



DÍLIS GO DEO

A PILGRIM PEOPLE - Killaspugbrone to Teampall Phádraig Naofa • Strandhill - 1920 - 2020

A Pilgrim People

Killaspugbrone to
Teampall Phádraig Naofa
STRANDHILL



A CENTENARY PUBLICATION
1920 - 2020

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STRANDHILL
1920 - 2020



Compiled by
Shane Kennedy

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Any profits from this publication will go the Teampall Phádraig Naofa Maintenance Fund.



Word of Introduction



Here in Lár Easa on the western edge of the Wild Atlantic Way we, as a faithful community realise, we have come into a noble faith inheritance as a pilgrim people. As we read this commemorative publication in our centenary year, I recall that *Memory and Identity* is the title of the last book written by the late Pope, St. John Paul 11. The concise focus of this title comes to mind as a most appropriate way to introduce this publication on the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of Teampall Phádraig Naofa here in our village community of Strandhill in County Sligo.

We have the Carrowmore burial tombs beside us which predate the pyramids; a stones throw away we have the great Knocknarea mountain with the cairn of Medbh, who was our pagan warrior queen and beside the high and low tides, we have one of the few authenticated churches established by St. Patrick in the treasured ruins of Killaspugbrone, which was built around 500 AD. This was the first meeting place with Christ for our ancestors.

As you read through the pages that follow, both **MEMORY AND IDENTITY** will be evoked in the narrative of a graced people who over the last century have met and prayed; wept and found joy; pleaded and made thanksgiving within the hallowed walls of this simple church, named after the one who came to our homeplace and established us in the eternal vision of everlasting life. Here you are presented with significant moments on the spiritual quest of a believing community; all little steps by a great people in the most ordinary and prosaic of circumstances. It is a quiet insight into a pilgrim people who continue under the benediction of God to entrust their lives to His providence.

We are most appreciative of the many who responded to our invitation to contribute to this journal of memories and our especial gratitude to

Shane Kennedy who spearheaded the project and nursed it into print. As we journey through these pages, we recall work well done and step forward with deep confidence on the future adventure into the mystery of our salvation in Christ. Our inspirational clarion call during this year of renewal in our faith is:

**DÍLIS GO DEO
FOREVER STEADFAST**

*Niall Ahern
Parish Priest*



Word of Welcome

On behalf of the Parish Council we would like to welcome the publication of this account of our story as a church here in Strandhill over the last one hundred years. We invite the reader to explore the history of our church, its origin, development and how it has become what it is today.

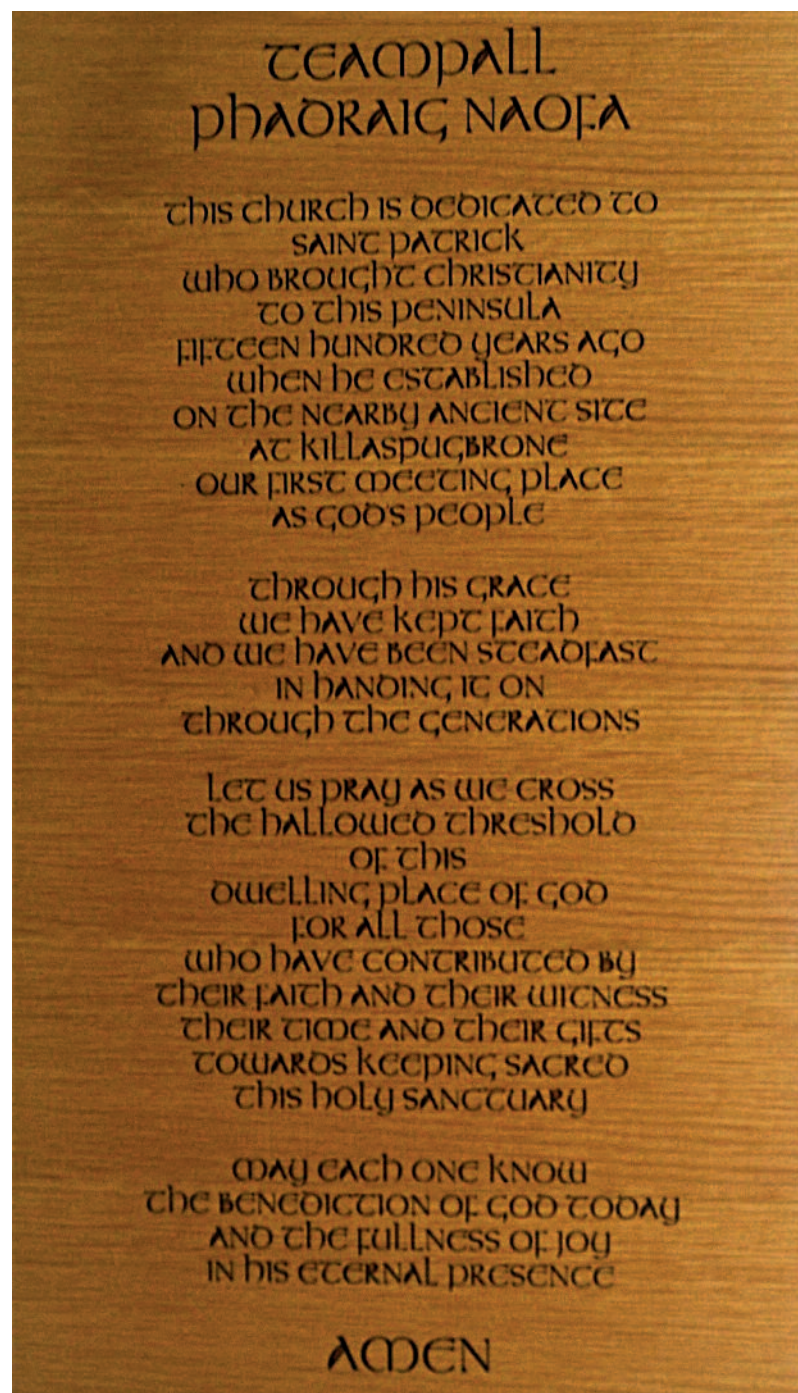
We are a privileged people to live in this place. Hopefully we have carried on the tradition and true meaning of the Christianity that was brought to us so long ago. As a Parish Council we endeavour to keep this alive and to pass it on to future generations.

Our church is a living church and in this our centenary year we encourage and welcome people to visit St. Patrick's Church, Strandhill and reflect on the gift that has been given to us by previous generations.

We thank everyone who contributed in any way to this centenary publication and hope that it gives the reader a sense of then and now.

*Alice Lindsay
Parish Council Chairperson*





This Plaque in the porch of Teampall Phádraig Naofa acknowledges the contribution of the people of Strandhill in keeping sacred this holy Sanctuary.

Word of Gratitude

The idea for this publication was first raised at a Parish Council meeting a number of years ago. Initially I set out to write a very brief account of Why? When? and How? St. Patrick's Church was built. Over time, the project developed into something a little more. In answering those three initial questions I ended up taking more than one detour as I explored different aspects of life associated with our Church in Strandhill.

This is not a perfect historical account of all that has happened in relation to St. Patrick's Church. Much of the information presented was gathered in conversations with the people of Strandhill. I have tried to be as historically accurate as possible and all is written in good faith.

While primarily this is an historical account marking our centenary year I also felt it was important to give some insight into what is happening in relation to our church here in Strandhill in 2020. Important aspects of parish life may be inadvertently omitted in this account and for this I apologise.

I wish to thank all those who contributed in any way in helping bring this project to life. Requests for information, memories, newspaper articles and photographs were made on many occasions through the Parish Newsletter. Thankfully, many responded to these requests. Hopefully, I have acknowledged all who contributed in any way to this publication. However there are a number of people whom I wish to acknowledge here.

Annie and Tony Mannion are often referred to as the 'Guardians of our Church'. They are also the 'Guardians of Strandhill History'. If not, for the hours of conversations had in their kitchen this account would not have been written. I also wish to thank Deirdre Foley, Donald and Joan Bree, Andy Higgins and Kathleen Devins for the stories, memories and photographs they shared with me. Sincere

thanks also to Gabrielle Finan for her invaluable support and guidance.

On the 15th of October 1995 a special Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated to mark the seventy fifth anniversary of St. Patrick's Church, Strandhill. In a section of the Mass booklet for that day, a comprehensive and insightful account of the history of St. Patrick's Church was presented. The late Mr. Aodhán O'Higgins researched and wrote a lot of that history. I have referred to much of that material in this publication.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Fr. Dominick Gillooly, Fr. Liam Devine, Fr. Brian Conlon and Fr. Christopher Mc Crann for sharing with us some of their recollections of their time spent amongst us here in Strandhill.

I wish to thank Canon Niall Ahern for his support, enthusiasm and expertise in all aspects of this project from the initial idea to the final publication. Finally I would like to thank Seán Ó hAnnracháin in Tiger Print for his help, advice and patience.

In writing this account I have come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the gift that has been left to us by previous generations. I hope that in some small way I am able to share this with the reader.

Shane Kennedy



From Killaspugbrone to Teampall Phádraig Naofa (C.450 - 1920)

The Catholic parish of Coolera (Strandhill and Ransboro) became a parish in its own right in 1998. Previous to this, Strandhill and Ransboro were part of the Cathedral parish. However, the history of Christianity in Strandhill stretches back to the late fifth century. Bronus a native of the Coolera peninsula was a follower of St. Patrick. Sometime in the 5th century Bronus and St. Patrick crossed Ballysadare Bay to Cuil Irra, the home of Bronus, to build a church. They chose Cashel Irra, a location less than a mile north of our present-day church Teampall Phádraig Naofa. Here Bronus built his church Cill Easpaig Bhróin, or the Church of Bishop Bronus.

Cill Easpaig Bhróin (Killaspugbrone) was founded sometime between St Patrick's arrival in Ireland in 432AD and his death in 493AD. According to the Annals of the Four Masters, Bishop Bronus died in 511AD. At that time Bronus was referred to as a bishop. The leader of each religious community was known as a bishop. A diocese could have many bishops. Today the equivalent role would be that of parish priest.

Cill Easpaig Bron served the people of the Strandhill community for over a thousand years. The local community worshipped here. They prayed here, they received the sacraments here and many were buried here. It is probable that it was renovated and even rebuilt on a number of occasions. It is believed that the present ruins date from the eleventh or twelfth centuries rather than the fifth.

Unfortunately, events in Germany and England in the 1500's were to send shockwaves through the Christian communities of Europe and our little Christian community here in Strandhill did not escape. The Reformation, which began in 1517, led to the break up of the church in Europe and the Dissolution of the Catholic Church in Ireland in 1541.

Sometime between 1541 and 1585 the newly established Protestant church took control of Killaspugbrone and banned any form of Catholic worship there.

The majority of the population in the Strandhill area remained loyal to the church in Rome and their Catholic faith. Unfortunately, they now had nowhere to worship and with the introduction of the oppressive Penal laws could not build a church of their own or worship in public. For much of the 17th and 18th Centuries, (1600-1800) priests were deemed outlaws and Masses were said in secret locations. It was the era of Mass Rocks and Priest hunters. In his book *The Diocese of Elphin: People, Place and Pilgrimage*, Fr. Francis Beirne refers to two of the priests who ministered to the two parishes in Coolera at the time, Killaspugbrone and Kilmacowen. They were Fr. Owen Meehan (1698) and Fr. John Duggan (1704). A fugitive priest by the name of Mac Dermott is also reputed to have said Masses ‘in the fields at Drynahan.’ (p230)

To add to the injustice felt by the Catholic population, Killaspugbrone fell into disuse in 1680. For the following one hundred and thirty years it lay abandoned. It was repaired by the Select Vestry of St. John in 1811 but was abandoned again in 1855 when the local Church of Ireland community moved into their new church, St. Anne’s, at nearby Tully.

With the easing of the Penal laws in the late 18th century, the first church built in Coolera in relatively modern times, was built high up on the eastern slope of Knocknarea on the site of a Mass rock. This location gave the faithful a great vantage point to see any approaching enemies. This first church was a very primitive structure and it is said that the ribs of a whale were used to support the roof. In 1820 a small stone chapel was built on the site and this was followed over the decades by further additions and extensions. The church was known locally as Ransboro Church and it is said that it took its name from a wren that always built her nest over the original Mass rock. It must be noted that the local Church of Ireland community made contributions to the costs of some of these renovations.

In 1959 it was decided to leave the old church at Ransboro and move to the more central location of ‘The Redgate.’ In 1967 ‘Our Lady Star of the Sea Church’ was opened. Fr. John Egan, the curate for Strandhill

and Ransboro at that time did a huge amount of work in relation to the building of the new church. The old church on the side of Knocknarea was to lie idle for a number of years but it has since been renovated as a private home.

As the Penal laws were relaxed the faithful in Strandhill found themselves looking for a place to worship in public. Throughout the 1800’s the people of Strandhill walked, or if they were lucky enough travelled by horse and cart, the almost three miles, mainly uphill, to the old church in Ransboro. They worshipped here and contributed in many ways to the growth and development of the church in Ransboro.

By the early 20th century the need for a church in the growing village of Strandhill had been recognised. In the early 1900’s it was decided to celebrate Sunday Mass in the local schoolhouse on the Top Road. This was very popular with both locals and visitors and sowed the seed for the idea that the village should have it’s own church. The man who made this idea a reality was Fr. James Mulligan, the curate at the time with responsibility for this part of the Cathedral Parish. The foundation stone of the new church was laid on the 17th of March 1920. On the 14th of August 1921 St. Patrick’s Church Strandhill was opened, fifteen hundred years after St. Patrick himself founded the first church in Coolera at nearby Killaspugbrone.



Killaspugbrone 2020

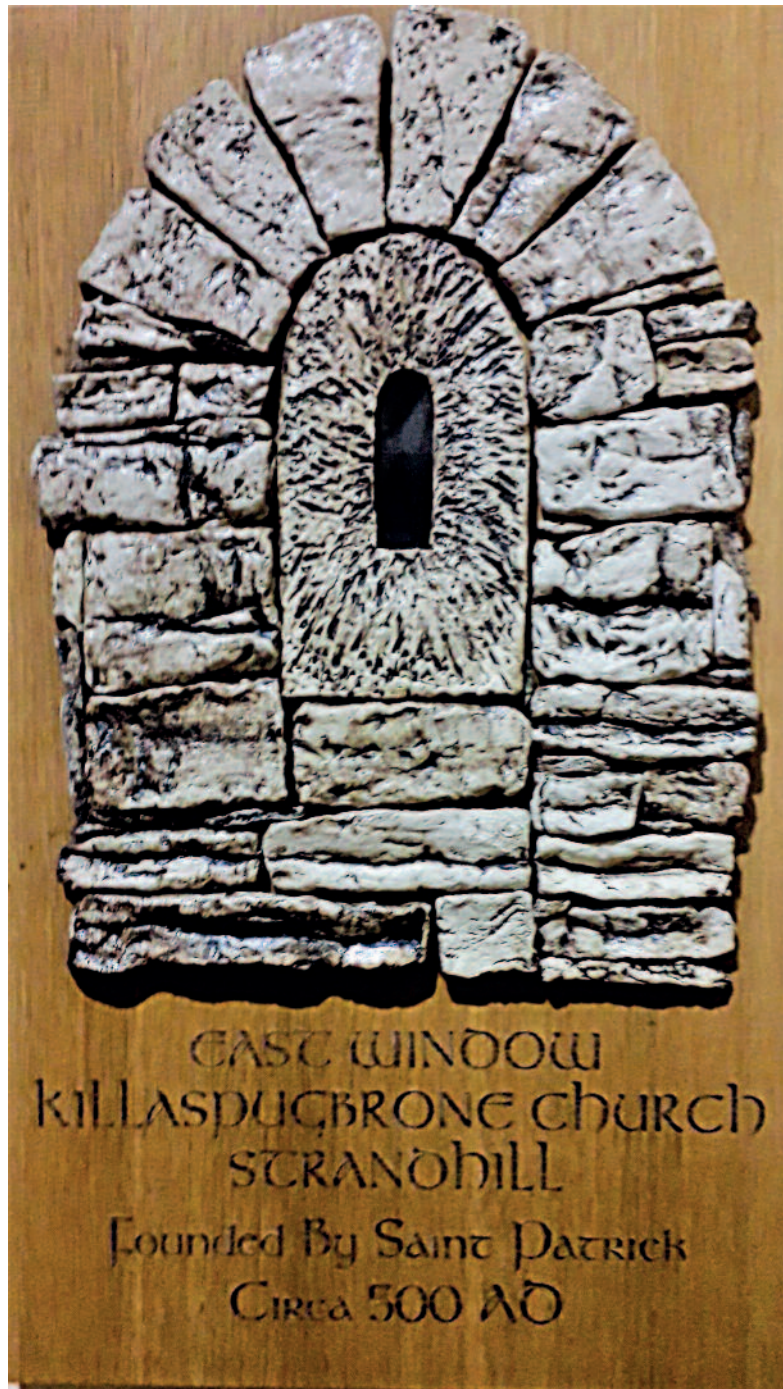
The donation of the site for Teampall Phádraig Naofa

The site for St. Patrick's Church was donated by a local landowner Mr. Benjamin Murrow. At the time nearly all the land in Strandhill was owned by either Mr. Benjamin Murrow or Mr. James Walker. Today if you were to travel from the roundabout, down the Burma Road and continue as far as the cannon, Walker would have owned most of the land to your right while Murrow owned most of the land to the left. Previous owners of the land on which the church was built included the Nicholson and Allen families.

In 1900, no one lived between the 'Top Road' and the sea. The bottom half of the village, as we know it today, didn't exist. To get from the 'Top Road' to the sea you had to cross fields. Murrow was anxious to develop the lower part of Strandhill as he realised its potential. In the early 1900's Murrow built a new road connecting the Top Road with the shore. It is reputed that the new road cost 1000 pound to construct. Murrow named this road Buenos Ayres Drive. He later placed a cannon at the end of the road where it still stands today. Murrow then sold sites for development along his new private road.

Slowly, the lower part of the village grew with houses, guesthouses, hotels and even a seaweed bath which was built in 1912. The village as we know it today began to take shape. Very quickly Strandhill became a very popular tourist destination with many visitors coming from throughout the county and from places as far afield as Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon. In 1919 there was a huge influx of visitors to the area as many felt that the sea air would help protect them against the Spanish Flu that was rampant at the time.

However, as noted in the Sligo Champion on the 20th of August 1921:
"Many people from the adjoining counties-some advanced in years-had come to enjoy the health-giving resources of this invigorating



The East Window of Killaspugbrone Church.
Ceramic by the artist Helen Devaney

seaside resort. They had everything which tended to their temporal and material comforts, but they lacked one thing which to Irish Catholics is the greatest comfort of all, they were without a church.”

For years, Catholics living in Strandhill had to make their way to the church near Ransboro. As Strandhill became more and more popular as a seaside resort, a significant number of tourists had to make the journey to Ransboro to fulfil their weekly obligation. Locals and visitors began to look for alternatives. As a result, for some years before the church was completed in 1921, Sunday Masses were celebrated during the summer months in the national school on the Top Road.

In 1919, Mr. Benjamin Murrow agreed to donate a site for the building of the church. Ground rent was set at one shilling per annum. At the time it was considered a very generous act by Murrow, especially considering the fact that Murrow himself was not a Catholic. It was probably also a very astute business move as the tourists who were flocking to the village were now to be provided with a suitable place to worship. This was to lead to more visitors and increased development.



Mr. Benjamin Murrow with Mr. Tom Higgins during the construction of Buenos Ayres Drive, c.1915. This picture was taken from the top of the present Buenos Ayres Hill. (Photograph courtesy of John C. Mc Ternan, At the Foot of Knocknarea)

The foundation stone for Teampall Phádraig Naofa

It was on a very wet and windy St. Patrick’s Day 1920 when Dr. Coyne, Bishop of Elphin laid the foundation stone of the church. The ‘stone’ was designed and constructed by the contractor, Mr. Paddy Harte of Breeogue. This was no normal foundation stone, it was more of a time capsule. The foundation stone was a small, hollow, concrete container in the shape of a casket with a separate concrete lid. The foundation stone had a number of decorative designs on it including shamrocks on its four corners. Inside the container several items were placed. These included copies of the three local newspapers of the time, the Sligo Champion, the Sligo Nationalist and the Sligo Independent. Three coins were also buried, a shilling, a six-penny piece and a penny. A sealed glass jar containing information to do with the building of the church was also placed in the foundation stone.

Bishop Coyne sealed the lid of the foundation stone with a silver trowel and it was then placed on the bedrock below the church. It was buried in the eastern corner of the building. Today, if you stand on the altar facing the congregation, the foundation stone is buried in the corner to your right and is marked accordingly.

An article published in the Sligo Champion on the 20th of March 1920 described the days events and concluded with the following remarks:

“A special word of praise is due to the people of Coolera and Strandhill. They have given not only subscription in generous measure, but they have placed at the disposal of the committee their services in the carting of material etc. and carrying free of charge all the initial work in which they could be of service. When the church is complete, it will be a standing tribute to their unselfishness.”



An early photograph of Strandhill.

The Building of Teampall Phádraig Naofa Feb 1920- August 1921

As mentioned, at this time Strandhill was part of the Cathedral parish and Fr. Mulligan was responsible for the Strandhill part of the parish. With the support of the Bishop of Elphin, Dr. Coyne, Fr. Mulligan started a fundraising campaign for the building of a new church. Station Masses were held throughout the area and donations were collected from the locals at these Masses. Business people in the locality and in Sligo town also contributed. Summer visitors to the area made significant donations which went a long way towards meeting the cost of the building work. In August 1920 races were held on Culleenamore Strand and all proceeds went to the Church Building Fund. Lists of those who contributed including their names, addresses and donations were published in the local papers.

Plans and specifications for the new church were drawn up by Mr.R.J. Kirwan. The church was to be 102 feet long, 32 feet wide and 55 feet in height. There were to be three porches and a sacristy. Like most churches of its time, it was to be built in the shape of a cross. Work began on the building of the church on February 10th, 1920. Men, many of them local and working for the contractor Mr Paddy Harte, began clearing the site and digging the foundations.

Mr. James Walker, owner of the Killaspugbrone townland, gave permission for the removal of sand and gravel from the shore at Killaspugbrone to be used as building material for the new church.

February 1920 was an exceptionally wet and stormy month and some locals recall the story of a very significant storm that occurred at that time. The sea front in Strandhill today is very different to what it was in 1920. Photographs from the time show that there were no stones or rock at the front, it was all sand. Sometime in that February, a huge storm

occurred that deposited massive amounts of stone and shingle a long way up Murrow's recently constructed road. Locals spoke of piles of stones and sand as far up as the present day Strandhill Surgery. This was considered a godsend by many. Much of the basic building materials for the new church were now at hand. Both Murrow and Walker gave permission to the locals to take whatever stone and shingle they wanted. Local men with carts volunteered to move the stone and sand the short distance to the site of the new church. For two weeks, tons of sand and stone was moved up the village. This material was then used by Mr. Paddy Harte and his men for the building of the church. The story of the storm didn't end here though. It is said that about a week after all the material that was needed was gathered, a huge spring tide occurred that washed away all the unwanted rocks and shingle. The beach was then returned to its original sandy condition.

As stated, work on the new church began on February 10th, 1920 and just over a month later, St. Patrick's Day 1920, the foundation stone was blessed and laid by Bishop Coyne.

Local men under the direction of the aforementioned Mr. Paddy Harte built the church. The church was painted by Mr. Kivlehan of William St. Sligo (later renamed Wolfe Tone St). The church seats were made by the Sligo firm, Costello and Sons. The altar rails were designed and made by Mr. John McLoughlin of Pound St. Sligo (now Connolly St.) The altar was crafted by Mr. E. Sharpe of Great Brunswick St., Dublin. The front of the altar was a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece 'The Last Supper' and following a recent refurbishment is to be found in the side Chapel of Intercession. By June 1921, only fourteen months after the work first began, the building was completed and ready for use.



Mr. Paddy Harte, Breeogue



Mr. Thomas Mannion, Strandhill



Mr. Bernard Mannion, Carnadough

Some of the local men involved in the building of the Church



The front of the original altar depicting Leonardo Da Vinci's Last Supper. This piece is now situated in the Chapel of Intercession.



A photograph of St. Patrick's Church taken from the present day Burma Road. Thady Higgin's cottage is on the left hand side of what was locally referred to as Thady's Lane. Thomas Mannion's house is on the western side of the church and St. Patrick's Hotel directly opposite.



St. Patrick's Church in the early 1920s (photo courtesy of John C. McTernan).

The Ceremony of Dedication

AUGUST 14th, 1921

August 14th, 1921 was a day of great celebration and pride for the village, as the Ceremony of Dedication of St. Patrick's Church, Strandhill took place. The church was named in honour of St Patrick due to the Saint's close links to the area and to the nearby ancient Christian site of Killaspugbrone.

Huge crowds attended the ceremony which began at noon. Three bishops attended; Bishop Coyne of Elphin, Bishop Morrisroe of Achonry and Bishop O'Doherty of Clonfert. Bishop Morrisroe blessed the church before Mass. Bishop Coyne was the chief celebrant and Bishop O'Doherty preached the sermon. The Sligo Cathedral Choir provided the liturgical music.

In the sermon the congregation was reminded that St. Patrick himself had brought the light of faith to the locality and that he had left Bishop Bronus to minister to the spiritual needs of those Christians of long ago. Bishop O'Doherty reflected on the fact that even though the church founded by Bronus at Killaspugbrone was no more, near its ruins there had now arose another in its place to be a landmark of the Christian faith in Strandhill.

It must be noted that the year 1921 was a time of huge uncertainty and turmoil in Ireland. The War of Independence was ongoing. It was the period of the IRA flying columns and the dreaded Black and Tans. National atrocities like Bloody Sunday and more local ones like the burning of Tubbercurry were to the forefront of people's minds. In keeping with the fervent national pride that was sweeping across our newly independent state at the time, Bishop O'Doherty spoke about the one thing in particular that gave him a feeling of pride:

"I have been told that every part of this church, the walls, the

carpentry, the seats, everything connected with it is of Irish material, planned by Irish brains and executed by Irish hands.”

After the Mass, Solemn Benediction was led by Bishop Coyne. The Ceremony of Dedication ended with the choir and congregation singing the very apt hymn ‘Hail Glorious St. Patrick.’



The beach front, Strandhill

The Builder of Teampall Phádraig Naofa - Fr. James Mulligan

Fr. James Mulligan, the man responsible for the building of St. Patrick's Church Strandhill was born in Roscommon on the 1st of August 1880. He was educated in Summerhill College Sligo and then in St. Patrick's College Maynooth. He was ordained on the 23rd of June 1907.

His first appointment was to Castlerea (July 1907 to November 1908). He was then moved to Loughglynn where he served from December 1908 until September 1909. On the 19th of September 1909 he was appointed to Sligo. He served in Sligo until July 1924. It would seem for a considerable part of his time in Sligo he ministered to the Strandhill / Ransboro area. He was the driving force behind the building of the church in Strandhill. He was involved in the acquiring of the site, the fundraising, the drawing up of the plans and the construction of the church. He oversaw the project from start to finish.

The Sligo Champion dated August 20th, 1921 summed up Fr. Mulligan's contribution by stating:

“.....everyone will agree that the new Church of St. Patrick will stand as a towering monument to the work of Fr. Mulligan; a living testimony to his untiring effort and unswerving zeal and devotion to the interests of those committed to his spiritual care.”

Following his term in Strandhill he returned to Castlerea where he served from July 1924 to July 1927. He was moved back to Sligo again in 1927 but this time to the other side of the bay, Rosses Point. On the 31st of August 1936 he was appointed Parish Priest of Ardcarne. On the 18th of July 1941 he moved to what was to be his final parish when he was appointed Parish Priest of Boyle. He was appointed a Canon of the Diocesan Chapter in 1942. On July 29th, 1950, Canon James Mulligan died and is buried beside St. Joseph's Church in Boyle.

Strandhill Postcards



Pastors of Teampall Phádraig Naofa

Priests who ministered in Strandhill/Ransboro since 1920.

The priests listed below were attached to the Cathedral Parish during the years noted and were officially appointed to the Strandhill/Ransboro area. Some ministered in Strandhill for all of that time, others for a period of it.

Fr. James Mulligan (1909-1924)

Fr. William Fallon (1924-1926)

Fr. Timothy Quigley (1926-1927)

Fr. Patrick Kelly (1925- not recorded)

Fr. Gerald Fannon (1927-1939)

Fr. John Feeney (1939)

Fr. Michael O'Beirne (1939-1953)

Fr. Michael O'Connor (1950-1954)

Fr. Peter Feely (1953-1959)

Fr. Thomas Moran (1959-1962)

Fr. John Egan (1954-1969)

Fr. Gerald Donnelly (1956-1970)

Fr. Desmond Mc Loughlin (1962-1972)

Fr. Dominick Gillooly (1973-1983)

Fr. Liam Devine (1984-1990)

Fr. Joe Gilmartin (1990-1993)

Fr. Pat Nicholson (1993-1995)

Fr. Brian Conlon (1995-1997)

Fr. Paul Quinn (1997)

In 1998 the new parish of Strandhill/Ransboro was created.

Fr. Sean Creaton PP (1998-2004)

Fr. Christopher Mc Crann CC (2003-present)

Canon Niall Ahern PP (2005-present)

At different stages other diocesan and missionary priests did provide temporary cover in Strandhill due to short term absences.

The Stained Glass Windows of Teampall Naofa Phádraig



The following Saints are depicted in the stained glass windows in the church: St. John the Baptist; St. Aloysius; St. Margaret Mary; St. Anne; St. Peter; St. Joseph; St. Agnes; St. Therese; St. Francis of Assisi; St. Anthony; St. Philomena; St. Maria Goretti; St. Brigid and St. Patrick.

Our Lady and the Sacred Heart of Jesus are depicted on two stained glass panels near the altar.

In the two side chapels, a dove, a pelican, a lamb and a fish are portrayed. The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. When Christ was baptised by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove. The pelican was believed to be particularly attentive to her young, to the point of providing her own blood, by wounding her own breast, when no other food was available. As a result, the pelican became a symbol of the Passion of Jesus. The lamb represents Christ. It was often sacrificed as Christ was, and is regarded as being gentle, innocent and pure. The fish symbol was used as a secret sign by the early Christians who were being persecuted by the Romans. It was also hoped that by seeing the symbol we would be reminded of Jesus and his wish for us all to be 'Fishers of men.'



In the porch there are two stained glass panels, one a set of rosary beads surrounding a crown, the other a star with the Latin phrase Stella Matutina (Morning Star). Mary Our Lady is often referred to as the Morning Star.



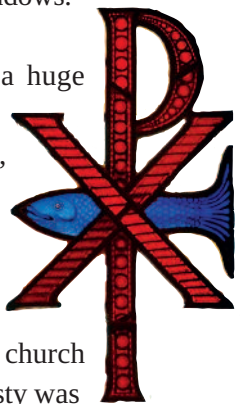
Renovations and Refurbishments (1921-2009)

Since the church was built in 1921, the people of Strandhill have been the guardians of St Patrick's Church. Throughout the century they have cared for it. They have repaired and protected it. They have renovated and updated it. There are very few buildings which were built in Strandhill over a hundred years ago that are still standing today. St. Patrick's Church is one of them and this should be a source of credit and pride to the parishioners and priests of Strandhill, past and present.

In 1934, a concrete wall was built around the church. This replaced the temporary fence that had been in place since 1921. The work was undertaken by voluntary labour. This wall came out as far as the present-day footpath at the front of the church. Iron gates were also erected to keep out stray animals.

In 1953, Fr. Peter Feeley, the then curate of Strandhill, decided to replace the old plain glass windows with new stained-glass windows. This was a huge undertaking due to the cost of stained glass. At the time there were ten windows in the church including one in each of the two side chapels. Each window had two panels. It was decided to seek sponsorship for the windows. £50 was asked for one panel, £100 for two. The money was collected and those who gave what at the time was a huge amount of money had their names inscribed on the windows. These windows are still in the church today.

Castlerea native, Fr. John Egan, was responsible for a huge refurbishment of the church in the 1960s. The Second Vatican Council was the catalyst for some of the changes, modern comforts the other. The church got its first form of heating when some storage heaters were placed in the building. The concrete floor which "glistened with sea sand" was covered with new parquet wood flooring. The old high altar was replaced and the altar rails were taken down. The church was painted, and new stations of the cross erected. The sacristy was





Just one example of the many fund raising initiatives that took place to support St. Patrick's Church.

enlarged and a small bathroom installed.

A balcony for the choir was constructed in 1963. Prior to this the choir sang at floor level from the back of the church. Constructing the balcony involved a major structural change. A reinforced steel girder was incorporated to support the new balcony area. A new stairs to the balcony was constructed in the place where the confessional once stood. Two new windows were inserted in the balcony area and one on the stairs.

The overall cost of the renovations and refurbishments from 1963 to 1968 was £13,000. A contribution of two shillings per week per household was requested. A further two shillings per week was asked for from each wage earner in the house. Cake sales, jumble sales and raffles were also held to pay for the work. Like at all other times, the people of the parish donated and all costs were met.

Throughout the 1970's, 80's and 90's further renovations took place. A central heating system was put into the church in the 1970's. Fr. Liam Devine was the curate when the tiled ceiling that is in the church today

was erected. It covered the vaulted roof and pitch pine timbers that were in place since 1921. Insulation was the sole reason for this move. A new amplification system was introduced and in the 1980's a new organ was also purchased. A sponsored walk around Knocknarea via Ransboro raised £400 towards the cost of the organ.

1975 was also a very significant year for the Catholic community in Strandhill. Though still part of the Cathedral parish, a priest's house was built beside the church. Mr. Harry Banks of Ballysadare constructed it. The curate for Strandhill and Ransboro would now reside locally. Fr. Dominick Gillooly took up residence in Strandhill on August 29th, 1975. For many it was a great comfort to have a priest residing in the village. It also led to the church being used more, as Fr. Gillooly introduced the practice of saying daily Mass in the village.

A wedding being celebrated in St. Patrick's Church in the 1950s.



Recollection by Fr Dominick Gillooly First Resident Priest in Strandhill 1973-1983

I was on the teaching staff of Summerhill College and as the school year ended in May 1973, with public examinations to follow, the late Bishop Conway asked me if I'd like to go out into a parish. I gave an enthusiastic "Yes!" In reply, he said, "Very well; out you go to Strandhill and build yourself a house". I understood that delegations had asked bishops for a resident priest on a number of occasions.

For July and August that year I and a number of colleagues had committed to do relief work in large parishes in Brooklyn, New York. On my return at the end of August, Bishop Conway indicated that he would introduce me to the congregation of Strandhill and Ransboro at Masses on the first Sunday of September. In the course of his introduction to both communities, he suggested that they dialogue as to where the priest's house might be built. Each community submitted documents in favour of their respective areas. On receipt of the two documents, the bishop decided that Strandhill should be the choice. A committee was formed that was to become the nucleus of the Parish Council. Plans were drawn up and tenders for the building of the house invited.

Meanwhile, I was resident in St Mary's with daily commitment to the Cathedral Mass schedule – no daily Mass then in Strandhill. Station Masses were a feature in those days and at my first Station Mass in Strandhill I received a very warm welcome as we enjoyed a welcome cup of tea after Mass. The late Tom Duggan declared aloud, "You are very welcome to Strandhill, Father," adding jokingly, "You'll be very lucky to get enough to eat here!"

While the two communities had to raise local contributions for new schools in both areas the people responded generously, and I was able to take up residence in the new presbytery in mid-summer 1975.



Fr. Dominick Gillooly celebrating Mass at Killaspugbrone.

Killaspugbrone in more recent times



Catholic worship had been banned in Killaspugbrone from the late 16th century and Anglican services were discontinued in the church from the mid-19th century. However, despite the church building falling into disuse the adjoining graveyard continued to be used as a place of burial for the people of Strandhill. There are very few headstones in the graveyard and most graves have 'marker stones' to mark burial sites. Catholics and Protestants were buried side by side in Killaspugbrone. At some stage a tradition did develop where Catholics were buried on the western side of the graveyard (the Atlantic side) while Protestants were buried on the eastern side. It was a tradition followed by some and ignored by many.

Within the 1-acre site which is enclosed by a boundary wall there are over 700 graves. Tidal erosion has damaged the graveyard and some graves and skeletal remains had been left exposed at times. Repairs to the boundary wall have taken place but remedial work needs to be carried out on an ongoing basis. Canon Ahern continues to this day to liaise with the office of Public Works and negotiations are still being sustained in an effort to preserve this ancient and sacred site.

Some of the older generation in Strandhill today still remember burials in Killaspugbrone. Many people chose to be buried in family plots in Killaspugbrone rather than





Recollections by Fr. Liam Devine

1984 - 1990

I am happy to be associated with the centenary celebrations for St. Patrick's Church, Strandhill. I was appointed to the Strandhill-Ransboro area in the Spring of 1984. I was teaching in Summerhill College at the time and for the first few months I was 'double jobbing'. I was continuing to teach in Summerhill while working as a curate at the same time. I soon realised that this wasn't going to work out and I think Bishop Dominic Conway realised it too. I was delighted when I was discharged of my teaching duties because I think my vocation was always to be a pastoral priest out among the people.

I must say that the almost seven years I spent in Strandhill were among the happiest and most fulfilling I have experienced in my almost 50 years as a priest. I will never forget the warm welcome I got from the people of Strandhill. I realised that it wouldn't be easy for me because I was replacing Fr. Dominick Gillooly who had endeared himself to the people over the previous 10 years. I decided that I could only be true to myself. I soon settled down and I really got to love Strandhill. I still do, and I love to go back there as often as I can.

The scenery around Strandhill is a landscape painter's paradise. I took up painting while I was there, inspired by the beautiful scenery. Majestic Knocknarea towered over Culleenamore Strand and the village of Strandhill. The Atlantic Ocean with its angry waves dashing off the rocks always gave me a sense of the infinity of God. The view from the golf course is stunning. I wasn't a great golfer, but I got attracted to the game mainly because of the scenery.

Another thing that appealed to me was the history of the place. The old ruin of Killaspugbrone always had a special appeal for me. I realised that this area once bore the footprints of St. Patrick. The rich history and heritage of the area suggests that Strandhill must be the cradle of Christianity in that part of Elphin Diocese.

being taken to Scarden. Following the Funeral Mass in St. Patrick's Church the coffin, usually carried in a horse drawn cart, made its way up Thady's Lane (now the Burma Rd). The funeral cortege would then head in the direction of Sligo passing through Mannionstown, Foleystown and the Bridge. It would then take a left down the road that was known as the New Line. This road which today has entrances to Sandycove and Waterside Lane is often called The Old Airport Road. The remains were then taken over the sand to their final resting place in the graveyard at Killaspugbrone. One of the last people to be buried in Killaspugbrone was Thady Higgins (RIP) who died in February 1961.

An historic occasion took place at 3pm on Sunday November 25th, 1973 when the Bishop of Elphin, Most Rev. Dominic Conway celebrated Mass at Killaspugbrone. The Mass which was held in the graveyard was the first Catholic mass to be celebrated in Killaspugbrone in over 400 years. This started a new tradition of celebrating an annual Mass at Killaspugbrone that continues to this day. Unfortunately, due to health and safety reasons, the Mass can no longer be celebrated in the ruins of the church itself. This well attended annual celebration now takes place at the entrance to the church and graveyard.

Killaspugbrone is a site of both significant spiritual and historical importance. Throughout the centuries the people of this area maintained and respected it. Despite a lack of resources, different individuals and committees past and present have tried to preserve and enhance Killaspugbrone. As mentioned, ongoing efforts are being sustained by interested parties towards obtaining funding for restorative work on this sacred site.

On my last visit to the village I was fascinated to see the wonderful improvements that Canon Niall Ahern has made in the church. Canon Niall has a very creative and artistic mind and it is reflected in every inch of the church from the front door to the sacristy. During my time there I carried out some modest improvements to the church. The Parish Council decided to replace the vaulted roof and pitch pine timbers that had been in place since 1921. It was covered with the tiled ceiling that is still there today. We also painted the outside of the church in a coffee and cream colour. All those were very modest alterations compared to the wonderful imaginative and creative work undertaken since.



Mass at Killaspugbrone being celebrated by Fr. Liam Devine.

I was delighted to find that there was a strong G.A.A. club in the parish when I arrived there. I was lucky that under age football was very strong and in 1987 I managed the Coolera-Strandhill U-12 team to win the county title. The photograph of that team is hanging on the wall above my head as I write this article in my new parish in Loughglynn. It is hard to believe that it is 32 years ago, and I am sure I wouldn't recognize many of them today. That team will always be special to me.

During my time in Strandhill I organised 3-day pilgrimages to Lough Derg. A group of us made the pilgrimage each year for about 5 years. We always enjoyed the lovely T-bone steak that the late Mary Mc Partland provided for us at 12 midnight on the night we returned from Lough Derg. Happy memories!

I always enjoyed my pastoral work in Strandhill. There were some sad funerals that were difficult to cope with. Every funeral is sad, and a priest has to do his best to convey to the bereaved the great hope that the Gospel holds for all of us. There were also some very happy occasions like Weddings and Baptisms. Confirmations and First Holy Communion were always special. I enjoyed visiting the schools where the teachers always had a warm welcome. Helping the teachers to prepare the children for the sacraments is a very important part of a priest's work and I always enjoyed it. You can learn so much from the children.

I will always treasure the happy memories that I have from my time working in Strandhill. The church was built at a difficult time in our country's history, but it is a monument to the faith and generosity of the people at that time. I wish you all the best with your centenary celebrations.

Primary Education In Strandhill



1971

1981



Today



Scoil Asicus Naofa, named after the patron saint of the diocese, was opened in 1896 to replace the two existing schools in the village situated at Larass and Mannionstown. Local historians speak of a school preceding these two at Tully. It is believed to have been situated up the hill from St. Anne's Church on the right-hand side of the road. It was known as Lar Easa and may have been a type of hedge school.

The school at Larass was opened in 1843 by Mr. Laurence Ballantine. It was a one room school and was situated beside Mr. Ballantine's house. A house on the Sligo side of Bree's pub now stands on this site.

Mannionstown National School was opened in 1858. It had one classroom and had an average enrolment of twenty pupils. It is recorded as closing in 1866 but local tradition holds that it continued to function up to 1896. It was located just past the present-day roundabout on the left-hand side of the road as you head towards Sligo.

On December 1st, 1896 a new two roomed school named Scoil Asicus Naofa was opened. It was situated in the townland of Carrowbunnaun on a site in an area today referred to as the Top Road. For the next 85 years the children of Strandhill were educated in this building. The school grew over the years and three prefabricated buildings were added to the school at different stages. When it closed on the 25th of March 1981 it had an enrolment of 171 pupils. After it closed it was used for a number of different activities, including a hostel. Today it is a private dwelling.

The Principals who served in the old school on the Top Road were Mrs. Kate Gallagher (nee Cogan) (1896-1926), Ms Elizabeth Burns (1927-1928), Mrs. Mary Kate Maguire (nee Duggan) (1928-1961), Mr. Patrick Thornton (1961-1978) and Mr. Manus Shields (1978-1981).

In the late 1970s it was decided to replace the school on the Top Road with a new school. The primary reason for this was, that the number of pupils attending had outgrown the facilities available. A spacious site



was donated on the Golf Links Road by Mrs. Victoria Jenet of Culleenamore House. The new school was constructed by Kilcawley and Co. builders Sligo at a cost of £300 000.

Complete with six classrooms, a general-purpose room, kitchen, staffroom and office, it was considered to be a very modern school for its time. On March 26th, 1981 the five teachers namely Mr. Manus Shields (Principal), Mrs. Rose Kilfeather (Vice Principal), Mrs. Rita Burke, Mrs. Kathleen Mullen and Mrs. Laura O’Grady and their 171 pupils transferred to the new school on the Golf Links Road. It was officially opened on the 2nd of April 1981 and blessed by Rev. Dr. Dominic Conway, Bishop of Elphin.

Since 1981, Scoil Asicus Naofa has continued to grow from strength to strength. In 2008, Mrs Anne Ruane replaced Mr. Manus Shields as principal. In 2014, a major extension was added to the school to cater for the ever-increasing population and changing educational needs. Two classrooms, three Learning Support rooms, a new entrance and an extensive lobby area and administrative office were added. In 2017, a further extension took place which consisted of a classroom, a learning support room and a store room. The staffroom was also extended as it was initially intended for a staff of five teachers when opened in 1981. Bishop Doran blessed the new extension on the occasion of its opening.

In 2018 Mr. Joseph Fogarty replaced Mrs. Anne Ruane as principal. In September 2019, Scoil Asicus Naofa had an enrolment of two hundred and fifty six pupils. The staff was comprised of the Principal, thirteen teachers, three special needs assistants and two support staff. The school is governed by a Board of Management with the Parish Priest as Chairperson.

Both photographs opposite were taken at Scoil Aisicus Naofa on the Top Road in the 1920s.

Recollections of Fr. Brian Conlon

1995 - 1997



The opening of the new school in Strandhill in 1981. Included in the picture are Bishop Dominic Conway and Fr. Dominick Gillooly.



A certificate awarded to Scoil Asicus Naofa in 1940 for Liturgical Music.

Strandhill Ransboro was my home for two years from the summer of 1995. Sister Marie Finan blessed those two years with an accompaniment that deepened me beyond words. An Ursuline Sister who drove a wee Renault Clio on the peninsular byways, with an alertness that was mirrored on the organ lofts where she commanded altos harmonizing with the bases while, at the same time, pressing the ivory herself. I cannot imagine the extent of her influence (predating many of my predecessors) and how it came to be distilled in so much of the discernment of all pastoral meetings. Deep was her commitment to faith development, as she mischievously lambasted clericalism while supporting the priest, the parson, and laity: young, old and in-between. She had appropriated Vatican II theology and she was the most significant influence on my early priesthood. Liturgies were occasions of life to be truly celebrated and the energy and zest she brought to planning ceremonies was remarkable. May she rest eternally, and may she receive the credit for so much of the vitality and beauty of theologically engaged congregations with whom I associate Coolera with.

Both churches benefitted from new central heating systems and a dash of paint during my tenure. Crying Chapels were developed in both Churches and the outer porch of Ransboro got some stone flashing. New footpaths were put into Scarden Cemetery while Kilmacowen and Killaspugbrone benefitted from the brilliant earth and stone movements of the genius machinist, the late Mr. Josie Devaney.

Having spent from 1997 to 2015 in County Roscommon's Boyle and Ardcarne, I returned to Sligo in Sept 2016 to take up Healthcare Chaplaincy in Sligo University Hospital. So now while at work, there is often joy in reconnecting with many former parishioners. Certainly, the



Mass in 1996 with celebrant Fr. Brian Conlon

evocation of a very happy time of my life happens when I meet familiar faces from Ransboro and Strandhill.

Those intervening years over in the county of the Primrose and Blue have brought me to an awareness of both my strength along with my vulnerability; the brevity of life and the sacredness of each ‘now’. As vocations to the priesthood are at an all time low I suspect that a new horizon is looming where laity will take the ownership that I once witnessed in Strandhill and Ransboro and it will be awesome to see its emerging fruition and blossoming.

As St Patrick’s Strandhill celebrates its Centenary I salute all involved and fondly remember the rebuke of our Senior Vicar General Fr Liam Devine when I hadn’t objected to the Committee of the Seventy-fifth year celebration who planned proceedings that clashed with the Connaught final! It would be remiss of me not to leave the final word to Fr Dominick Gillooly who uttered the Ephphatha prayer over my ears and mouth when he baptized me fifty-five years ago. His deep vocal assurance of everything being ‘okee dokee’ continues to be a sustaining presence felt daily in the hospital from across the Garavogue where he resides in St Anne’s as Pastor Emeritus. To you gentle reader and those I had the privilege of knowing in Coolera I sign off with that Ephphatha Prayer:

“May your ears hear the word of God and your mouth proclaim it to the greater Glory of God.”

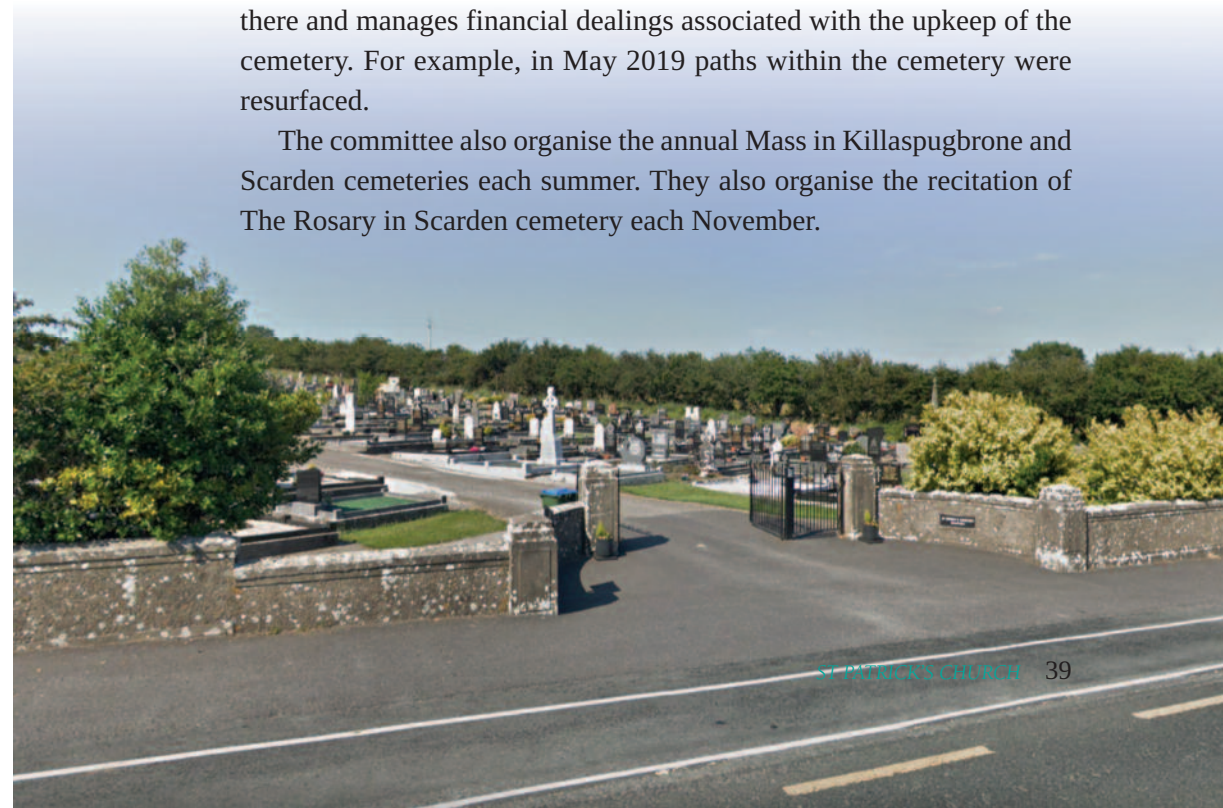
Saint Patrick’s Cemetery Scarden

For a long time there had been a need for a new burial ground for the people of Strandhill and the surrounding area. There was not adequate space left for burials in Killaspugbrone. Added to this, issues with accessibility and erosion were ongoing. Sometime in the mid-1930s, John Walter Walker of Rathcarrick House gave two acres of his land at Scarden to the Catholic Church. This land was to be used for the burial of the people of the parish.

Scarden Cemetery was consecrated on the 15th of August 1937 by Bishop Edward Doorly. As of September 1st 2019, there are one thousand three hundred and twenty three recorded burials in Scarden in seven hundred and eighty four graves. Recently the Parish purchased a field adjoining the cemetery with a view to extending the cemetery for future burials. Work on that project began in March 2019.

Today, the St. Patrick’s Cemetery Committee oversee the daily running of Scarden Cemetery. This is a committee of six people one of whom is the Registrar. The Registrar keeps a record of all who are buried there and manages financial dealings associated with the upkeep of the cemetery. For example, in May 2019 paths within the cemetery were resurfaced.

The committee also organise the annual Mass in Killaspugbrone and Scarden cemeteries each summer. They also organise the recitation of The Rosary in Scarden cemetery each November.





The Gong and statues of Our Lady and the Sacred Heart that have been in use in the church since 1921.

Fr. Sean Creaton - Our First Parish Priest 1998 - 2004

Fr. Sean Creaton became the first Parish Priest of the newly created parish of Strandhill/Ransboro in 1998. He was a native of Ballaghadereen, County Roscommon. He was ordained on June 16th, 1968 at All Hallows College, Dublin. The first parish, Fr. Sean served in was St. Patrick's in Sheffield England. After Sheffield, Fr. Sean served in Ballygar, Drumboylan, Crossna, Elphin, Castlerea and Roscommon Town. He was also a chaplain to the Defence Forces in Athlone from 1994 to 1996. His first appointment in Sligo was to the parish of St. Anne's in 1996. In 1998 he was then appointed Parish Priest of Strandhill Ransboro. Fr. Sean served in Strandhill until his untimely death following a short illness on Saturday November 27th, 2004 at the age of 61.

Fr. Sean was a much loved and respected figure within the community. He was very fond of and dedicated to his parish and enjoyed living in Strandhill beside the golf course where he spent many an hour in his spare time.

His Funeral Mass and burial took place on Tues November 30th, 2004. His brother Fr. James Creaton was the chief concelebrant. Fr. Sean is buried in the grounds of St. Patrick's Church, Strandhill and a parish Mass is offered annually for his repose.



Fr. Sean Creaton celebrating Mass at Killaspugbrone.



St. Patrick's Church Strandhill in 2006

The 2009 Refurbishment

The most recent refurbishment occurred in 2009 under the guidance and direction of Canon Niall Ahern. Brendan Mitchell Knocknahun (BM Construction) was employed as the main contractor for this extensive refurbishment. Overall the cost of the whole project was in the region of 300,000 euro. Again, like with previous generations, generous donations and sponsorship by the people of Strandhill and beyond, paid in full for this major refurbishment.

Internally the sanctuary area was reconfigured. A new altar, lectern and seating was purchased for the sanctuary. The altar area was redecorated with paint, tiling and wallpaper. The partition wall at the back of the altar was redecorated and was surrounded by an oak frame with spotlights. The old tabernacle was built into this wall and surrounded with a brass frame. A new version of the cross was placed above the tabernacle.

New oak seating was purchased. These seats were shorter in length than the original seats to accommodate people going up to Holy Communion by the centre aisle and coming down the sides. The porches and aisle were retiled, and the parquet floor was extended. All internal joinery was replaced with white oak and the windows were surrounded with oak frames.

Both side chapels were redecorated. The baptismal font was moved from the altar to the Baptismal Chapel on the eastern side. The front of the church's original altar was moved to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel or chapel of Intercession on the western side. The front porch was redecorated. The door on the western side of the porch was permanently sealed and redesigned to frame the statue of St. Patrick.

Major upgrades or replacement of all electrical and plumbing works was carried out. Internal painting, plastering and insulation was completed. The roof in both the church and sacristy was also repaired.

Externally new tarmacadam was put down in the carpark. The



boundary wall built in 1934 was replaced and capped with sandstone. A new front boundary was erected with individual sandstone pieces. Brick paving and planter beds were also incorporated into the grounds. The exterior of the church was painted and the words Teampall Phádraig Naofa were placed in gold lettering above the front porch.

On a personal note, I believe we have a church in Strandhill today where there is a wonderful sense of prayer and sacredness. We have a beautiful church that is a great source of pride for the people of the parish. I have no doubt that if St. Patrick could come back to Strandhill today, he would be extremely proud of the church named in his honour.





Scoil Aisicis Naofa Confirmation Class 2019



Scoil Aisicis Naofa First Communion Class 2019

Teampall Phádraig Naofa 2020

Our Living Church Today

Teampall Phádraig Naofa has stood steadfast in the village of Strandhill since 1921. However, for those from Strandhill and its environs who practice the Catholic faith it is much more than a building, it is the vibrant hub of an active, progressive and inclusive faith community. On many occasions throughout the year our Church fills with people who gather for Masses, Vigils, Weddings, Funerals, First Communions, Baptisms, Nativity Plays and musical events. These are the big occasions in our Church. They can be occasions of joy or sorrow when the community, as a whole come together to worship.

Yet there is another aspect to Teampall Phádraig Naofa and its faith community, an aspect that operates at a much quieter and less obvious level. This aspect refers to the normal day to day activities that happen in and as part of Teampall Phádraig Naofa. These activities are the foundation stone on which our faith community is built and the cement that binds it together. Some of these activities relate to people practising and expressing their faith. Others relate to the preparation and planning for the aforementioned bigger ceremonies. More relate to assisting with and improving the different areas of parish life.

Unsure of how to unearth all the many and varied aspects of parish life in Strandhill I decided to take one year 2018, and research the Parish Newsletters of that year. By doing this I hope to present the reader with a small flavour of the events that occur within our faith community.

Mass is celebrated daily in Strandhill. The Rosary is also recited daily and there is Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament from 7:00 pm to 8:00pm every evening. On Sundays, Masses are celebrated at 9:30am and 12:30pm. During July and August, the Saturday evening Vigil Mass is celebrated at 7:30pm. For the rest of the year the Vigil Mass is celebrated in Strandhill on 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of the month only. Mass is

celebrated in Ransboro on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals are interwoven into the weekly cycle of liturgies.

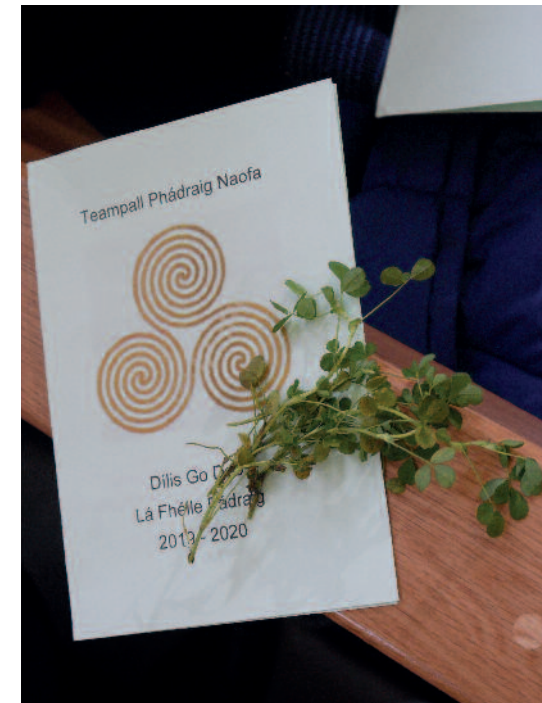
To facilitate and enhance these liturgies there are a number of individuals and groups who maintain and decorate our church on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. There are many other groups and committees who meet in the church regularly. Choir practices are held most weeks. Altar servers, Readers, Eucharistic Ministers and other liturgical groups are constantly fine tuning their skills. Various committees such as the Parish Council, the Finance Committee and the Safeguarding Group meet often, to help with the smooth running of the parish. Other groups such as St. Vincent de Paul and The Legion of Mary also meet regularly.

An important day every month in our faith community is the First Friday. Visitation to the housebound with the Holy Eucharist is an integral part of life in the parish. Other visitations made during the month as part of the Parish Chaplaincy service include, local nursing homes, hospitals and schools.

Other events and celebrations happen annually. The first Holy Day of the year, the feast of the Epiphany takes place on January 6th. Catholic Schools week takes place in January and is marked by different liturgies being organised for the classes of Scoil Asicus Naofa. The annual Grandparents Mass also takes place at this time.

February begins with the feast of St. Brigid and the making and distribution of St. Brigid's crosses. On February 3rd throats are blessed in the church marking the feast day of St. Blaise. The World Day of the Sick is also celebrated in February. On that day a church anointing takes place during Masses.

St. Patrick's Day (La Fhéile Phádraig) holds a special place in our community and is celebrated on March 17th. Our annual Volunteers Mass is also celebrated in March. At this Mass local Volunteer Groups are recognised and thanked. March usually heralds the start of Lent, the season of preparation for Easter. The Trócaire Lenten campaign is supported by the people of the parish. The Way of Gentleness takes place over four Monday nights during Lent. It is a time of reflection and a chance to pray and contemplate with the aid of word and music. During Lent, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place after daily Mass.



Reconciliation services are also organised for the parish and the school at this time.

In April, Commitment ceremonies are held for those about to receive their First Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation. Many of those being confirmed also take part in a ceremony where they enrol in the Pioneer Association.

Easter usually occurs in April. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Easter Week. Ceremonies on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Saturday night and Easter Sunday are all significant occasions in Teampall Phádraig Naofa. It is also a time when many admire the Easter Garden that is placed in the Sanctuary area.

In May, local children make their First Holy Communion while many of those in 6th class are confirmed. A one-day parish pilgrimage to Lough Derg takes place in May while Vocations Sunday is also celebrated. The annual Sports Mass takes place during this month. Local sporting bodies and clubs organise and participate in the Mass.

Pentecost often explained as the Apostles confirmation is celebrated in June with the Lighting of the Flames ceremony. A Mass for those doing exams is celebrated in June as well as the Faith and Light Mass which celebrates the lives of people with special needs. All those who were baptised in Strandhill in the previous twelve months are invited to a special annual Baptismal celebration in June.

July and August see an increase in visitor numbers attending Masses in Strandhill. Cemetery Masses are normally celebrated in Killaspugbrone and Scarden during these summer months. The feast day of the Assumption of Mary is celebrated on the 15th of August. August is also the month when many members of the parish community attend the annual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Knock while one or more young people from the parish volunteer as helpers for the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

The end of the summer is marked by a return to schools and the opening of the school year Mass for Scoil Asicus Naofa. It is also the month in Teampall Phádraig Naofa where time is set aside to allow various speakers and organisations address the congregations and inform us about their work. In October the Altar Society create a wonderful floral display celebrating the harvest. Mission week also takes place in October and one or more missionary talks are organised.

November is a special month for all as we remember those who have gone before us. The month starts with the Masses on All Saints and All



Participants at the Sports Mass 2019

Souls days. A Book of Remembrance is made available to sign while names and petitions are placed on the Tree of Life. The Rosary is also recited in Scarden at this time of the year.

November is also the month when certificates are presented to the Altar Servers. They are given in gratitude to those young people who have given their service over the past number of years.

The end of November marks the start of the Season of Advent. The Advent Wreath is lit at each of the Sunday Masses. A personal enrichment journey for Advent takes place over four Monday nights which gives people the space and environment to reflect and pray.

In December, Mass celebrating the Immaculate Conception takes place on the 8th. The approach of Christmas is heralded with the exterior of Teampall Phádraig Naofa being transformed with a crib and Christmas tree. A much smaller crib is also placed inside the church beside the altar. A Tin Tank is placed in the church during Advent where non-perishable foodstuffs are collected and then distributed locally to those in need. A Reconciliation Service is held during December in preparation for Christmas. A Christmas Carol Service is held in the church with the Senior, Folk and Children's choirs and the Sligo Concert Band. The Nativity Story is performed in the church by the local school



children. Finally, the celebration of the Christmas Vigil and Christmas morning Masses signal that the end of another year in the life of Teampall Phádraig Naofa and its people is near.

Every day throughout the year, people wander into Teampall Phádraig Naofa in their own time. They may be there to light a candle, say a prayer or just to reflect for a moment. They might be putting a name or petition in the Prayer of Intercession Box or on the Tree of Life. They may be just offering a prayer of Thanksgiving, or even taking five minutes for themselves in a place of quietness and sanctity. It is these visits that are the heartbeat of Teampall Phádraig Naofa and what have sustained it over the last 100 years.



Canon Niall Ahern and parishioners making their way to Killaspugbone

Strandhill 2020 Committees, Societies and Pastoral Groups

Today, many people in Strandhill contribute in a variety of different ways to maintain, promote and enhance our experience of worship and parish life. This sense of generosity and community can be seen through the many different committees, societies and groups that work in and around Teampall Phádraig Naofa.

Adoration Committee

A special group who promote and maintain a constant presence at the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Adoration takes place daily from 7.00 – 8.00pm in the Chapel of Intercession.

Altar Servers

Today there is a team of thirty altar servers who serve in St. Patrick's Church. The team is made up of boys and girls who reside in the area and are for the most part aged between eight and thirteen. They serve on a two-week rota basis every Sunday and on Holy days. The servers attend a number of practice sessions before they serve their first Mass. Servers also train for special liturgies like Funerals, First Communion and vigils at Christmas and Easter. A number of adult parishioners put a huge amount of time and effort into coordinating and training the servers. All this hard work is obvious when you see how confident and capable our servers are at the altar.

St. Patrick's Altar Society

One of the most vibrant groups within the parish is the St. Patrick's Altar Society. This group provide floral decorations within the church throughout the year. They may not be as visible as other groups, but they are constantly working in the background enhancing the beauty of the church. At the moment there are almost twenty members in the society and they work in pairs on a monthly rota. Each pair is responsible for the



Some of the Altar Servers enjoying a treat in Mammy Johnston's with their co-ordinator Pauline Monaghan

provision, arrangement and care of the flowers during their assigned month. At special times like Christmas, Easter, The Harvest Festival or any other parish celebrations the society as a whole look after the flowers.

Baptismal Team

They help in the preparation of people for the sacrament of Baptism. They organise a special information meeting for the parents and Godparents of children about to be baptised. Each home is also visited by a member of the team before the Baptism. The Baptismal Team also help in the preparation of candidates for adult Baptisms.

Choirs

We have three choirs in Strandhill today, the Senior Choir, the Folk Choir and the School/Children's Choir. The Senior Choir was formed in 1973. It presently has a membership of twenty five and is directed by their organist. The Folk Group/Choir came into existence in the 1980s and today has sixteen members. The School Choir is made up of children from third to sixth class who sing at the 12:30pm Mass once a month.

One choir sings at the 12:30pm Mass every week. Sometimes a choir will sing at the 9:30am Mass or the Vigil Mass. At times of the year like Christmas and Easter one or more of the choirs will participate in and enhance these liturgical events.

Cluster Group

A number of parishioners are members of our Cluster Group which is part of the Sligo Parish Cluster Group area. Here local parishes come together to share resources, ideas and expertise. Many initiatives are undertaken that are of shared interest. This group meets monthly and has a permanent Catechist available for ministry in all aspects of parish life.

Collectors Committee

A group of parishioners organise the collection, registering and banking of donations that are generously contributed at Mass each week.

Eucharistic Ministers

At the moment there is a team of twenty-one Eucharistic Ministers in Strandhill. They serve on a rota basis at all Masses and also distribute Holy Communion to the housebound.

St. Patrick's Finance Committee

The finance committee comprises of seven volunteer members who oversee the everyday financial running of the church. Like all other committees they work with the Parish Priest to ensure the smooth running of the parish. An end of year financial statement is issued by the committee every December and is posted on the noticeboard at the back of the church.

Maintenance/Support Group

Visitors to Strandhill often comment on how well St. Patrick's Church looks both internally and externally. This does not happen by chance as a group of generous and dedicated parishioners clean and care for the church throughout the year. This group of volunteers work on a rota system and clean the church weekly. Volunteers are always welcome.

There is also a team of parishioners who help to build and create features that help our experience of prayer and worship both inside and outside the church. Some of the items they are responsible for include the Resurrection Garden at Easter and the Cribs and decorated trees at Christmas.

Strandhill Pastoral Council

The Pastoral Council is made up of fourteen members and meets monthly. The council elects its own Chairperson and Secretary. The role



Some members of the present Parish council

of the Parish Pastoral Council is to be consultative and advisory in the furthering of the mission of Christ and his Church in Strandhill. Members are encouraged to take up active responsibilities in the parish whenever and however they are able.

Recollections of Fr. Christopher Mc Crann

I was a missionary priest and had been working in Mexico and Columbia. In 2003 I returned home to accompany my elderly mother and family. My friend and colleague the late Fr. Sean Creaton was Parish Priest in Strandhill. He was starting medical treatment at that time and needed some assistance in the parish. Bishop Christopher Jones (RIP) knew I was home and asked me could I assist Fr. Sean with his parish work and cover for him when absent. I gladly accepted.

Sadly Fr. Sean died in November 2004. At this stage I was living in the parish and was serving the people of Strandhill and Ransboro. When Fr. Niall Ahern was appointed Parish Priest in 2005 I remained on in the Parish with the Bishop's blessing. At that time Strandhill was rapidly expanding and there was a need for two priests in the Parish. A beautiful priest's house was then built in Ransboro which I moved into and thankfully I have been here since.

There are many words I could use to describe my experience here in the parish but the one word that really sums it up for me is community. We have great communities in Strandhill and Ransboro. You just have to look at what happens in the carparks of both churches after Sunday Masses. Both are full. People are chatting and laughing. They are interested in one another's stories and take time to talk and listen. Nobody seems to be in a rush home. People seem to genuinely care for one another. There is a great sense of community here.

This is a special year for St. Patrick's Church Strandhill. We have a lovely church in Strandhill. It has stood the test of time and has been wonderfully redecorated by Fr. Niall in recent years. We have inherited a strong faith in this parish, a faith that goes back to the time of St. Patrick. We need to keep that faith, practice it and pass it on to future generations. Finally, I would like to thank the people of Strandhill and Ransboro for their hospitality, kindness and support over the years and for making me feel part of this special community.

Readers

Over thirty adults are available to read at our Sunday Masses while a smaller group read on the weekdays. A group of teenage boys and girls read the Prayers of the Faithful each Sunday. At the moment there is a team of twenty-one teenagers participating in this ministry.

Sacristy Team

The sacristy is the hub of Church activity and members of the parish contribute to its organisation and smooth running at all times.

Safeguarding Committee

The Safeguarding Committee is made up of a number of volunteers. They meet at regular intervals and review and monitor the structures that are in place within the parish to ensure the safety and protection of children. They attend regular training and keep updated. They aim to create safe environments for children and young people in order to secure their protection and enable their full participation in the life of the church, parish and community. Contact details are on the Parish Notice Board in the church porch.

Welcome Team

Many parishioners share their time and talents to help with the smooth running and enhancement of many liturgical services. These include those who are members of the St. Patrick's Welcome Team. They serve as ushers at the 12:30pm Mass each Sunday and at and at other liturgical ceremonies including those at Christmas and Easter.

Some Interesting Facts and Bits and Pieces



In putting together this publication I came across the following bits and pieces that I found of interest. They are in no particular order as I recorded them as I went along.

- Apart from Killaspugbrone there are at least two other early Christian sites in Coolera, Kilmacowen and Templenabree. Kilmacowen ‘the Church of the sons of Eoin’ was founded in the sixth century by a chieftain named Eoin. Like Killaspugbrone it fell into disuse over the centuries. Adjacent to the church is a holy well called Tobar Phádraig, with a stone that is reputed to bear the imprint of the Saint’s knee. The remains of another ancient church are to be found at Templenabree. There is a possibility that at some stage there was a convent on the site as old maps refer to the area as Teampall na gCailleach Dubh. (Church of the Black Robed Nuns)
- There is a lot of local folklore regarding St. Patrick’s visit to the Coolera peninsula. One such story recalls the day St. Patrick was crossing from Killaspugbrone to Coney Island when he was surrounded by the incoming tide. He took refuge on the small piece of raised ground that can be seen directly in front of the church. Today its known as Dunán Phádraig or Patrick’s Little Fort. Tradition has it that since then, no matter how high the tide rises this little islet will never be covered.
- While visiting Killaspugbrone St. Patrick is said to have tripped on uneven ground, fallen and lost a tooth. He gave the tooth to Bronus who enshrined it in the church. The relic became very well known and was treated with great reverence. At what stage it was removed from Killaspugbrone we are not sure but in the 14th Century, Thomas de Bermingham, Lord of Athenry, had a tooth of St. Patrick encased



The Tooth Shrine of St Patrick, 12th Century

in a golden casket. It is highly probable that this encased tooth came from Killaspugbrone as the Berminghams had seized lands in Sligo in the 13th Century. The reliquary is purse shaped and is made from wood, copper, silver and gold. Today it is on display in the National Museum in Dublin.

- Local history has referred to the existence of a convent type settlement existing at some stage in the environs of Killaspugbrone. There is no historical evidence to support this. However, the very small beach on the western side of Killaspugbrone was known in the past as Nun's Beach or Nun's Bay. This is not to be confused

with the much larger beach on the eastern side of Killaspugbrone that is commonly known as Killaspugbrone Beach.

- In his wonderful book *'At The Foot of Knocknarea'* John Mc Tiernan noted; *The ancient parishes of Kilmacowen and Killaspugbrone were reduced in size in 1891, when Bishop Clancy of Elphin transferred the townlands of Carrowgobbadagh, Carrowkeel and Cloverhill to the curacy area of Carraroe and the Islands of Coney and Oyster to Rosses Point.* (p149)
- If you stand high up on Knocknarea you may observe that St Patrick's Church Maugerow, Killaspugbrone and St Patrick's Church Strandhill all appear to be situated in a straight-line running north to south. St. Patrick's Maugerow which was built in 1882 was completely refurbished in 1991 following a devastating fire caused by a lightning strike.
- The first night Fr Dominick Gillooly slept in the newly built priests' house in Strandhill was August 29th, 1975. This was the same night the late Taoiseach and President Mr. Eamon De Valera died.
- Most of the contents of the church have been replaced over the years. What definitely has remained since 1921 are the statues of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady which are now situated in the choir balcony; The Gong which is rung by the altar servers at each Mass; The front of the original altar depicting Da Vinci's Last Supper which is now

situated in the Chapel of Intercession; The original bell on the roof of the church is still intact. It was restored in the 1990s but salt from the sea air has rendered it unusable once more.

- The tabernacle that is used in the church today had once been the tabernacle in the convent oratory in Glenties, Co. Donegal.
- The large cross that hung above the altar before the most recent refurbishment in 2009 still hangs in the church today. Most parishioners pass under it as they enter the church, but many have failed to notice its new position.
- St Patrick's Church at one time had four entrances two of which were in the main porch. At present we use the entrance on the eastern side of the porch. The entrance on the western side was closed in 2009. Today the statue of St. Patrick stands where the door once was situated. The two side chapels also had entrances. The door on the eastern side is still in use today. The door on the western side has been closed for many years. The prevailing wind and rain on the western side of St. Patrick's was the primary reason for these closures.
- There is a basement area under the sacristy that was used for storage. It was closed in the 1960s as there were ongoing issues with dampness as well as safety.





- The Stations of the Cross that currently hang in the church were made locally by Mr. John Healy. He owned a local pottery business named Dun Maeve Pottery. It was located on the site of the present Plaza apartments, Shore Road. They replaced the original stations that were made by Messrs. Egan, Cork.
- Kilmacowen Hall was opened on St. Patrick's night 1920. This was the same day that the Foundation Stone was officially laid in St. Patrick's Church Strandhill.
- Fr. James Mulligan, the man responsible for building St. Patrick's Church, was to later officiate at the Baptism of one Niall Ahern, our present day Parish Priest.
- When St. Anne's was consecrated as a place of worship for the local Church of Ireland community a baptismal font from Killaspugbrone was placed inside its front door.

- Prior to the introduction of electricity to Strandhill in 1948, Tilley lamps were often borrowed from St. Patrick's Hotel which was situated directly across the road from the church. These were used to provide extra light in the church at the Christmas and Easter Vigil Masses.
- Mrs Victoria Jenet donated two fields as a site for the new Scoil Asicus Naofa in 1981. Very little is known about Mrs Jenet. She was originally from France and came to Sligo after acquiring the Culleenamore riding stables. She later sold all her property and moved to the State of Colorado in the USA.
- In 1831 Mr. James Walker of Rathcarrick purchased property which included Killaspugbrone Church and graveyard. In the 1950s most of Walkers Estate was taken over by what was then referred to as the Department of Lands.
- The building fund to raise money for the new church in Strandhill was officially launched in December 1919. Fr. Mulligan's brother who was home from the missions preached at the launch of this event in the cathedral.
- Up until the 1960s there was no hard surface covering the church grounds. Today we have tarmacadam, back then it was grass with narrow paths to the church doors. In fact, hay was regularly saved where the cars are parked today. The meadow that grew in the church grounds was also a home for the corncrake.
- In times past Confessions were heard on one Saturday per month in the church beginning at 10:00am and such was the attendance that Confessions would last most of the morning.
- Sunday Mass times in Strandhill changed with the arrival of our first resident priest in 1973. Before this, Sunday Mass was celebrated in Strandhill at 9:30am and in Ransboro at 11:00am on the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays of the month. On the 3rd Sunday, Mass was celebrated at 9:30am in Ransboro and at 11:00am in Strandhill. There were no Vigil or 12:30pm Masses.
- Year round daily Masses also began in 1973. Prior to this some daily Masses were celebrated intermittently over the summer months.

These Masses were celebrated by priests who were on their summer holidays in Strandhill. During some weeks there may have been no priest while during other weeks many priests were in the village. First Mass could have begun as early as 6am and consecutive Masses followed throughout the morning.

- An interesting feature of the church windows is that male Saints are depicted on the left hand side of the aisle and female Saints on the right hand side. This was in line with the tradition of the time when men sat on the left hand side and women on the right hand side of the church for worship. At the altar there are two exceptions to this rule. An image of Our Lady appears on one of the panels on the left and an image of St. Patrick is depicted on the right.

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- No record exists of where the original bell on the roof of Teampall Phádraig Naofa came from. However, a story from the local folklore of Boyle Co. Roscommon may shed some light on its origins.

There was a church in Boyle named St. Patrick's which was built in 1823 and situated on Chapel St. In 1882 it was replaced by a new parish church, St. Josephs on the Carrick Road. It is said

that the old bell that rang people to Mass in St. Patrick's was given to the new chapel in Strandhill in 1921. The transfer of the bell from the Boyle Parish caused a certain amount of disquiet and unhappiness and gave rise to a minor incident that happened in Strandhill some years later.

One Sunday afternoon in Strandhill the church bell began to ring. At that time the bell was only ever rung to mark the Angelus and at Mass times. It was never rung at any other time unless a very serious incident was happening or about to happen. On hearing the unscheduled ringing of the bell people flocked to the church. Rumours were spreading that

the church was on fire or that a public announcement was to be made about some impending disaster.

At the church, the people who had come running from all directions were met with the sight of a man ringing the church bell. When in the absence of any obvious reason, he was asked to account for his actions, he explained that he was a Boyle man visiting the seaside for the day and that he had decided to ring his own bell.



A picture of the Church from 1930s with the aforementioned bell.

DÍLIS GO DEO

Teampall Phádraig Naofa
STRANDHILL
1920-2020

Centenary Prayer

God, our Father, in your wisdom you sent your Son amongst us with the compassionate Good News of the Gospel.

Through the power of the Spirit, continue to lead us in faith during this our centenary year of Teampall Phádraig Naofa. Since the witness of Saint Patrick, who first walked amongst us and established here our first meeting place with Christ at Killaspugbrone, we have endeavoured to be steadfast in our belief in the power of the Trinity.

Through the example of our ancestors in successive generations, we have been inspired with hope towards this centenary year and we especially remember

.....
at this moment of grace and blessing.

Renew our community as we pass on the gift of faith in our time. Give us courage to proclaim the Gospel with newness and joy so that Teampall Phádraig Naofa may continue to serve as the sacred place of encounter with Christ for the generations to come.

AMEN

*Críost Liom, Críost Romham,
Críost i Mo Dhiadh, Críost Istigh Ionam*

*Christ Be With Me, Christ Before Me,
Christ Behind Me, Christ Within Me.*

ADORATION PLEDGE

We as a family commit to being represented during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on at least one occasion of our own private choosing during this centenary year of Teampall Phádraig Naofa.

We place this commitment leaflet in the Petition Box in the Chapel of Intercession in the confidence that all who pray here during this year of special grace will be blessed abundantly by God and we ask God's joy and peace on all our family members.

(Adoration takes place each evening / Monday- Friday 7pm- 8pm / No signature necessary.)

DÍLIS GO DEO

Teampall Phádraig Naofa
STRANDHILL
1920-2020



DÍLIS GO DEO YEAR OF RENEWAL 2019-2020

This significant year is a time of renewal in faith and mission for our parish and is a deep and blessed time for all of us.

Our centenary year is being celebrated and marked in many different ways. The following is a list of some of the ways we are recognising one hundred years of Teampall Phádraig Naofa.

- A special Centenary Prayer is recited at all Masses.
- A special prayer book is being published with the title of *One Hundred Prayers for One Hundred Years* and all the contributions are from parishioners.
- A special walk/Camino for young people and their families from the church to the top of Knocknarea in aid of children with special needs.
- A St. Patrick's Day Mass broadcast live by RTE.
- The composition of a Centenary Hymn DÍLIS GO DEO.
- The publication of a history of Teampall Naofa Phádraig.
- The production of a ceramic copies of the East Window of Killaspugbrone.
- A commemorative Mass to mark our centenary, celebrated by Bishop Kevin Doran.
- The production of a Centenary Calendar.
- Commemorative Christmas and St. Patrick's Day cards.
- The Centenary Festival of Flowers Exhibition.
- The creation of a Centenary Time Capsule to be laid in the Church sanctuary.
- The presentation of Bene Merenti Medals.



- An Adoration Pledge where a family commit to one hour of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament during our centenary year.
- Commemorative fridge magnets distributed to primary school children.
- A Centenary Retreat entitled Guided Prayer in Daily Life for parishioners in their homes.
- A commemorative candle for all the homes in Strandhill.
- A commemorative candle and prayer card to be used in St. Patrick's Cemetery Scarden for our deceased.
- A special centenary concert entitled The Sacred and the Song.
- Scoil Asicus - Church Windows Project.



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