinding - in order to avoid the people becoming over-dependent on the government! Trevelyan is remembered in a poor light to this day in Ireland, in song and story, principally because he came 'to represent the British government's controversial policies of minimal intervention and attempting to encourage self-reliance,' while people starved.

It was necessary for the Board of Works to import and distribute Scottish quern-stones in Ireland so that the starving people could grind the corn in order to cook it and make stirabout of it. Trevelyan went on to become known as the father of the modern British Civil Service. In his favour it might be said that in the 1830s, while holding a government post in Calcutta, 'he devoted himself to the cause of education, particularly of providing Indians with schooling in European science and literature'. One trusts that they did not have to depend on Trevelyan for food to eat.

At times, there would be sour milk or buttermilk, but these were mainly used for butter and

bread-making. Calves had first call on milk reserves- they along with the pig paid the rent and saved the family from the dreaded poor-house. Butter was added to that of the neighbours in a firkin which, when full, was sent to the Cork Butter Market and sold. The income was used mainly to ensure that the rent was paid and to buy essentials for the house and farm. Alcohol, when available, was mainly of the home-brewed sort, and was a dangerous addition to a half-empty stomach.

Fr. Casey initiated a Temperance Society in the parish and personally saw that abstinence from alcoholic drink was 'enforced' by regular supervision, cajoling and, where necessary, by sanction. Pledges were issued to many parishioners- some took the pledge several times. Incidentally, in times past, the 'best' poitín was said to have been made in Duagh parish and brought into Abbeyfeale parish for weddings, wakes and other like events.

As we look to the future, food and food production will pose many questions in our parish, e.g., the question of wilful food waste in a world where there is widespread starvation; the ethics of genetic modification of plants and other food sources; obesity and other health and welfare issues for children and adults; alcohol abuse – these are some of the issues which will occupy our minds and consciences- and will give us plenty of food for thought.

Nicholas Leonard



Eviction

Choirs

Choral Singing in Abbeyfeale Parish

It was a sombre time. World War 2 had ended but wartime restrictions were still in place. The shadow of rationing in tea, petrol, fruit and other imports still prevailed. We had escaped a German invasion but times were still harsh.

In the parish of Abbeyfeale, Canon Patrick Carroll had replaced Canon Hogan as P.P. Canon Carroll was a man of few words but decisive actions. Soon after his appointment to Abbeyfeale, he had organised the formation of a Men's Confraternity. Great emphasis was placed on the monthly Sunday Confraternity Mass, celebrated at 8a.m. on the Third Sunday of every month. The seats in the main isle and the Kerry isle were reserved for the men of the parish. Each group had its particular banner with a prefect in charge who recorded those present. To add to the importance of these monthly occasions, Canon Carroll asked Pádraig Ó Conchubhair to form and train an adult mixed choir. Under the expert tuition of Pádraig the choir was soon familiar with Faith of Our Fathers, Hail Queen of Heaven, Sweet Heart of Jesus, Sweet Sacrament Divine, O Sacrament Most Holy and many other hymns. Soon their singing was adding a magic all its own to the seemingly arid Latin Mass which nobody understood. To our childhood ears it sounded as close as possible to a foretaste of the heavenly choruses.

Pádraig trained and conducted the choir group. These included Anthony Donovan, Kathleen Wrenn, Anna O Kelly, Dan Leahy, Jakes Collins, Joan Browne, Nancy Leahy, Ita Dillon, Eddie Mc Carthy, Margaret Ann O Neill, Teresa O Donnell, Sean Broderick and many others. Sitting at the harmonium was Mrs. Margaret Collins familiarly known as Maggie. Her musical knowledge and commitment to the choir group contributed greatly to the choir success. Attendance at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was also religiously observed by organist and choir on Sunday evenings.

A pattern had been set for choirs in future years. Some minor changes were introduced during Canon Gallagher's time as P.P. He advocated Congregational Singing and hymn leaflets appropriate to the different liturgical seasons were provided in the Church for Sunday Mass. Solo singers helped to lead the congregation in the singing of hymns. Michael Moloney and Sean Broderick lent their talent on many occasions. Among the organists at this time were Sr. M.Sacred Heart, Sr. Consilio and Sr. Patricia.

The present Abbeyfeale Church Choir was formed in 1978. Both Monsignor Gallagher and Fr. Eamonn Dillane had a great interest in music and singing. Following a few local concerts in which Dee Dennison was musical director, he was asked to become musical director of the choir. It was a brilliant decision. Since then, Dee has trained and led a mixed choir of over 30 members to great musical heights in all aspects of Liturgical Singing. Organists of outstanding ability have enhanced this choral excellence. Among these were Marie

Fitzgerald, Ann Dennison, Margaret O'Donnell, Gordon Woulfe, Melanie Eggleston and Ríona Curtin.

Prior to 1985, Áine Nic Gabhann conducted classes in orchestral instruments for Abbeyfeale Youth. She was also training members of the Desmond Singers in Newcastle West at this time. As an acclaimed international contralto, Áine was in an ideal position to recognise and nurture talent.

Three members of the Desmond Choir were natives of Abbeyfeale and being aware of the great singing heritage of the area, they requested Áine to commence training a male voice choir in Abbeyfeale. Thus “Cór na bhFear Cois Féile” was founded in 1985, the three founding members being Michael Moloney, Jack Fitzgerald and Sean Broderick. They, with Áine formed the nucleus of what was to become a very successful choir. Membership grew steadily until it reached a max of 21. Áine, being a talented musician, singer and teacher soon had the choir doing two, three and four part harmonies as well as a large repertoire of Church music and Christmas Carols. Practices were held initially in St. Ita’s Hall and later in St. Mary’s Boys’ N.S. Public performances included a few concerts each year, some church appearances principally in tribute to relatives of choir members, and participation at Choral Festivals in Killarney, Wexford, Wales and Germany. Participation in international festivals has resulted in friendships forged over many years with other singers. This in turn leading to new acceptance, understanding and appreciation of the giftedness of others. Long may it continue.

ADULT CHURCH CHOIR

A BRIEF HISTORY

A number of pageants and concerts led to the start of the church choir in Abbeyfeale. The present conductor, Dee Dennison had been involved in the musical side of a number of concerts in the Convent Hall. These concerts had led to a choral group being formed – St. Mary’s Choral Society - which performed the Ó Riada mass in Dingle, then in Broadford, Co. Clare for an anniversary mass. They also sang at a concert in the Devon Inn. Following a concert in the Convent Hall which contained a section on “Carols Around The World”, the conductor was asked by Monsignor Dan Gallagher to form a church choir. It was started virtually right away in 1978. The cast from the shows and the choral group formed the nucleus of the choir.

Rehearsals were held in the Convent in an upstairs room. The Sisters of Mercy saw to it that the room was always well heated. Meetings were held weekly on Wednesday nights from 8pm to 10 pm and at the start the singing was all unison. The choir sang at Mass every weekend.

The first formal Mass learned was the Bodley Mass, which was done for the year of the Papal visit in 1979. In 1981 and 1982 the conductor attended the Maynooth Summer School of church music. Afterwards he introduced some of the pieces he had learned on the course. These were in two part and four part harmony and began the long journey to the present repertoire which is all four part.

Along the way the choir has had the help of a number of accompanists. The conductor took on the role from the start but realised he wasn’t quite up to the task. The choir was then blessed with the help for a number of years of Marie Fitzgerald, a highly talented local student who has since gone on to international acclaim. Ann Roche, a sister of the choirmaster, helped out on a number of occasions as well as Mary Sheehy from Newcastlewest. Dr. O Donnell’s sister, Margaret, also helped on a few occasions and in return the choir went to Broadford two years running to perform at the Christmas Mass. Next came Gordon Woulfe, a brilliant and multi-talented organist who gave years of service to the choir. He was followed by Melanie Eggleston, another wonderful musician and finally Ríona Curtin, who is still playing and is worth her weight in gold. Ríona not only plays for the mass but also attends the practice nights. This has been a massive help to the choir as they have a professional musician on hand all the time.

As the music became a bit more involved, it became necessary to get someone with musical knowledge to turn the pages for the organist. This role was ably filled by Norma Gaire and presently by Aoife Daly. It is a vital role and the choir is lucky to have such talented and willing helpers. There are others also, who play a huge role in the running of the choir. Dr. Mullins was the first to provide printing

facilities for the choir. That role is now filled by Noreen Cotter, who has endless patience with every new request. Dori Cotter is keeper of the music files, and is endlessly forgiving when members seem to have lost track of where their music has gone. Ann Maria Dennison is also an invaluable help in any of a number of different ways, especially in knowing where relevant information is to be found.

There have been a number of notable events along the way for the choir. They performed two Ó Riada Masses for Raidio na Gaeltachta that were broadcast nationally. They performed at the carol services in Newcastlewest for three years running. They attended a one day event in Carlow with a Limerick choir from Fr. Dillane's church in Raheen. There were two interdenominational masses, one in Tralee and one in Limerick. They did a carol performance in front of AIB for the switching on of the Christmas lights at the turn of the century. Around the same time they did a series of Christmas visits to Rathfredagh, St. Ita's Newcastlewest and Kilcara nursing home. Later they performed in St. John's Cathedral in Limerick with the Musica Sacra Chorale and the following year Musica Sacra came out to Abbeyfeale and performed with the local choir. In later years they did a number of broadcasts at Christmas time for West Limerick Radio and were joined by the Male Voice Choir. Paraic Sweeney, another talented Abbeyfeale man, recorded the choir for WLR and the choir can be heard on CD. One of the highlights was an invitation to sing at the Chrism Mass in Limerick where the Holy Oils were being blessed by the bishop. The Fr. Casey centenary provided another first as the choir was broadcast nationally on TV performing at the centenary Mass in Abbeyfeale. In later years they did a number of Christmas Concerts with Aidan O Carroll's choir from Tralee, and returned the favour with subsequent concerts in Siamsa Tíre Tralee. There was also a mass with the travellers in our own church in conjunction with West Limerick Radio. When Philip Enright launched the Gary Mc Mahon weekend, the choir was asked to perform Aifreann na Ríochta at the Mass. This is the Mass that Gary wrote. They of course obliged and have been performing it since at the annual celebration. Philip joins the choir for these performances.

For the last two years the choir has been involved in pre-Christmas concerts in Abbeyfeale with the cream of local talent showcasing different musical elements: national school choirs, second level choirs under Nan Howard and Fiona Collins, the Male Voice Choir, Jazz musicians, soloists, musicians both traditional and classical and not forgetting the donkey on his way to Jerusalem.

Along the road they were helped in every way by the priests of the time. The original valve organ gave up the ghost and was replaced by a hand built instrument. That in time, with financial help from Canon Neville was replaced with the present instrument, along with external speakers to fully fill the church with a great sound. Canon O Shea put in underfloor heating for the choir as the practises had transferred from the convent to the church which can be quite cold on a winter's night.

Practices are held on Wednesday nights, preparing for Easter and Christmas. They still start at 8.00 and finish at 10.00 and new members are always welcome. The director is eternally grateful to the choir members for their continued dedication to the work of the choir. Without their energy and cooperation the music would not be a shadow of what they produce on a continual basis. It is to be hoped that it will continue for many years to come.



Abbeyfeale Anglers' Association

Chairman
Paddy O Sullivan

Treasurer
Nora Mary O Sullivan

Secretary
Denis Dennison

06/06/2014

Abbeyfeale Anglers' Association was founded in 1980 to provide angling facilities for club members. It has grown in numbers to the present day and currently has 102 adult and 9 juvenile members. All members are covered by Public Liability and Person to Person insurance.

The club is affiliated to the national body Salmon and Seatrout Recreational Anglers of Ireland (SSTRAI) and all members are affiliated to the Angling Council of Ireland. Four of the committee members of the club are on the executive of SSTRAI (Chairman, Vice-chairman, Child Liaison Officer, Lower Shannon Region). The club committee is elected annually at the AGM by the members present. It consists of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Deputy Chairman, Deputy Secretary and eight committee members.

During the nineties it became apparent that the salmon numbers in the river were in serious decline. A campaign to get a salmon hatchery for the river was begun. A site was selected, a study done on water volume and suitability and the application was sent to the Minister. In the face of a lot of opposition from other clubs, the application finally got to the minister. The minister granted the permission and sent it to Limerick County Council. Unfortunately, at the eleventh hour, an objection went to the Council and that ended the hatchery.

The club then focussed on directing its energies towards improving fish stocks in the river and enhancing salmon habitat. It was instrumental, with Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), in getting the dam in Finuge altered with the installation of a fish counter. This allowed easier upriver movement for salmon and trout and enabled proper data on salmon numbers and movement to be taken. The club was also actively engaged in getting Limerick Co. Co., in conjunction with IFI, to put a rock pool fish pass on the Allaghaun when they were repairing the bridge some years ago.

The nature of the river has changed over the years, due to a number of factors. Water levels are much lower, leading to smaller holding pools for salmon. The nature of floods has also changed, making them much faster and more damaging to banks. The club has been involved in bank protection since 2000. It secured a substantial grant from Minister Frank Fahy (December 2000) towards bank protection on the lower reaches of our fishery. The plans for these works were drawn up by Dr. Martin O Grady. Major improvements were carried out at Relihans, O Connors, Horgans, Lanes, Moloneys, Scanlons and Dillons.

Since 2000 the club has spent all spare funds on bank protection, mostly on rock armour which is ongoing on an annual basis.

Scientists in Ireland are against hatcheries. They consider that the enhancement of spawning habitat on the upper reaches is the most beneficial method for increasing fish numbers. In 2012, in keeping with the advice of the scientists, the club started on the renewal of one of the major spawning tributaries on the Feale – the Oolagh. The club secured a grant from IFI towards machinery and running costs, and eliminated tunnelling and dams on the stream as far as Cratloe Bridge. That work is continuing.

The club also became involved with eradicating invasive species. An incident of giant hogweed

was eliminated at Fealesbridge and a lot of work was done on removing Himalayan Balsam from the river banks.

The club sees itself as part of the larger community and members are prepared to work with local organisations for the good of the community. In 2012, in this spirit of inclusiveness, the club became involved with the Town Park and Anneke Vrieling, in conjunction with West Limerick Resources. This led to the club providing backing for the publication of “Abbeyfeale Park – A Nature Guide” This, in turn, led to the emergence of the Feale Biodiversity Fund. Anneke is currently doing super work on the Oolagh and Allaghaun in eliminating invasive species and detailing the different species of plant, insect, bird and animal life in the area. The club is also involved with APGAI, Ireland (Association of Professional Game Angling Instructors, Ireland) and provided tuition for the last two years on fly casting at the GAA grounds in Abbeyfeale. There were five professional casting instructors, all members of APGAI. The club got a grant towards equipment for the day from Limerick County Council.

As part of the Gathering week last year, a second fly casting tuition day was held on 20th July as part of the festivities (APGAI instructors were on hand again) and the day finished with a Paella and Tapas meal at the GAA grounds. Limerick Co. Co. again provided us with an equipment grant for the casting instruction.

The club is presently actively involved with the Gathering Committee, Abbeyfeale, in organising the festival for 2014. We sincerely hope that the 2014 festival is as good or better than the previous one.

Some facts from the past

In the 1920's, a record number of salmon was taken on the Feale – 127,000 to net and rod. This is the highest record of salmon ever taken on any river in Ireland. In 1962, 43,000 salmon were taken. In 1963, 1475 salmon were taken in the nets in one hour on the Cashen, where the Feale runs into the sea. In 2007, the counter at Scartleigh showed that 14,301 salmon came upriver. Last year that number was down to 5,540. This year, up to the end of April, only 180 salmon had crossed the dam.

A rod caught salmon for the tourist is valued at €1,000.00 minimum. If salmon numbers could be increased to even one tenth of the previous bounty, it would represent a massive angling tourism boost right along the river. The Moy is a classic example of tourist spin off from angling. Abbeyfeale benefited from this tourism in the middle of the last century. There was hardly a week during the fishing season without a complement of visiting anglers, mostly British. They are an element of the past, as are the five salmon dealers in town. If salmon and trout numbers could be increased, it could lead to an increase in the number of young people on the river and the return of tourist angling, something that would be of enormous benefit to the area and to the country in these times.

The club will continue to work towards providing angling for its members and the return of viable numbers of fish to the river. This would be a worthwhile achievement and could lead to large numbers of young and old back on the banks of the Feale. Go néirí linn.

THE RIVER OOLAGH

Rivers are among Ireland's greatest natural resources. They provide recreation, food, relaxation and spiritual reflection. They are often used as geographical boundaries between counties and regions. Rivers have a history dating back over centuries. Each river has its local lore of stories – some joyful and some tragic. Ancient battles were fought at river fords, resulting in ancient victories or ancient defeats. A wise man once said "Rivers and the inhabitants of the watery element were made for wise men to contemplate and fools to pass by without consideration"

The Oolagh which is a tributary of the Feale, is one river which merits our consideration. Situated in a peaceful valley, with rising agricultural land on its right bank and proximity to the Abbeyfeale- Athea road on its left, it is easily accessible. The Oolagh rises on the slopes of Sugar Hill at a place called "Polcadh Baile" ie a stream welling up through the ground. It flows south westwards and joins the Feale about a half mile from Abbeyfeale. It marks the boundary between Athea and Templeglantine parishes. It was originally called the White River.

During the Middle Ages and later, the area where the Oolagh joins the Feale was more important socially than Abbeyfeale town itself. Close by was Purt Castle, associated with the Geraldines. An ancient cattle fair "The Purt fair" was held on the lands surrounding the Castle. With the defeat of the Earl of Desmond, Purt Castle fell into disrepair. The cattle fair was later transferred to Abbeyfeale town.

In ancient times, according to local historians there were four crossing points on the Oolagh between Buckley's Cross and Cratloe Bridge. A simple device of laying wooden planks from bank to bank to facilitate carts and pedestrians was used. In 1894, a man named John Harnett together with his wife and mother in law, was returning from Abbeyfeale town in a horse cart and rail. The river was now in flood. The cart was overturned at the crossing and the three occupants were thrown into the swollen river. The man succeeded in grabbing a bush on the bank and was rescued. The two women were lost. The body of the mother in law was recovered the following morning. But the wife's body was never found. At various times the planks were swept away by floods, so crossings were unpredictable.

Rivers have changed course through the centuries. The Oolagh is no exception. On the 1833-1846 Ordinance Survey map the river course is shown south of its present position. Its new course is noted on the 1898 Ordinance Survey map as substantially north of this position. This map also shows a footbridge to the east of the ford. This footbridge no longer exists.

In the current O.S. Map (2009) the river is seen to have changed again. It has changed course to the south.

A need for a proper crossing was always experienced by local people. Requests were made to Limerick Co. Council to provide a footbridge. Eventually in the late 1940's a concrete footbridge was erected by Limerick Co. Council. It consisted of two large concrete structures on either side of the river to support the bridge, and having a central column in the river to support the middle of the span. The bridge was reinforced with iron bars and had hand rails on both sides. In time the central column in the river was undermined and left suspended as a free standing column with the river flowing freely underneath. Representations were made to Limerick Co. Council to underpin the central column. However before any remedial work was carried out, a large flood swept a big tree down river. It carried the centre support of the bridge, breaking the bridge in two in the process. This collapse occurred in the early 1990's. It

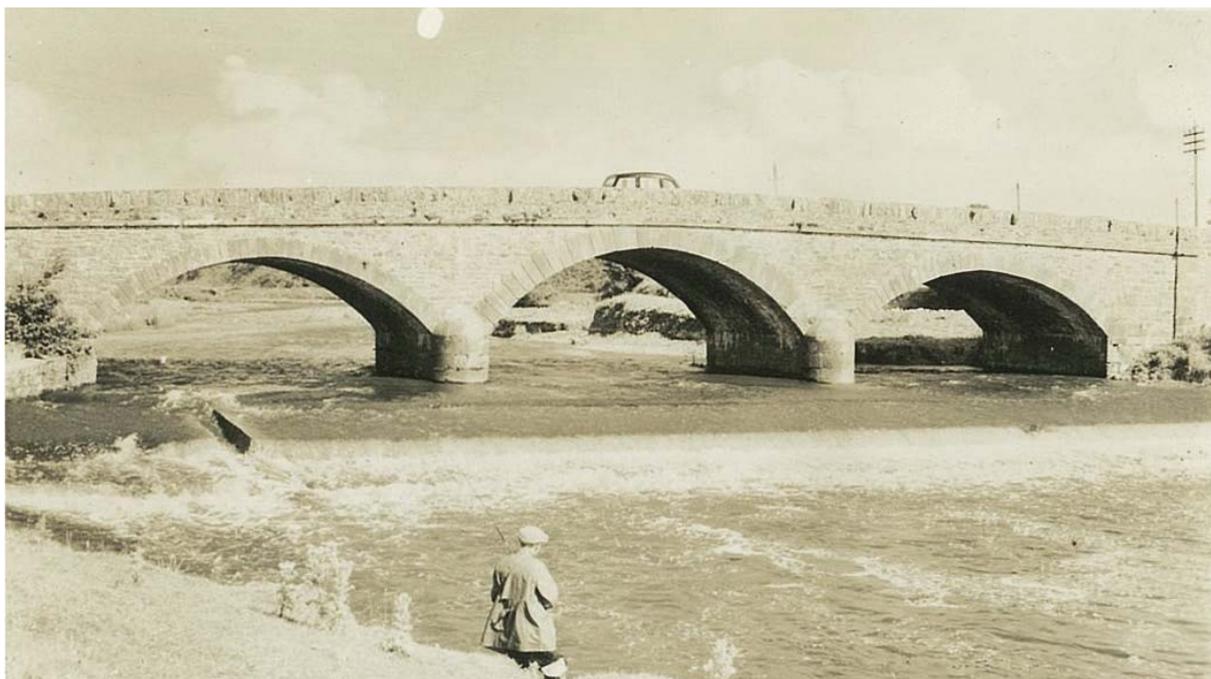
was then a source of danger to children and the large concrete structures on either side of the river, which supported the bridge, had to be closed off with iron gates.

In the late 1990's a concrete slab was placed in the river at the location of an earlier ford. This was to enable vehicular traffic to cross the river. The slab was put in place by Limerick Co. Council. Timmy Horgan, Tournafulla, was the foreman for the council in charge of the work. According to Timmy, the concrete slab was about eighteen inches thick, and was reinforced with mesh. Officers of the Shannon Regional Fisheries board were in attendance as the work was being carried out to ensure that it was done in accordance with the Dept. of Fisheries' requirements. However, over the course of a number of years, Inland Fisheries Ireland came to realise that the slab was a major cause of obstruction to salmon, sea trout and lamprey going upriver to spawn. On numerous occasions they have had to net salmon from below the concrete slab and lift them up over the slab so that they can continue upriver to spawn. This has been a major source of work and worry to Mr. Paddy Halpin- head water keeper on the Feale. In normal weather conditions only a few centimetres of water flow over the slab. Inland Fisheries Ireland have requested the local angling club to try and have the slab removed.

In this time of emphasis on eco-friendliness and care for all our natural resources, it is appropriate that we would make every effort to return the Oolagh River to its former glory as a salmon spawning river. To this end the only viable solution is the building of a proper bridge capable of taking local traffic and the removal of the concrete slab which has obstructed the salmon in their journey upstream to spawning grounds. It behoves us all to ensure the Oolagh and its future hopes of prosperity are not consigned to a filing cabinet and forgotten.

“For men may come and men may go

But I go on for ever”



THE FORGE ON MAIN STREET.

Originally, all the houses on Main Street were thatched. Gradually, in the late 1880's the houses were replaced by slated dwellings. The Meade Family did not change their dwelling. This dwelling, incorporating the forge, remained as a link with the past. The house belonged to Patie Meade and his sister Mag Meade. Patie was a blacksmith and his forge was a social centre for all who came on business or merely to exchange news and jokes. The forge was a busy place. The thud of the hammer on the anvil and the hiss of steam were familiar sounds to the passersby. Meade's forge was demolished in February 1979. Patie and his sister had already gone to their reward.

A forge at Bridge Street was owned by the Begley Family. Another forge at St. Ita's Road was owned by the Lane family. Paddy Brosnan from Cordal worked in his forge below the Boy's school, now Teach na Féile at the end of New Street.

Employment

The factory at Kostal provides employment for approximately 450 people. Formerly car components were produced at the factory but in recent times the Kostal Company have commenced producing solar panels. In former times the factory employed as many as 1400 but because of a world wide recession a down sizing has taken place.

Irish Wire Weavers employs 30 people approx. It produces fine mesh, which is used as a filter in engines.

My Town of Abbeyfeale

The London lights are burning bright
On this new millenium day
And Kilburn Road is my abode
But my thoughts are far away
From Kensal Green to sweet Groegen
The memories I do steal
To that little town of high renown
And my home in Abbeyfeale.

Do sportsmen run with hound and gun
Above Kilconlea high?
Do they hunt the hare from his mountain lair
And the pheasant from the sky?
Is ball still played in the inch's glade
'neath the churchbell's solemn peal?
Do they take the field and never yield
Those lads from Abbeyfeale?

Is turf still cut with sleán and foot
In black Dromfhada bog?
Do they make the tay in the same old way



On a burning bogdeal log?
 Do they still draw out as curlews shout
 With pony, cart and creel?
 Then home again by Dalton's glen
 To the town of Abbeyfeale.
 At Liz Doody's gate after Mass we'd wait
 Our childhood friends to greet
 And Motty's shop was our favourite stop
 For to eat the gallon sweet.
 From Pat Fealey's height what a wonderful sight
 Below us would reveal
 Where salmon leap in still waters deep
 By our own sweet Abbeyfeale.

To Tobin's Hall we would call
 To hear the showbands play
 With the Western Star known near and far
 We would dance the night away.
 With a likely girl we would dance and swirl
 Soft kisses to steal
 And slowly home by Glenashrone
 To my home near Abbeyfeale.

I have travelled far 'neath a wandering star
 Many splendours have I seen.
 From Victoria's Falls to Great China's Walls
 And all places in between.
 Now my journey's done
 And my race is run
 One last wish I'll reveal
 To end my days near Caherhayes
 And my town of Abbeyfeale.

Raymond Fenelly



Fr. Casey's statue being created.

Fireside Memories - The June Fair

Wisha, do you remember the great Fair Days that were held in Abbeyfeale?
 Every year there were 12 or more, to-day there's not one, a chroi.
 A big one was held in November, Ah! But June's was the best of them all.
 'Twas known as the Famous 29th, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.

The Jobbers would come from all over, from the north, south, east and the west.
 They'd 'put up' at Keeffes, John Richards and Colberts, who had feather beds of the best.
 From breaking of day the Fair morning, the roads to town would be black,
 With cattle and drovers and horses and carts and beggars with bags on their backs.

You'd see tinsmiths with pannies and gallons and the man with the 3 card trick.
Ballad sellers and singers and Soss with his bell and Jewmen with parcels of silks.
And do you remember the 'standings' that would set up below in the Square?
Displaying the latest in fashionable style, Oh! my, we'd gather to stare.

The air would be heavy with noises, voices raised in 'barg'ning and song,
The swishing of ash plants and the slapping of palms and the constant dropping of dung.
And when we'd be feeling hungry, shure we'd head up for W D's,
For a schelp of hot bread with brown sugar on top, those days we were easily pleased.

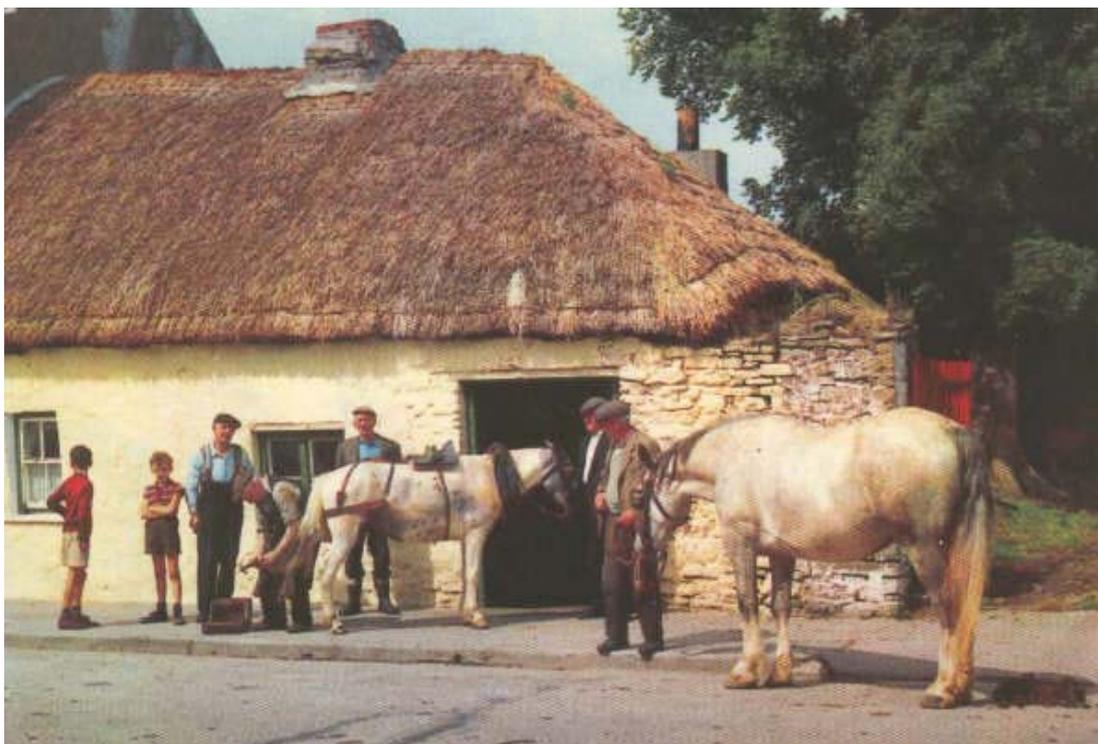
The Hirings took place at Joy's Corner, shure that was the first place we met.
"I picked you from the crowd that day." "Wisha, now, will you listen to that!"
"You were eyeing the boys from Brosna, Oh! You were the noted flirt".
"I was only making you jealous, a chroi, you'd your eye on a damsel from Purt."!

"The first fair after we were married, only three days man and wife,
You took me, dressed up in my wedding costume, I was never so proud in my life"
"Twas a pale blue dress with flounces and you had your hair pinned high!"
"Do you remember all that Mike"? "Shure, weren't you the light of my eye"!

"Going home in the heel of the evening, you stopped the pony and trap.
And picked me a bunch of wild daisies...."
"Maggie, now, that's enough of that....."

Now all that is left are memories, gone are the farmers' boys.
The toll man has passed through the Golden Gate and hushed are the stall women's cries.
"But I wonder if up there somewhere, midst the sound of celestial chimes,
Do they hold a Heavenly 29th, like we did, in the rare old times."

Margaret OConnor – Shea.



The Parish Priests of Abbeyfeale were as follows:

Rev. James O'Connor 1704 registered as P.P. For Abbeyfeale and Templeathea.
Rev. Luke Collins 1720 approx. to 1775 approx.
Rev. Maurice Roche. 1775 – 1780 (approx.)
Rev. Thomas O'Sullivan 1780 – 1799
Rev. David O'Sullivan 1799 - 1800. He left Abbeyfeale because he was attacked and tortured in an attempt to get the Christmas dues.
Rev. Thomas O'Neill 1800 – 1813
Rev. John Sheehy 1813 - 1824
Very Rev. Daniel Lyddy 1824 -1849
Very Rev. Thomas Carroll 1849 – 1856
Very Rev. Michael Coghlan 1856 – 1883
Very Rev. William Casey 1883 - 1907
Rev. Patrick Lee 1907 - 1918
Rev. John Cregan 1918 -1924
Rev. Jeremiah Murphy 1924 – 1936
Rev. Thomas Hogan 1936 -1944
Rev. Patrick Carroll 1944 – 1959
Rev. Patrick Lynch 1959 – 1964
Rev. Robert O'Sullivan 1964 -1965
Rev. Philip Enright 1965 – 1969
Rev. Michael Purtill 1969 -1975
Rev. Daniel Gallagher 1975 – 1986
Rev. James Neville 1986 – 2002
Rev. John O'Shea 2002 – present.

Church Appointments and Transfers in Abbeyfeale Parish

Looking back - Abbeyfeale - Our Parish

As we near the close of the second Millennium, it is interesting, challenging and somewhat chastening, to reflect, from the comparative luxury of our times, on times past in the parish, on the people who lived here and on the priests who ministered to them. In our affluent times, it is difficult to visualize a time when Mass had to be celebrated outdoor in a lonely Glen. Such was the reality during Penal Times in Ireland, and in countless Parishes we have the folk memory of such times. The name “The Altar Field” describes the site of such a Penal Times site for the celebration of Mass. An “Altar Field” is situated in Abbeyfeale parish in Ballybehy South, near the former railway line.

We do not know exactly where the earliest residence of an Abbeyfeale P.P. was situated. But folk memory points to a site, along the Ballaugh road, about one mile from the town, between the homes of John Joe O'Connor and Bill Kelly, as the site of a parochial house. The site was later owned by Kate Harris and her son Jeremiah “Fox” O Connor (New York). The present owner of the site is Bill Harnett, brother of Batt Harnett (The Square) and presently living in New York. In his book “Gentle Place and Simple Things” Kevin Danaher has the following information. “Nearly twenty years before that, (the year 1919) another Parish Priest was the victim of a raiding band. This was in Abbeyfeale shortly after Christmas when Fr. David O'Sullivan was assaulted in his own house and tortured to make him reveal the whereabouts

of the Christmas offerings paid to him by his flock; the unfortunate clergyman was put sitting on the kitchen fire and was severely burned, but refused to give them any information, until they had run off when help came. Some blamed the Whiteboys for this outrage, but others held that it was a band of common robbers". After this attack, he left Abbeyfeale and became P.P. of Knockderry. Perhaps it was after this attack the decision was made to site the P.P.'s residence on Clash road. The Lands where the residence was stood were later bought by the County Council and built upon. This is the site of the present Hillview Drive. This house was lived in by Fr. Coghlan, Fr. Casey, Canon Lee, Canon Cregan, Canon Murphy, Canon Hogan, and Canon O'Carroll. Canon O' Carroll got the present parochial house built.

The Clash Road Parochial residence was bought by the late Mr. Downey N.T. who taught at the boys' National school. The Downey family lived in the former parochial house until the 1960's.

The Treaty, between Ireland and England following the Black and Tan War, was signed in July 1921. Following the signing of the treaty, the R.I.C. policemen had no further authority in the enforcement of law and order. This duty would henceforward be performed by the Gardai. The R.I.C. barrack was the actual building, which is now known as St. Ita's College. Following the disbandment of the R.I.C. the building was bought by W. D. O' Connor family. It was rented by the Abbeyfeale Parish as a Curates' house until about 1940. The Gardai came to live in New Street, in the house now owned by Mr. Ward. The present curates' residence was built about the year 1940.

The following is a list of the Parish Priests and Curates who served in Abbeyfeale Parish from 1704 to 1997. Our earliest records date from 1704 but these records make no mention of curates from 1704-1800! During the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1 and the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the monks from the Cistercian Monastery in Abbeyfeale were dispersed. They lived among the people and ministered to them – under threat of severe punishment and death itself. Understandably, during the Penal Times which succeeded this – there was no mention of the presence of a priest among his people – except those who were “registered”. So our sources of information are very scant. Of one thing we can be certain – the Priest was there when needed – despite having to travel on foot or on horseback. There are also “gaps” in our information. Some readers may be able to supply the missing links in regard to appointments of Parish Priests and Curates!

- 1704 Rev. James O Connor was registered as P.P. for Abbeyfeale and Templeathea.
- 1720 (approx) Rev. Luke Collins was P.P. Abbeyfeale. He lived in Cragg near Mountcollins, a house now owned by Eddie Barry. He was appointed Canon of the Diocese in 1734. He was supposed to have died about 1775. Most likely he gave his name to Mountcollins.
- 1775 Rev. Maurice Roche appointed P.P. He was ordained in 1764 and is said to have died young.
- 1780 (approx) Rev. Thomas Sullivan appointed P.P. of Abbeyfeale.
- 1799 Rev. Thomas Sullivan died.
- 1799 Rev. David O'Sullivan appointed P.P. of Abbeyfeale.
- 1800 Rev. David O'Sullivan, owing to an attack and attempted robbery of his house, left Abbeyfeale and became P.P. Knockaderry.

- 1800 Rev. Thomas O' Neill appointed P.P. of Abbeyfeale.
- 1813 Rev. Thomas O' Neill P.P. died. Rev. John Sheehy appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1814 Rev. John Sheehy appointed P.P. Parteen. Rev. David Fitzgerald appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1825 Rev. David Fitzgerald appointed P.P. Kildimo.
Rev. Daniel Liddy, curate at St. John's Limerick, appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
In 1847 he got St. Mary's Parish Church built.
- 1849 Rev. Daniel Lyddy appointed P.P. in Ballingarry.
- 1851 Fr. Lyddy died, he was buried at his own request, in St. Mary's Church Abbeyfeale.
- 1849 Rev. Thomas Carroll, P.P. Tournafulla, appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1856 Rev. Thomas Carroll died.
Rev. Michael Coghlan, DD. at St. Michael's Limerick, appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale. He introduced the Mercy Sisters to Abbeyfeale in 1871.
He got a Convent School built in 1874-75 and a Convent built in 1877-78.
- 1869 January 6th Rev. William Casey sent to Abbeyfeale on temporary duty.
- 1871 November 18th Rev. William Casey appointed C.C. in Abbeyfeale.
- 1880 Very Rev. Michael Coghlan retired as P.P. of Abbeyfeale.
- 1880 Rev. William Casey, the senior Curate, appointed P.P. of Abbeyfeale. Fr. Byrne was C.C. at this time.
- 1883 June 20th Very Rev. Michael Coghlan died.
- 1886 Feb 3rd Most Rev. George Butler, Bishop of Limerick died.
- 1886 June 29th Rev. Edward O' Dwyer was consecrated Bishop of Limerick.
- 1892 August 15th – The foundation Stone of the Convent Chapel was laid.
Rev. Timothy Curtin (native of Tournafulla) was C.C. in Abbeyfeale at this time.
- 1895 April 6th Rev. Timothy Curtin appointed P.P. Effin.
Rev. William Fenton appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1900 Rev. William Fenton appointed P.P. Templeglantine.
- 1900 Rev. R.J. Ambrose appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1907 December 29th Rev. William Casey P.P. Abbeyfeale died.
- 1907 February 2nd Rev. Patrick Lee P.P. Pallaskenry, appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1912 Rev. David O' Riordan was C.C. in Abbeyfeale at this time.
- 1917 August 19th Most Rev. Edward Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, died.
- 1918 March 10th Rev. Denis Hallinan consecrated Bishop of Limerick.

- 1918 May, Rev. Canon Lee appointed P.P. Newcastlewest.
Rev. John Cregan P.P. Athea appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1921 Rev. John Carr and Rev. David Fitzgerald were curates in Abbeyfeale.
- 1923 July 2nd Most Rev. Denis Hallihan, Bishop of Limerick died.
- 1924 March 2nd Most Rev. David Keane consecrated Bishop of Limerick.
- 1924 April 9th Very Rev. John Cregan P.P. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. St. Munchin's Limerick.
Rev. Jeremiah Canon Murphy P.P. Coolcappa, appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale. Rev. Thomas Mortell was C.C. in Abbeyfeale at this time.
- 1926 August 21st. Rev. Thomas Mortell C.C. Abbeyfeale, appointed C.C. at St. Munchin's.
Rev. Patrick Ruddle C.C. Ballingarry to be C.C. Abbeyfeale.
Rev. John Houlihan C.C. Abbeyfeale at this time also.
- 1936 Feb 12th Very Rev. Jeremiah Canon Murphy, P.P. Abbeyfeale died.
Very Rev. Thomas Hogan P.P. Ballingarry appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1936 August 24th Rev. Patrick Ruddle C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. Toornafulla.
Rev. William Meade (recalled from the U.S.A.) appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1943 July 24th Rev. John Houlihan C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. Templeglantine.
- 1943 September 21st Rev. John Halpin C.C. Mahoonagh appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1944 June 4th Very Rev. Thomas Canon Hogan P.P. Abbeyfeale died.
Very Rev. Patrick Carroll P.P. Killeedy appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1945 March 18th Most Rev. David Keane Bishop Of Limerick died.
- 1945 May 6th Rev. William Meade died suddenly.
- 1945 July Rev. John Liston-Diocesan Examiner appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1945 Dec 20th Very Rev. Patrick O Neill D.D. P.P. of St. Munchins appointed Bishop of Limerick.
- 1957 Oct 7th Rev. John Halpin C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. Cratloe.
Rev. Michael Frawley C.C. Bulgaden appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1958 March 26th Most Rev. Patrick O Neill D.D. Bishop of Limerick died.
- 1958 August 31st Rev. Henry Murphy D.D. St. Munchin's College appointed Bishop of Limerick.
- 1959 June 3rd Very Rev. Patrick Canon Carroll P.P. Abbeyfeale died.
- 1959 August 4th Very Rev. Patrick Lynch P.P. Kilcolman appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1963 Feb 23rd Rev. John Liston C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. Fedamore.
Rev. John Casey D.D. C.C. Adare appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1964 May 4th Very Rev. Patrick Canon Lynch P.P. Abbeyfeale died.

- Very Rev. Robert O Sullivan P.P. Janesboro appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1964 Oct 3rd Rev. John Casey C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. Coolcapa.
Rev. Timothy Greene C.C. Castlemahon appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1965 Sept 30th Very Rev. Robert O'Sullivan P.P. Abbeyfeale died suddenly.
Very Rev. Philip Enright P.P. Ashford appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1967 July 1st Rev. Timothy Green C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed C.C. Kilmallock.
Rev. Charles O'Neill C.C. Mungret appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1969 August 28th Very Rev. Philip Canon Enright died.
Very Rev. Michael Purtill P.P. Parteen appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
- 1971 Sept 29th Rev. Michael Frawley C.C. Abbeyfeale to be P.P. Banogue.
Rev. Eamonn Dillane C.C. Kilfinane to be C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1973 Oct 8th Most Rev Henry Murphy D.D. Bishop of Limerick died.
- 1974 July 14th Rev. Jeremiah Newman, President of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth,
consecrated Bishop of Limerick.
- 1975 August. Very Rev. Michael Purtill P.P. Abbeyfeale retired.
Very Rev. Daniel Gallagher P.P. Mungret appointed P.P. Abbeyfeale.
Sept 20th Very Rev. Michael Purtill died.
- 1979 Sept 1st Rev. Charles O'Neill C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. Glenroe.
Rev. John Fitzgerald C.C. St. John's, Limerick appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1980 Sept 1st Rev. Eamonn Dillane C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. Mungret.
Rev. Joseph Kennedy, St. Munchins's College, appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1986 May Rev. Monsig Gallagher retired as P.P. Abbeyfeale to become C.C. Abbeyfeale.
Very Rev. James Neville P.P. St. Paul's appointd P.P. Abbeyfeale.
Oct. Rev Joseph Kennedy C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. Ardpatrick.
Rev. Joseph Shire C.C. Loughill/Ballyhahill appointd C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1990 Sept. Rev. Joseph Shire C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed
C.C. Our Lady Queen of Peace, Limerick.
Rev Eugene Boyce C.C. Newcastlewest appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1995 April 3rd Most Rev. Jermiah Newman, Bishop of Limerick died
Sept 2nd Rev. Eugene Boyce C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed C.C. Askeaton.
Rev. Michael Cussen C.C. Athea, appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 1996 Sept 7th Rev. John Fitzgerald C.C. Abbeyfeale, appointed C.C. Monaleen.
Rev. Leo McDonnell. C.C. Our Lady of the Rosary, Limerick, appointed C.C.
Abbeyfeale.
- 1997 Oct.4th Rev. Michael Cussen C.C. Abbeyfeale appointed P.P. Fedamore.
Oct 11th Rev. Timothy Curtin C.C. Broadford appointed C.C. Abbeyfeale.
- 2000 Sept Rev Timothy Curtin appointed to Cappagh

- 2002 Sept 1st Rev. Canon James Neville retired as PP Abbeyfeale.
- 2002 21st Sept Rev. John O'Shea PP Moyross appointed PP Abbeyfeale.
- 2008 20th Sept Rev. Leo McDonnell appointed CC St John's Limerick.
- 2008 20th Sept Rev. Micheál Liston appointed CC Abbeyfeale.
- 2013 1st April Rev. Micheál Liston appointed Admin. in Templeglantine
- 2013 Dec 11th Rev. Joseph Foley CC Bruff appointed CC Abbeyfeale.

Sr. Delia Curtin

Church of the Assumption, Abbeyfeale Parish Church

To Abbeyfeale parishioners, the Famine Church represented a hallowed place where the very walls exuded an atmosphere of prayer and sacrifice. There was seating for approximately 350 people on the ground floor and accommodation for a further 250 in the combined galleries. Surveys had shown a need for a 1000 capacity church. Therefore when considerations of suitability, capacity and future prospects were taken into account, it became evident that changes would have to take place. This fact involved no small measure of emotion, heartache and soul searching for parishioners and most particularly for the residents of Church Street. The offer of a free site on convent Street from the Sisters of Mercy, and a further extension to this site offered by Mr. Con Broderick of Main Street swayed the balance in favour of siting the new Church at Convent Street. Slowly and painfully people came to accept the emerging situation. Finally, in 1967 King Brothers, builders of Killarney moved their machinery to the Convent Street site. By 1968 the new church was ready. It was blessed and opened on Sunday 23rd June 1968 by Most Rev. Henry Murphy, Bishop of Limerick.



Church of the Assumption

The Church of the Assumption is situated on Convent Street, across from the old convent and the new secondary school. A short tree-lined avenue leads up to the front doors of the Church while, on either side, the spacious church-yard provides parking and plenty of room for church occasions. The large dimensions of the yard serve to create an oasis of calm despite the traffic outside on the busy street. It was blessed by Dr. Henry Murphy, designed by P.J. Sheehan and built by J.&M. King, under the leadership of Philip Canon Enright. It is a fine example of the modern Church building styles that were adopted after the liturgical changes of the second Vatican Council. In the vestibule, a joyful and welcoming note is sounded by the vibrant yellow drapes and the community notice board that holds notes about current local activities. The Church is built in the traditional cruciform shape yet the new simplification of form and

spatial openness creates a lovely light feeling as one enters the nave and this aided by the light through the stained glass windows that run along the top of each wall and the warm colours on the beautiful vaulted ceilings.

Abbeyfeale Church contains some notable Christian art. An intricate mosaic of the Transfiguration creates a backdrop to the altar and the two stained glass windows on either side depict the story of the Good Samaritan and that of the miracle of Lazarus. The large front window depicts the Assumption of Mary while the window on the right transept represents the healing of lepers and the one on the left also shows Jesus healing the sick. There is symbolism here too, for example, the hexagonal shape of the baptismal font beside the main altar which signifies the seven days of the Creation and the creation of the new life on a new day. There are shrines to St. Joseph and to Mary built into the right transept while a small Adoration Chapel can be entered from the left transept. This was built in 1991 and contains statues of Our Lady and the Sacred Heart. Five magnificent stained glass windows represent the story of Jesus from the Last Supper to the Resurrection and Pentecost. The small chapel is silent except for the ticking of the clock and the daylight filtering through the stained glass creates a tranquil meditative space.

The Church is the fourth in a succession of Churches stretching back to the original twelfth century Cistercian Abbey from which the town takes its name. The predecessor of today's Church was St. Mary's which was built in 1847 and became known as the "famine chapel". St. Mary's succeeded a small thatched chapel which had been built on the site of the Cistercian Abbey and was said to have contained some fragmentary remains of it. The past is still linked strongly with the present here as traces from all the old churches were brought forward with each new building. The statue of Our Lady in the small chapel came from the Famine Church and a cornerstone from it was made into the holy water font that is built into the wall beside the grotto at the right side of this Church yard. The first parish priest registered for Abbeyfeale was Fr. James O'Connor. That was in 1704. The foundation stone of the Church of the Assumption is built into the wall beside the front door and inscribed *Hunc Lapidem Primarium* ie "this is the first stone"



Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Abbeyfeale

Date: 1991

Architect : Tom McGahon, Shannon.

Builder : James Quirke, Killarney Rd., Abbeyfeale.

Art Design of Windows : William Earley Studios, Dublin.

Approx. Cost : €90,000

White Marble Altar : Received from Sisters of Mercy, Ballingarry, Co. Limerick.

Sacred Heart Statue : Received from Sisters of Mercy, Abbeyfeale.

Statue of Our Lady: Originally in the Famine Church, Church St. Abbeyfeale. Removed to Convent of Mercy, Abbeyfeale when St. Mary’s Church was demolished. Presented to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel when it was completed.

Year of Consecrated Life Priestly and Religious Vocations in Abbeyfeale Parish

“I am counting on you to “wake up the world” – This was the rallying call of Pope Francis to all Religious, when dedicating 2015 as a year of prayer and thanksgiving for women and men who live a vocation to the Religious Life. We are blessed to have many religious sisters, brothers and priests, born in Abbeyfeale Parish who minister or have ministered both in Ireland and on mission fields. Their particular ministries include education, healthcare, chaplaincy, working with the marginalized, care of the elderly and those with special needs.

Others have dedicated their lives to prayer and contemplation. We look forward to a new Springtime for the faith and for Consecrated Life in Ireland. Pope Francis urges all Christians to be people of joy and not prophets of doom. It was that same spirit of joy, which urged all those in the following list of Priests and religious, to embark on a “road less travelled”.

Religious Vocations in Abbeyfeale Parish.

Priests from Abbeyfeale Parish who ministered in the Diocese of Limerick.

Rev. Danial Murphy	Church St.	Rev. John J. O’ Donnell	The Hill.
Rev. Dermot Mccarthy	The Square.	Rev Michael Lane	Killarney Rd.
Rev. John Browne	The Square.	Rev. Cornelius Collins	Main St.
Rev. John Moloney	West End.		

Priests from Abbeyfeale parish who ministered in the U.S.A.

Rev. Michael Galvin	Ballybehy.		
Rev. John Galvin	Ballybehy.	Rev. William Lane	New St.
Rev. Maurice Galvin	Ballybehy.	Rev. Richard Harnett	New St.
Rev. Timothy Galvin	Ballybehy.	Rev. Thomas Greaney	New St.
Rev. Garret Galvin	Ballybehy.	Rev. John Harnett	Clash.
Rev. Maurice Woulfe	Ballybehy.	Rev. John J. Healy	The Hill.
Rev. Thomas o Rourke	Clash.	Rev. William O Donnell	The Hill.
Rev. Daniel McEney	Dromtrasna.	Rev. Denis Lyons	Purt.
Rev. Thomas McEney	Dromtrasna.	Rev. Daniel Collins	Purt.
Rev. Patrick McEney	Dromtrasna.	Rev. Michael Collins	Purt.
Rev. Peter Harnett	Dromtrasna.	Rev. Patrick O Carroll	Purt.
Rev. Daniel Harnett	Dromtrasna.	Rev. Daniel O’Sullivan	Main Street
Rev Humphrey Moynihan	Main St.	Rev. Thomas O Donoghue	Meenahela.
Rev. Patrick Collins	Main St.	Rev. Michael Curtin	Meenahela.
Rev. Denis McEney	Main St.	Rev. Patrick Leahy	Banard.
Rev. Michael Enright	Church St.	Rev. John O Sullivan	Mountmahon
Rev. Patrick Enright	Church St.	Rev. Thomas Lane	Kilconlea.
Rev. John Enright	Church St.		

Spiritane Order (formerly called Holy Ghost Order)

Rev. Patrick Harnett C.S.Sp	New St.
Rev. Michael Woulfe C.S.Sp	New St.

Rev. Ristead Woulfe C.S.Sp New St.
 Rev. Cornelius woulfe C.S.Sp New St.
 Rev. William O Neill C.S.Sp New St.
 Rev. Cornelius Daly C.S.Sp The Square.
 Rev. Vincent O Rourke C.S.Sp The Square.
 Rev. John Joe Hackett C.S.Sp Church St.
 Rev. Richard Harnett C.S.Sp Main St.
 Rev. Daniel Leen C.S.Sp Main St.
 Rev. Edward Leen C.S.Sp Main St
 (a student who died, 21 years)
 Archbishop James Leen C.S.Sp Main St.
 Rev. William Moriarty C.S.Sp Railway Hse.

Australia

Rev. Morgan O Connor	Islandboy.	Rev. John O Callaghan	Main St.
Rev. John O Connor	Islandboy.	Rev. Thomas O Callaghan	Main St.
Rev. Jeremiah Downey	New St.	Rev. Dan Murphy	Mountcollins
Rev. Timothy J Murphy	New St.	Rev. Michael O Connell	Purt.
Rev. Sean Murphy	New St.	Rev. James O Connell	Meenkilly.

England, Scotland and Wales.

Rev. Daniel Harnett	Kilconlea.		
Rev. Sean Danaher	Church St.	Rev. John O Donoghue	Meenahela.
Rev. James K. O Donoghue	Convent st.	Rev. Cornelius Greaney	New St.

Religious Orders of Priests.

Jesuit Order

Rev. Michael J. Moloney Church St.

Columban Order.

Rev. Cornelius O Connell Kilconlea.

Augustinian Order

Bishop Timothy Cotter Dromtrasna.

Mill Hill Fathers.

Rev. Michael Murphy Ballybehy.

Salesian Order.

Rev. Timothy Leahy Millstream.

Redemptorist Order.

Rev. Thomas Roche Church St.

Sacred Heart Missionaries.

Rev. Daniel Daly Cahir.
 Rev. John Moloney St. Ita's Tce.

Religious Brothers.

Presentation Brothers.

Br. Clement Mccarthy Purt.
 Br. Hilarion Cahill Ballaugh.
 Br. Justin Cahill Ballaugh.
 Br. Fintan McAuliffe Ballaugh.
 Br. Edwin Collins Ballaugh.

Brothers of Charity.

Br. Daniel O Riordan Ballybehy.
 Br. Peter Lyons Main St.

Religious Sisters born in Abbeyfeale Parish

Sr. Teresa Broderick	Main St.		
Sr. Gregory Dillon	Main St.	Sr. Bridie Collins	Main St.
Sr. Teresita Dunne	Main St.	Sr. Ann Collins	Main St.

Sr. Benedict O Riordan	Main st.	Sr. Mary of the Rosary McEnery	Dromtras.
Sr. Celine Enright	Church St.	Sr. Magdalen Flynn	The Hill.
Sr. Peter Enright	Church St.	Sr. Noreen O Sullivan	The Hill.
Sr. Berchmans Murphy	Church St.	Sr. Ann O Sullivan	The Hill.
Sr. Consilio Moloney	Church St.	Sr. Carmel O Donnell	The Hill.
Sr. Claver Moloney	Church St.	Sr. Mary Doody	The Hill.
Sr. Elfrida Downey	Church St.	Sr. Maurice Doody	The Hill.
Sr. De Pazzi Lane	New St.	Sr. Martina Cotter	Kilconlea
Sr. Mary A Harnett	New St.	Sr. Denise Cotter	Kilconlea
Sr. Agatha Woulfe	New St.	Sr. Nalasco McEnery	Kilconlea.
Sr. Ide Woulfe	New St.	Sr. Fintan McEnery	Kilconlea.
Sr. Vianney O Connor	New St.	Sr. Eileen Fitzgerald	Glenashrone.
Sr. Marcella McCarthy	Colbert Tce.	Sr. Madeleine O Rourke	Clash.
Sr. Margaret Colbert	The Square.	Sr. Marie Fitzgerald	Clash.
Sr. Madeleine Moloney	Bridge St.	Sr. Mgt Angela O Rourke	Clash.
Sr. Mary of the Angels Begley	Bridge St.	Sr. Magdalen Harnett	Inch.
Sr. Marguerite McEnery	Bridge St.	Sr. Agnes Harnett	Inch.
Sr. Teresa Harnett	Purt.	Sr. Nora Harnett	Inch.
Sr. Immaculata Harnett	Purt.	Sr. Gerardine Harnett	Knockbrack.
Sr. Kieran Harnett	Purt.	Sr. Lorenzo Harnett	Knockbrack.
Sr. Elizabeth Lyons	Knocknasna.	Sr. Mary Murphy	Sheskin.
Sr. Margaret Fitzgerald	Meenahela.	Sr. Ita Leahy	Millstream.
Sr. Mary Harnett	Meenahela.	Sr. Nolasco Wrenn	Banard.
Sr. Borgia Curtin	Meenahela.	Sr. Benita Leahy	Banard.
Sr. Mary Curtin	Meenahela.	Sr. Aquin Ward	Banard.
Sr. Esther Curtin	Meenahela.	Sr. Baptista Ward	Banard.
Sr. Serafina Leahy	Ballybehy.	Sr. Elsie Woulfe	Ballaugh.
Sr. Anthony Leahy	Ballybehy.	Sr. Ita Broderick	Ballaugh.
Sr. Paschal Leahy	Ballybehy.	Sr. Esther McAuliffe	Ballaugh.
Sr. Josephine Leahy	Ballybehy.	Sr. Berchmans McAuliffe	Ballaugh.
Sr. Rita White	Ballybehy.	Sr. Rachael Joseph Sheehy	Ballaugh.
Sr. Bridie Harnett	Ballybehy.	Sr. Lydia Harnett	Ballaugh.
Sr. Eileen White	Ballybehy.	Sr. Mary Harnett	Ballaugh.
Sr. Gonzaga Curtin	Ballybehy.	Sr. Hanora M. Moriarty	Station Hse.
Sr. Magdalen Curtin	Ballybehy.	Sr.M.Brendan O Connor	Cahirlane.
Sr. Brendan Curtin	Ballybehy.	Sr. M.Beniti O Connor	Cahirlane
Sr. Joseph Curtin	Ballybehy.	Sr. Joachim Casey	Cahirlane.
Sr. De Pazzi Curtin	Ballybehy.	Sr. Ignatius O Connor	Cahirlane.
Sr. Augustine Curtin	Ballybehy.	Sr. Esther McCarthy	Cahirlane.
Sr. Mary O Riordan	Ballybehy.	Sr. Consilio Lane	Cahirlane.
Sr. Mary Cahill	Ballybehy.	Sr. Noreen O Connor	Cahirhayes.
Sr. Mary McEnery	Dromtrasna.	Sr. Kate O Connor	Caherhayes.
Sr. Amabilis Fitzgerald	Dromtrasna.	Sr. Cornelius Lane	Caherhayes.
Sr. Peter Curtin	Dromtrasna.		
Sr. Columba Curtin	Dromtrasna.		
Sr. Delia Curtin	Dromtrasna.		
Sr. Ita Mulcahy	Dromtrasna.		
Sr. Tereas Josephine Cotter	Dromtrasna.		
Sr. Augustine Cotter	Dromtrasna.		

Sr. Delia Curtin

The Glórach Story

Genesis: The success of the open-air stage shows of the Feale Baron festival, a fundraising support event, for the building of the new Parish Church, led the Abbeyfeale Community Council, to propose and set out to procure a Folk Centre with a firm focus on preserving local culture.

1974: Co-ordinating project management committee formed. Shannon tourism organisation supports the proposal.

1975: The Abbeyfeale Community Council set out their plans.



1977: Niall Ó Beacháin SFADCO Comhairleóir Siamsa Bailí helps performing group present “Ceolta Cois Teallaigh”.

1980: Performing group present “TORADH” their own show.

1981: Community folk school, with a community cast, present “The Story of Abbeyfeale” on the Convent hall stage. Evolution ongoing and development continues.

1988: Limerick County Council gifts to Muintir Cois Féile a greenfield site at Convent Street, on the condition that within five years they substantially develop the site. Heavy machinery moves in. Site development starts.

1991: Planning permission granted. Temporary building on site.

1993: Fundraising begins, Abbeyfeale Folk formed.

1995: First ever three act comedy “The Cobweb’s Glory” staged in local venues. Theatre plans unveiled.

1998: Priming funding given by Limerick County Council.

Fund raising campaign launched. Fás come on board.

Abbeyfeale folk Ltd., a company limited by guarantee formed. Foundations opened. Building started.

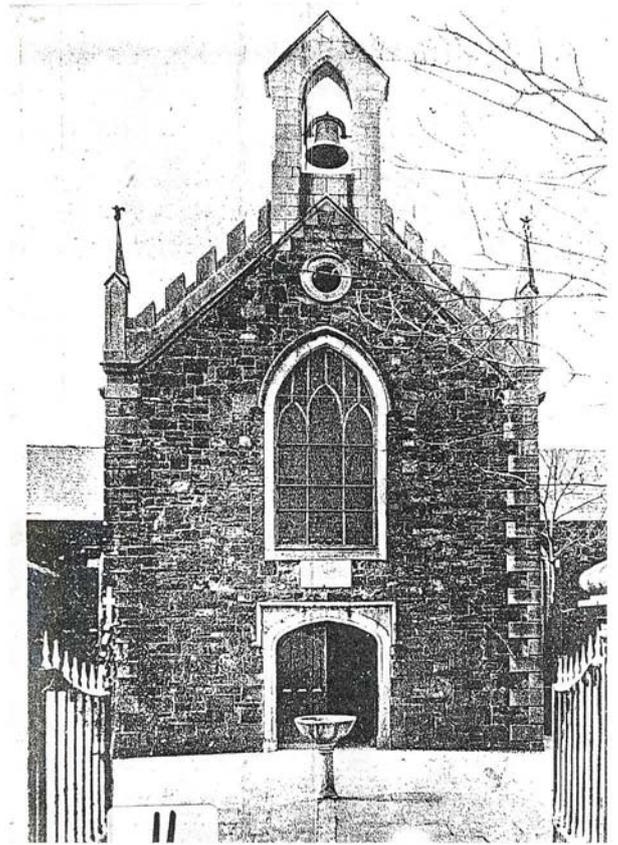
2005: Construction completed. Fund raising continues. Glórach is a reality. Our in-house voluntary theatre group present plays and our company board of Glórach realise it is time for change if Glórach is to endure and grow into the future. The story continues.

Jim Dennison 26 May 2014





St. Joseph's Secondary School
1968-2011



The Original St. Joseph's Secondary School
1947-1968





The house at
Clash where
Fr. Casey Resided.



