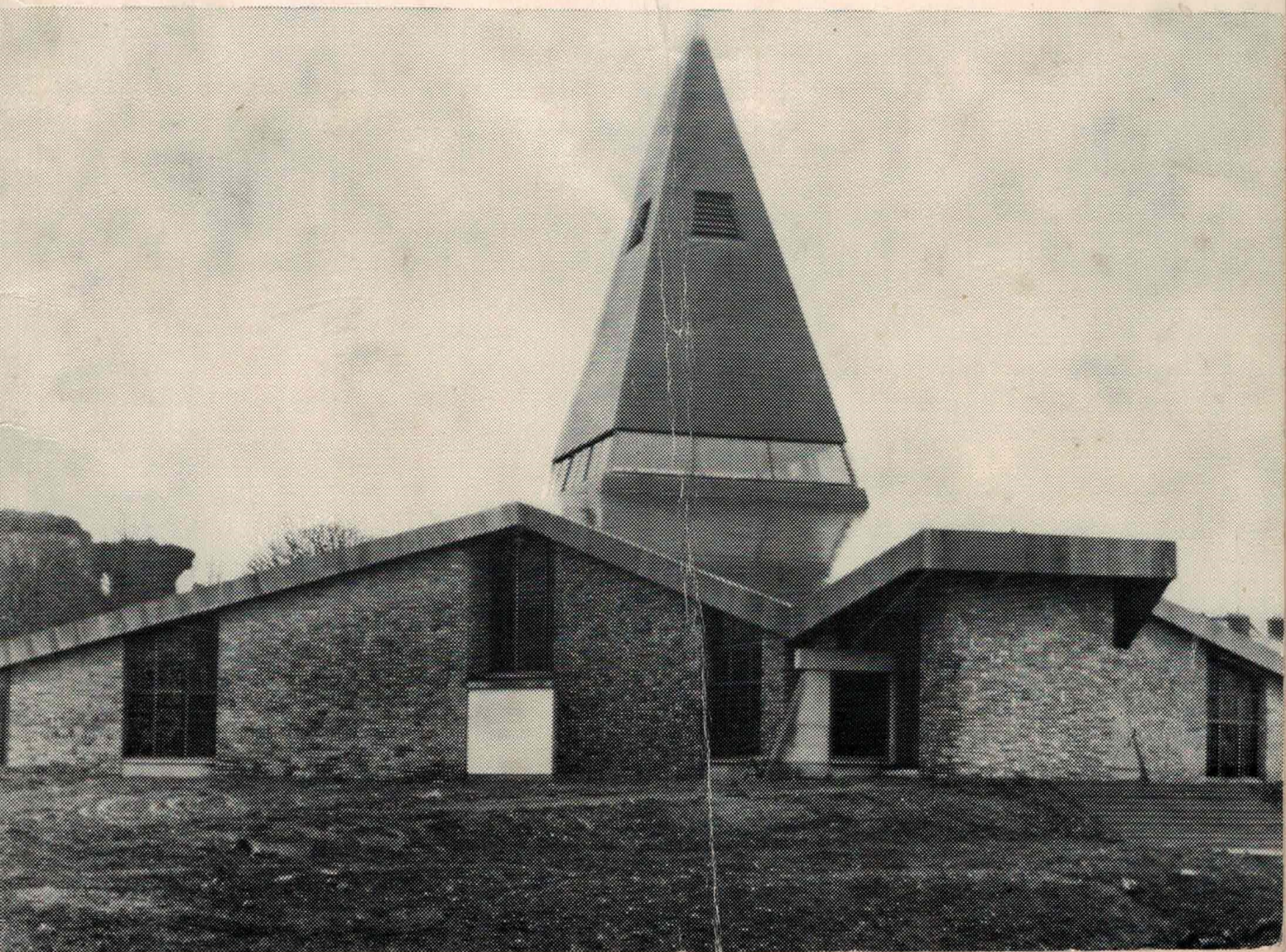


St. Aidan's
Church
Ferns



St. Aidan's Church Ferns

Blessing and Dedication

by

MOST REVEREND DONAL J. HERLIHY, D.D.

BISHOP OF FERNS

Sunday, February 2nd, 1975



MESSAGE FROM POPE PAUL VI

From The Vatican City,
5th December, 1974

Bishop Herlihy,
Summerhill,
Wexford.

Holy Father is pleased to learn of dedication of new parish church in Ferns and praying that all who assemble there may ever find spiritual renewal in the presence of God. His Holiness willingly imparts to you, to clergy and people of parochial community, as also to those who have helped to build the church, his apostolic blessing.

Yours Sincerely in Christ,
Cardinal Villot.



MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP

Bishop's House,
Wexford.

December 1, 1974

I am very happy to welcome the erection of St. Aidan's church in the parish of Ferns. The time had come for the replacement of the old church, which has served the people of the parish for a long time.

In particular, I welcome the idea of building to a design which is liturgically significant. And I hope that the people will come to appreciate and love the liturgy in its new setting.

The church is the most important building in a parish. It shadows us from the cradle to the grave, and figures at all the key moments of our lives. It is, pre-eminently, the place where the sacrament-sacrifice of the Eucharist is celebrated. And since the Blessed Eucharist is a sign of unity and a bond of charity, it is devoutly to be hoped that all who worship here will be filled 'with joy and peace in believing, so that they may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Rom. XV. 13).

I am confident that the good Lord will reward, in his own generous fashion, all those who have helped in any way towards the construction of the new parish church. A special recompense awaits those who 'love the beauty of God's house and the place where His glory dwell' (Ps. 25-8).

✠ DONAL J. HERLIHY,

Bishop of Ferns.

Message from Parish Priest

Parochial House,

Ferns.

January 20, 1975

The publication of this commemorative booklet on the occasion of the opening of our new church of St. Aidan provides a welcome opportunity of saying Thanks to all those who have made this happy parochial event possible.

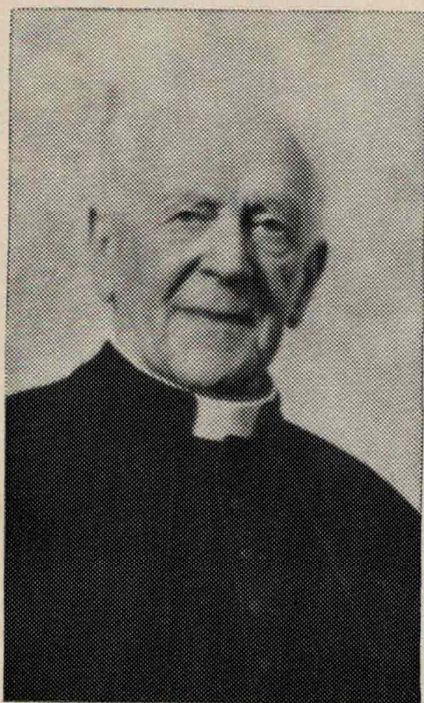
In a project of this dimension it was fitting that the whole parish should be involved and I am happy to say that this was so. Through the central building committee and the seven district committees, the whole Ferns area of the parish was closely identified with the progress of the work and the raising of the necessary funds from the start, while the people of Ballyduff and Cloogue and many outside the parish also, played an important role.

To the good God in the first place, without Whose blessing the whole undertaking must surely have come to naught, to the above-mentioned committees for their sustained and invaluable co-operation, to the local Church of Ireland Community and to all within and without the parish who helped so generously in many ways, a deep debt of gratitude and appreciation is due.

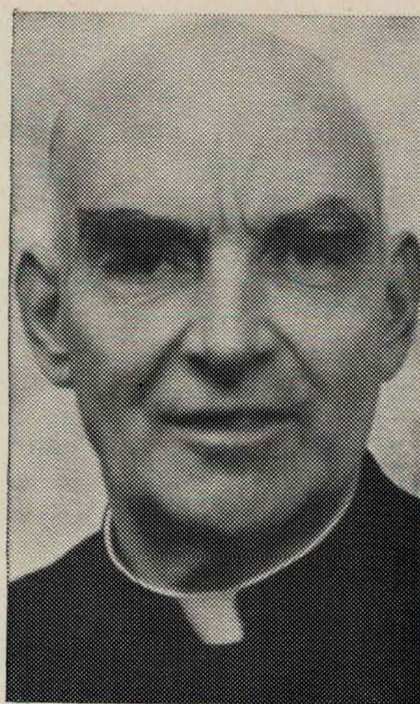
Those who were immediately concerned with the planning and construction work most assuredly deserve our thanks. They have given us, I feel, an attractive, spacious and practical building of simple yet interesting design, which ensures the maximum participation of the congregation in the sacred liturgy, as the norms of the Irish Episcopal Liturgical Commission require. While the new church may lack something of the devotional intimacy of the old, it retains its quiet and prayerful atmosphere, combining some of the best elements of traditional and modern Church architecture. Conspicuously sited in pleasantly laid out grounds, its fascinating contours, uplifting tower, attractive stone facing and rich stained glass, add a new dimension to scenic qualities of the neighbourhood.

As the Church of St. Aidan emerges from the quiet seclusion of 'The Chapel Lane' into the centre of our town, it becomes in a very real sense a 'church of the market place,' carrying the daily worship of God into the midst of the business, educational and social life of the community. It is my sincere hope that this visible sign of God's presence amongst us may make us ever more conscious of our rich heritage as a people of God, redeemed by His beloved Son Our Lord Jesus Christ. May it constantly inspire us to reflect ever more fully in our daily activities the great Christian virtues of love of God and neighbour, inherent in this symbolism, for this is surely what the Church of St. Aidan must be all about.

Patrick E. Doyle, P.P.



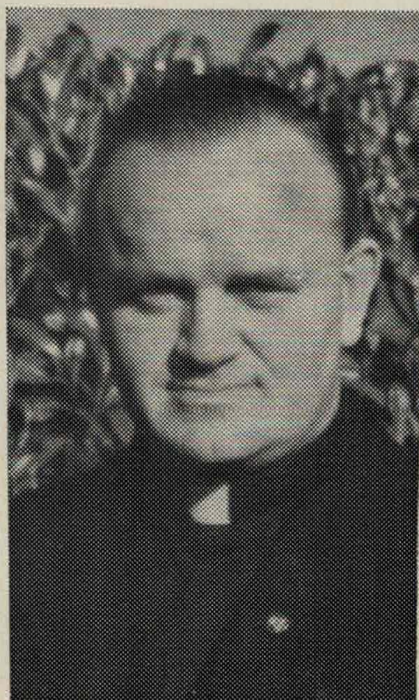
RT. REV. MONSIGNOR JOHN
DEAN CODD, V.G.
(retired Parish Priest of Ferns)



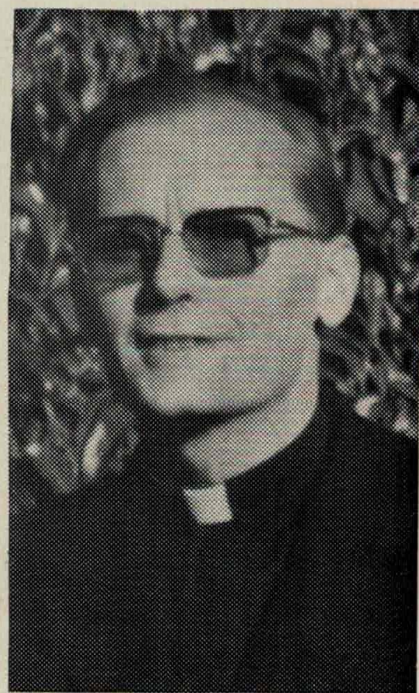
VERY REV. PATRICK CANON
DOYLE, P.P., V.F.



REV. FRANCIS WALSH
(recently transferred from
Ferns for studies at Mount
Oliver, Dundalk)



REV. PATRICK J. CUMMINS,
C.C.



REV. ANTHONY HASSETT,
C.C.

Church Building Central Committee



J. Bolger (Chairman), M. Breen (Vice-Chairman), J. Murray (Hon. Sec.), D. O'Donnell (Treasurer), J. Bolger, P. Byrne, E. Davitt, A. Doyle, T. Doyle, E. Dreehan, D. Kennedy, N. Killeen, A. Murphy, M. O'Toole, (Mrs.) E. Walsh, J. Whelan. Press: P. Cowman, J. Gethings.

LIST OF PARISH PRIESTS WHO SERVED IN FERNS

V. Rev. Fr. Doyle, c. 1670.
V. Rev. Fr. Doyle, 1690.
V. Rev. Venard (Verdon), c. 1725.
V. Rev. Fr. Lovelocke, c. 1740.
V. Rev. Michael Cannon, c. 1740-1762.
V. Rev. Andrew Cashin, 1762-1786.
V. Rev. Edward Redmond, 1786-1819.
V. Rev. Wm. O'Neill, 1819-1840.
V. Rev. James Roche, 1840-1850.

V. Rev. Bernard Mayler, 1850-1840.
V. Rev. F. Canon Marshall, 1850-1891.
V. Rev. John Canon Parker, 1891-1900.
V. Rev. D. Canon O'Connor, 1900-1901.
V. Rev. J. F. Canon Doyle, 1901-1924.
V. Rev. A. Canon Forrestal, 1924-1925.
V. Rev. J. Canon Rossiter, 1925-1942.
Rt. Rev. Monsignor Codd, 1942-1971.
V. Rev. Patrick Canon Doyle, 1971.

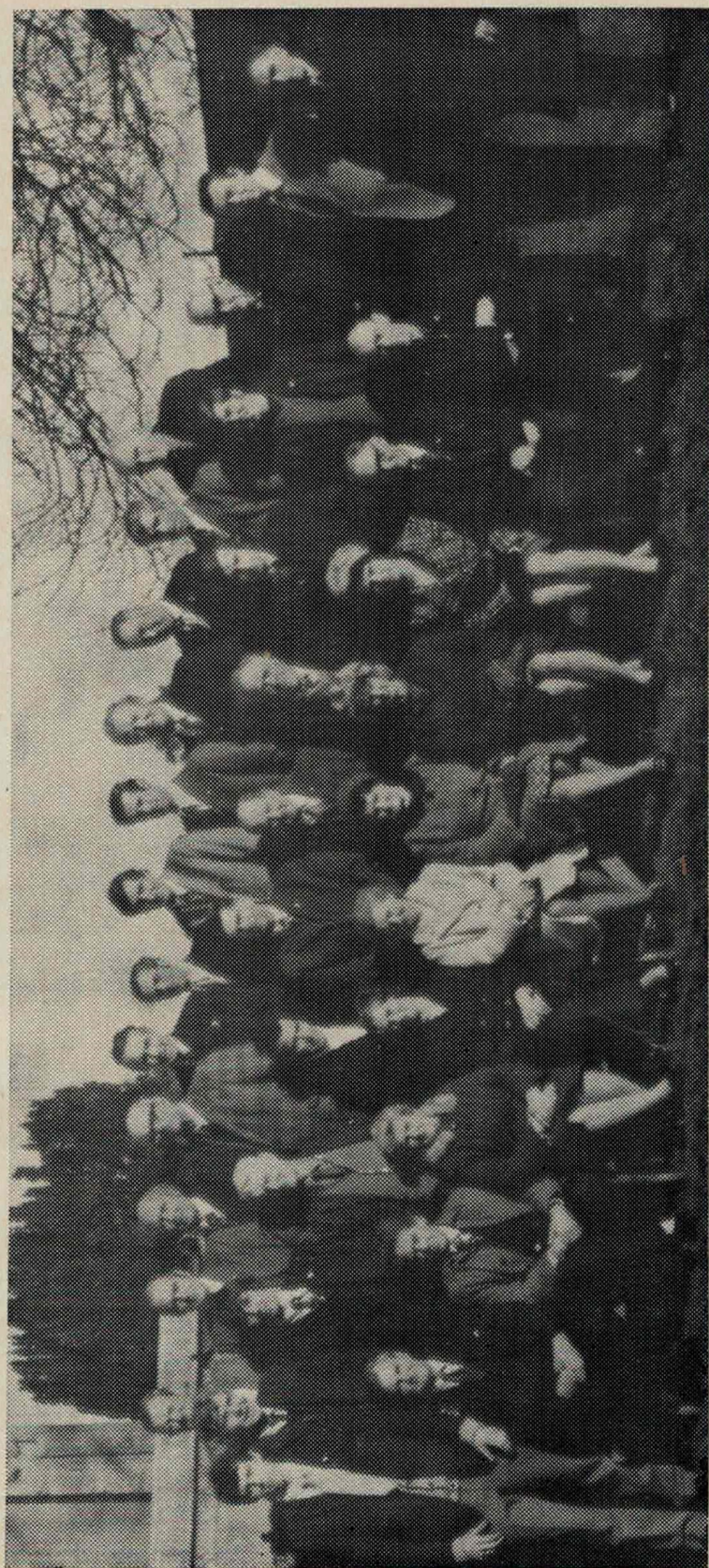
LIST OF CURATES WHO SERVED IN THE PARISH

Rev. Peter Barry, 1836.
Rev. Bernard Hayle, 1836.
Rev. Peter Murphy, 1841.
Rev. Abraham Brownrigg, 1842.
Rev. John Doyle, 1854.
Rev. Thomas Burke, 1854.
Rev. Joseph Murphy, 1866.
Rev. Thomas O'Farrell, 1889.
Rev. Martin Ryan, 1889.
Rev. Nicholas Mernagh, 1892.
Rev. Paul Kehoe, 1892.
Rev. John Lyng, 1892.
Rev. Laurence Boggan, 1893.
Rev. Michael Hayden, 1894.
Rev. Sylvester Cloney, 1894.
Rev. Laurence Jones, 1895.
Rev. Jeremiah King, 1903.
Rev. John Murphy, 1903.
Rev. James Forrestal, 1905.
Rev. Richard Kavanagh, 1906.

Rev. Jas. Redmond, 1907.
Rev. Michael Murphy, 1907.
Rev. Richard Gaul, 1916.
Rev. Michael D'Arcy, 1916.
Rev. James D'Arcy, 1917.
Rev. Francis Bookey, 1918.
Rev. Martin Kinsella, 1922.
Rev. Cornelius French, 1924.
Rev. Aidan Brennan, 1931.
Rev. Thomas Cloney, 1936.
Rev. Thomas Murphy, 1937.
Rev. Denis Carton, 1941.
Rev. Michael Sinnott, 1951.
Rev. Patrick Prendergast, 1957.
Rev. Anthony Elliot, 1957.
Rev. Thomas Eustace, 1960.
Rev. Francis Walsh, 1961.
Rev. Patrick Cummins, 1971.
Rev. Anthony Hassett, 1974.

Area Committee Members





Corah-Ballycarney:

C. Christopher, F. Fortune, J. Jackman, S. Kehoe, J. Leary, L. Mullett, A. Murphy, J. Murphy, M. Murphy, T. Owens, M. O'Toole, F. Ralph.

Craan-Tinashrule-Killtown:

M. Breen, T. Carton, E. Davitt, J. Doyle (Mrs.) T. Doyle, J. Kavanagh, E. Killeen, (Mrs.) O. Nolan, P. Nolan, M. O'Connor (Mrs.) P. Turner.

Effernogue:

J. Byrne, P. Byrne, D. Donohoe, J. Doran, (Miss) E. Doyle, P. Fortune, E. Gethings, S. Gethings, E. Kinsella, (Mrs.) E. Walsh.

Ferns (Lower):

J. Bolger, J. Brennan, S. Byrne, P. Colfer, P. Cowman, (Mrs.) R. Denby, (Mrs.) M. Dunbar,

P. Holden, (Mrs.) T. Holland, M. Kelly, N. Killeen, O. Merne, D. O'Donnell, D. Purcell, D. Redmond, (Mrs.) W. Ronan.

Ferns (Upper):

A. Banville, J. Bolger, T. Carter, (Mrs.) K. Cox, A. Dempsey, A. Doyle, J. Foley, L. Murphy, (Mrs.) E. Moulds, (Mrs.) J. Nolan, (Mrs.) T. O'Leary, (Mrs.) K. Redmond.

Scarawalsh-Camolain:

D. Byrne, E. Dreehan, (Mrs.) E. Dreehan, L. Dunbar, P. Fowler, (Mrs.) J. Hiney, D. Kennedy, J. Moynihan, (Miss) B. Murphy, E. Murphy.

Tombrack:

(Mrs.) P. Byrne, J. Doyle, T. Doyle, J. Fortune, W. Kavanagh, L. Kenny, T. Nolan, P. O'Toole, J. Whelan.

CHURCH OF ST. AIDAN

Ferns, Co. Wexford

By Kenneth Meehan

The church occupies a prominent site in a town of great historical and religious significance. The design for a new church for Ferns must incorporate this character and blend as neatly as possible into its surroundings. The use of materials, such as stone and slating, which are indigenous to this area, seemed a prerequisite for any building to achieve this.

The upper sloping transepts merging into the tower were conceived in an attempt to signify man's continuing efforts to leave the frailties of human nature and take on the spiritual cloak of God's divinity—so the human scale of the side porch entrances leading one, hopefully, to the uplifting scale of the central sanctuary area.

The church is simple in layout. The three equal transepts provide the best opportunity for all in the church to be comfortably near the sanctuary and altar. The absence of decoration and the use of plain materials in the internal finish, reflect that simplicity and integrity which are features of the Christian faith. Attention is immediately focused on the altar of sacrifice which is situated in the centre of the sanctuary and meets all the requirements of the modern revised liturgy.

The altar chair and lectern are carried out in Barracullia granite slab by O'Neill and Roe, Monumental Sculptors, of Ballyedmonduff, Dublin.

The Stations of the Cross, a feature of the church, are done in beaten copper, designed and executed by Paul Meehan of Shankill, Co. Dublin.

The stained glass windows can be read in sequence to tell the story of man's redemption. They are the work of Lua Breen of Howth, Co. Dublin.

The confessionals are located rather prominently in the centre of the church and so symbolise the important part that the sacra-

ment of penance plays in the sanctification of the individual.

In an equally important position in the sanctuary the organ is located. The instrument, of very fine tonal quality, was taken from the old church, renovated and reassembled in its new position. The work was carried out by G. Meates, Organ Builder, of Dublin.

"Adeir seanleabhar ro-aosta meamraim ina bhfrith Martarlaic Mhaolruain Tamhlachta . . . go raibh Maodhog Fearná cosuil i mbeasa agus i mbeatha le Cornelius papa."

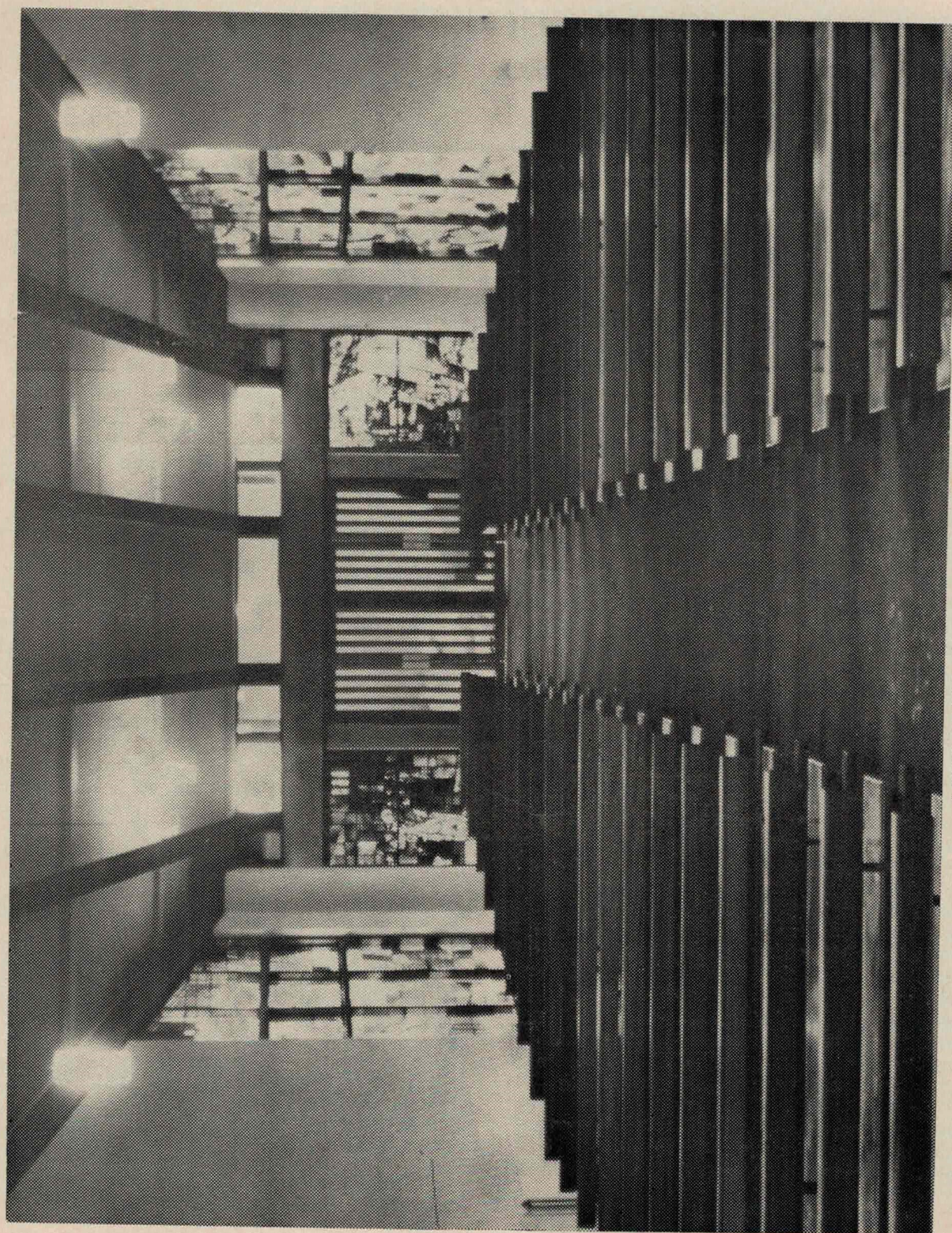
(An ancient vellum book, in which the Martyrology of Maolruain of Tallaght was found, says that Maodhog of Ferns was like Pope Cornelius in character and life).

—Feilire na Naomh Eireannach.

BIRTHPLACE OF SAINT RENOVATED

St. Mogue's Island, birthplace of St. Mogue, who was Bishop of Ferns, near Bawnboy (Cavan), has been cleared of rocks and undergrowth by 200 men working under the direction of Rev. L. Corr, C.C., Bawnboy. A committee was formed to keep the island in good order. Vestiges of an extensive monastery are on the island.

(Irish Independent report Friday, May 27, 1938).



VIEW FROM THE SANCTUARY

ST. MOGUE'S CHAPEL

(Compiled from Parochial records)

The above title for what we must now describe as "the old church of St. Aidan" may have an unfamiliar ring for many parochial ears to-day,, and people may well wonder at its origin. The explanation is simple enough. On an engraving of the church (see photograph), circulating when the great apostle of temperance, Fr. Mathew, preached in the parish of Ferns on December 4, 1840, the venue of his sermon is described in just this way: 'St. Mogue's Chapel, Ferns; so, obviously, the name was in popular use at the time and, indeed, most likely since the opening of the church some fourteen years previously. Why this happy colloquial term gave place to the more conventional 'St. Aidan's Church' is not so clear; possibly the solemn institution of the festival of St. Aidan on January 31, 1843, and the order of Most Rev. Dr. Keating, Bishop of Ferns, that the feast of the dedication of the Church of St. Aidan be celebrated on the same day, may have been instrumental in effecting the change.

Before dealing with the story of the church in what is familiarly known as 'the chapel lane,' a few words about its predecessors may be opportune. The parochial archives give no information about any ecclesiastical buildings in the Ferns area until mention is made of Fr. Cashin's church out at Newtown (sic). As can be gathered from the list of Parish Priests appended to this article, Father Cashin ministered in Ferns from 1762 to 1786 and the church at Newtown is placed c. 1778. It is reasonable, then, to assume that since the dissolution of the great abbey of St. Mary's (1539), the destruction of the old cathedral (1577), and the confiscation of the Castle with its splendid chapel, no places of public worship were available to Catholics until this church came into being about 1778. Local tradition points out its site and, indeed, the location of other ecclesiastical buildings as well, but the Newtown church is the only one for which any written evidence survives. It is described as being small in size, having a mud floor and thatched roof, its building was made possible owing to a relaxation in the penal laws of which Fr. Cashin availed himself, and it seems to have endured to 1798. Being of such modest pretensions, it is not surprising that steps would be taken to have this first post-reformation building replaced by something more adequate as soon as circumstances allowed. This opportunity came towards the end of the century when much of the severe penal code was being ignored or relaxed, and in 1801 we read of the beginnings of St. Mogue's Chapel.

An entry in the parochial registers' notes

that the altar wall of the present church was built in 1801. This must have been under the auspices of Fr. Redmond, a nephew of Fr. Cashin, who came from Clogogue to Ferns as Parish Priest on the death of his uncle in 1786. For some reason or other, however, no further progress seems to have been made on the church until 1824, some twenty-three years later. Why this long delay in completing the project we have no clue.

1801 was the year of the Union, and possibly political tensions were running high, although the appearance of Catholic schools, colleges and chapels on the scene elsewhere, does not suggest this as a reason. It may well have been due to lack of funds, since it is well known that after the '98 Insurrection the economic plight of Co. Wexford was nothing short of disastrous. Whatever the reasons, it was not until 1824 that the Very Rev. William O'Neill, who had been appointed Parish Priest in 1819, was able to have work begun on the nave and the chapel completed and opened for worship in 1826. A few years later, the bell tower and bell were added and the Chapel of St. Mogue blessed and dedicated by Bishop Keating on October 10, 1839.

It is indicative of the changing climate of opinion in England in the matter of religious discrimination that a protest in the House of Lords against the erection of the bell-tower was totally rejected by their Lordships and Fr. O'Neill and his chapel were left unmolested. The spire and cross were added

by Fr. Roche and blessed by the Bishop in 1843. Fr. Roche was transferred to Wexford in 1850 where he built the twin churches of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception. By an unusual coincidence, a new church of the Annunciation opened in Wexford parish as the final touches were being put to the new church of St. Aidan in Ferns.

The engraving referred to at the beginning of this article and reproduced below makes an interesting comparison with the old church as we have known it. It was issued to publicise Father Mathew's temperance crusade which was sweeping the country at the time and to help Fr. Roche to pay off the debt on the chapel. The picture gives a very good impression of the building without its tapering spire, cross and side-chapels, as it appeared in December 1840 when Fr. Mathew preached there.

With the main fabric of the church completed, there remained the furnishing and decoration of the building. The essentials, of course, had been provided at the time of opening but others were only added as conditions and finances permitted. The parochial records note the purchase of an organ by Fr. Mayler in 1851 and the reslating of the church in the same year, while confessionals were installed at this time in accordance with a decree of the recent national synod. Canon Marshall, who succeeded Fr. Mayler as parish priest, was mainly preoccupied with the erection of the school in Main Street and the building of the parochial house, but his successor, Canon Parker, had the present altar, Stations of the Cross and stained glass window in the sanctuary installed in 1898. These additions and improvements were made possible by a bequest of £600 from the will of Mrs. Cogley who lived at Enniscorthy. In 1901 Canon Doyle—still happily remembered—carried out further improvements in the sanctuary, had the side altars erected and added a new organ, bell and clock. Redecoration of the interior in 1909 cost £93, and the year 1911 saw the opening of the new cemetery and yet another new and larger bell and tower clock installed, the latter being the gift of John and Margaret Bolger of Ferns. To mark the golden jubilee of Canon Doyle's ordination, the parishioners presented a new wrought-iron communion rail to the church in 1923. This altar rail, cast at the local Milltown

factory at a cost of £240, shows excellent design and workmanship.

The mosaic work in the sanctuary carried out by Canon Rossiter, and the interior redecoration and tarmacadamming of the grounds by Monsignor Codd represent the last major improvements effected in the old church.

To close this review without some record of the institutions which St. Aidan's Church brought into being, or with which it was very closely associated, would be serious omission indeed. First mention must be made of the Sacred Heart Confraternity established by Canon Doyle in 1905 which registered some 650 members at its first enrolment. Later on it was sub-divided into men's and women's branches, which still happily survive. The Confraternity played a prominent part in launching and organising the annual Blessed Sacrament procession which was first held in 1907, and soon built up a reputation throughout the diocese for its order and good taste. Closely identified, too, with the Confraternity was the inauguration by Monsignor Codd of the Forty Hours devotion and the annual Pattern in the early 'sixties.

The establishment of a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul was followed in the 'thirties by the setting up of a praesidium of the Legion of Mary. The formation of the Youth Club and the Apostolic Work Society came some years later and all these developments showed something of the pioneering spirit of the Church of St. Aidan and its people, inasmuch as Ferns was amongst the first of the predominantly rural parishes to sponsor these organisations.

Such, in brief, is the story of our old church. It has spanned almost a century and a half, which has seen enormous political, social, economic and religious change. To understand the depth and variety of the experiences it has shared with its worshippers down the years, one has only to contrast the repressive penal age in which it came into being, the poverty and famine-stricken era in which it grew, the oppressive artificial Victorian era in which it matured and the affluent permissive society to which it bids farewell.

Through all these vicissitudes, it has served the people of Ferns well and played its part in moulding them into a loyal and dedicated people of God. For this we owe it our eternal gratitude.

Design and building teams for St. Aidan's Church

Architects:	Meehan Levins Delaney Associates, 43 Main St., Arklow, Co. Wicklow.
Consulting Engineer:	D. J. Keogan, 62 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.
Quantity Surveyor:	J. C. Hogan, 52 Pearse Street, Dublin 2.
Mechanical & Electrical Engineers:	J. V. Tierney & Co., Marleigh House, 13 Leinster Road, West, Dublin 6.
Main Contractor:	P. Furlong & Sons Ltd., Bunclody, Co. Wexford.
Sub-Contractors:	Buckley's Steel Buildings, Mill Street, Cork. Hoyne Heating Ltd., Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. Smith's Electrical, Main Street, Wicklow. Quality Wood Crafts Ltd., Dromod, Co. Leitrim.
Craftsmen:	Operatives:
P. Slye (Foreman).	J. Nolan.
J. O'Connor (Site Clerk).	E. O'Brien.
T. O'Toole.	M. Slye.
T. Peare.	B. Murphy.
E. Murphy.	P. O'Leary.
P. Foley.	C. Roche.
G. Roberts.	W. Murphy.
G. Ennis.	P. Murphy.
P. Roberts.	L. Byrne.
H. O'Neill.	T. Carty.
D. Doran.	J. Taylor.
G. O'Neill.	J. Kenndy.
T. Redmond.	M. Coony.
J. Murphy.	P. Furlong.
P. Coleman.	J. Dunbar.
B. Quigley.	T. Kearns.
T. Freeman.	
E. O'Connor.	
P. Grogan.	
G. Doyle.	
G. Dempsey.	
J. Foley.	
S. Kelly.	
D. Doyle.	
T. Carroll.	
P. Hayden.	
S. Cullen.	
T. Byrne.	
P. Boggan.	
M. Jordan.	
O. Jordan.	

OUR PATRON SAINT

(The early Irish saints have not always fared well at the hands of their biographers. In this the authors were not always entirely to blame, for apart from conflicting records in the matter of dates, names and topography, their researches often lead them through a labyrinth of popular tradition and legend where the borderline between fact and fiction was extremely thin indeed.)

Dr. Daphne Pochin-Mould, in her book *'The Irish Saints'*, published in 1964, has tackled these difficult problems with as much success as was possible, given the circumstances, and has endeavoured to present us with a picture of the real rather than ideal saint with whom she happens to be dealing. Included in her list is a short biography of St. Aidan of Ferns, and by her kind permission we are able to reproduce here major extracts from this which must be the most recently published life of our patron.—Ed.).

Maedoc (Aedan, Aidan, Eadan, Moedhog, Maodhog, Mogue)

Maedoc of Ferns died in 626. His name is found in a variety of forms; he was baptised Aed, and then his fosterers, a family of Ua Dubthaig (O'Duffy), his nurturers 'openly gave him through love and affection an eke-name, calling him habitually 'my little Hugh' (Mo Aodh eg), so the name Maedoc stuck to him as a surname to the exclusion of other names' (Irish Life in Plummer II). Thus the name is found as Maedoc, Moedhog, Moeog, Maodhog, anglicised Mogue, and from the original Aed, Aedan, Eadan or Aidan as it is spelt to-day. The name is far from being uncommon and a number of other Irish saints bore it, thus the Maedoc of Cill Mhaodhain (Kilmodan in Glendaruel, Cowal, Scotland) is probably the sain of March 23rd, that Oengus styles 'My Maedoc,' Alba's diadem! The name is also found in Welsh place names—Llawhaden, at Nolton Haroldston West and Solfach in Pembrokeshire, Llanmadog in Gower, Capel Madog in the Elan Valley, Radnor. As the 'Lives' bring Maedoc of Ferns into contact with David of Wales, most probably chronologically incorrect if we accept an early date for David's death, it is quite likely that he did visit Wales, David's name standing for a kind of symbol for his so doing. Wales and Wexford are near enough and the Welsh names may relate to Maedoc of Ferns.

There are a number of 'Lives' of Maedoc in Latin and Irish, but they tell little about the saint himself, although a great deal about customs, traditions, and

the monastic claims at the time they were compiled, long after Maedoc's death. Ferns and Taghmon, both in Wexford, were rival monasteries, each backed by a local ruler, and the Maedoc 'Lives' are all concerned to exalt Ferns. All the 'Lives' except one suppose Maedoc buried in Ferns. The exception is a long account in Irish (11 in Plummer's edition), which seemed to be derived from two sources, one southern (Ferns) and one northern (Rossinver, Co. Leitrim). This states explicitly that Maedoc was buried at Rossinver. It does not seem possible to accept O'Hanlon's way out of the difficulty by making Maccoige, son of Eochaid (Jan. 5th), the saint of Rossinver, Maedoc definitely appears as its patron.

Maedoc belonged to Connacht — as that province was then known—the boundaries have changed a little with time (and included Co. Cavan), and his father Setna (Sedna) was descended from Conn of the Hundred Battles. His mother's name was Eithne. One version makes Maedoc's parents go to Drumlane (Co. Leitrim) to pray for a son to be born to them, others make Drumlane a fresh foundation of Maedoc's. He was, anyway, born on Inis Breachmhaigh (Braithwee, St. Migue's Island), an island in Templeport Lough, Co. Cavan. Here still survive the foundations of a church (late 15th, early 16th century in date), together with some carved stones and old querns in the graveyard. It appears that this church was once the principal church of Magh Sleacht — the district in which it is; a mainland church at Templeport was founded c. 1400, but that on the island still continued to exist as well.

(At this point in her narrative, Dr. Pochin-Mould details the location of Templeport, Rossinver and Drumlane and seems to favour the view that the latter two places were personal foundations of Maedoc's but rejects the supposed friendship between Molaise of Devenish as chronologically impossible. She then gives some family details).

Maedoc's father was an important man and his standing resulted in his son being given as a hostage to Airmire the High King, when he came to take hostages for the Ui Briuin, Maedoc's clan. Airmire died in 568 according to the Annals of Ulster, while Clonmacnois puts it in 569, so that Maedoc must have been very young at the time if he was a hostage of Airmire's. He seemed so striking a youth that the king offered to let him go. Maedoc refused until he had also granted the release of all the other hostages.

The long Irish 'Life' gives a verse to help one remember Maedoc's churches:

"Aird-chealla Maodhoc iattso,
Druim Lethan ocus Ferns,
A oghadha ocus Ros Inbhir,
Nemh da gach aon onorfa."

'The high churches of Maedoc are these:
Drumlane and Ferns
and virginal Rossinver.

Heaven to everyone who shall honour them.'

The same gives an account of Maedoc planning Drumlane (which is worth quoting as showing the craftsmanship, the administrative, as well as the organising capacities of our saint).

"Maedoc blessed and permanently established the place, arranged the ramparts and fair cemeteries and measured and marked out its temple and fair churches. fairly constructed the caps and columns of its round towers, with stone and timber and implements, visited its houses and buildings, ordered its seniors and congregations, ordained and set in honour its working people and servitors, its students and men of learning, its clerics and Mass priests, to sow belief and devotion, to chant psalms and psalters, to celebrate the divine canonical hours, to give refectio to guests and destitute travelling companies, and strangers, to the weak and feeble and to all others who were in need, both in State and Church. He bequeathed to the place grace of clergy and coarbs grace of posterity and abundance, grace of welcome and entertainment for ever, according to the proverb: 'The welcome of Erin is Drumlane.'"

FERNS

Ferns (Ferna Mor Maedoc) lies far south in Leinster in Wexford. It is good, agricultural country, where the Wicklow mountains peter out in the south, and is on the road between Enniscorthy and Gorey. West of it rise the Blackstairs Mountains. Brandubh, son of Eochoid, King of Leinster, in somewhat repentant mood, is supposed to have given the site to Maedoc. Brandubh was killed in the 7th century; the Annals give various dates: 601 (Four Masters), 604 (Ulster), 605 (Tighernach). He is said to have reigned thirty years and to have been buried at Ferns.

At Ferns today, the road dips down to the stream in the hollow of the little hills. On the slope to the side of it is a ruined church of small size, nave and chancel, separated by a round arch (St. Peter's); on the opposite rise of ground, is the ruined Augustinian Priory incorporating round tower with a series of graceful lancet windows to light the choir. The Protestant church close by is built along the fragmentary outlines of the Cathedral chancel; three plain crosses

of Wicklow granite stand in its grounds, and a cross shaft with a complex zig-zag design is alleged to mark the grave of Diarmait Mac Murchada. A graveslab with the figure of an ecclesiastic on it, preserved inside the Protestant cathedral is supposed to represent Maedoc. His holy well, Tobar Maedog, lies beside the stream in the valley between the two church sites. The massive cover of the well has an inscription saying it was erected in 1847, and that it incorporates stones from Clone and Ferns cathedrals. It says that the well was blessed by St. Moling (d. 632). This is evidently based on the story in the 'Lives' that Moling as a youth came into contact with Maedoc and was picked out by the latter to succeed him as bishop and abbot of Ferns. But it would seem to be a chronological impossibility.

There is a ruined church and another holy well of Maedoc. 'Lives' give some little interesting details of life in "telling of Maedoc's miracles." Thus Maedoc plants fruit trees, apples and nuts in the monastery garden; his helper gives him instead slips of beeches and alders which, of course, later miraculously bear fruit. Or we see the heavy ox-team in full course with its primitive plough. Maedoc, a hundred miles from Ferns, sees the ploughmen fall between share and coulter as the team is turning from one furrow to another. Maedoc raises his hand, the oxen stop dead and the man is saved from injury. There is also an amusing story of a party of scroungers who hide their good clothes and come begging to Maedoc. One version makes Maedoc, knowing what they have done, find their cache and give them their own clothes back; in another he gives them to more deserving beggars, so that the tricksters depart with neither clothes nor alms.

The long Irish 'Life' gives a little panegyric of Maedoc, a build-up with some truth in it, of the idea of an Irish saint, a wonder-worker ascetic, generous to those in need: 'Maedoc the marvellous of the mighty deeds was seven full years fasting in Drumlane, without milk or ale, without flesh or kitchen, but only a little bit of barley bread and a drink of water from one evening to another, and a little drink of milk every third Sunday, lying on the bare ground or a stone full hard, without any covering or clothing except the skins of wild animals, continually reciting his psalms and psalters, praying zealously to God on Lec na Nemhann; for he used to recite thrice fifty psalms every day on cold, clammy stones, or the bare clean swept floor; and seven psalters with fifty psalms in each psalter; and he never rejected the face of any man in the world in respect of food and drink or clothing, if only he saw there was a need of them.' (After dismissing Maedoc's supposed association with other famous saints, as chronologically impossible, and the curses to be invoked on those who refused tribute to his mon-

asteries or those of his family who failed to demand it — mentioning in particular the cursing stone at Killybeg, Co. Fermanagh, which was to be turned against enemies—she goes on to deal with the saint's relics.

RELICS

The relics which the 'Life' (The Long Irish Life) makes Maedoc bequeath personally to his different monasteries, are of special interest in that some of them still exist. Ferns got the staff of Brandubh, which had raised the latter to life. The Bell of the Brooch and the Bell of the Hours went to Drumlane as well as 'my beautiful wonder-working reliquary which travelled with me to every place, in which are relics of the martyr Stephen and Lawrence and Clement of Martin and the Virgin Mary, and many other relics of saints and holy virgins besides, which had been divided between

the Brec and the Reliquary; and this is why the name Brec was given it, because of the variegated arrangement together of the relics of the saints and virgins which had been united and made fast in it.' Rossinver got the Brec, the white bachall, and the Son of Grace—a bell. The Bell of the Hours would have been to call the clerics to the church for the Office.

The Brec Maedog, with its satchel for carrying, still survives. The hereditary keepers were the Mac-Gaughran family, later it passed to the Parish Priest of Drumlane (Co. Cavan). Oaths used to be sworn on it, whence the saying, 'as true as if sworn on the Breac.' The Parish Priest let it out for that purpose on a deposit security of one guinea; in 1846 the borrower sold it in Dublin. It is now in the National Museum there. The Clog Mogue, the saint's bell and its shrine, was similarly kept and used for oaths; eventually it was presented to the library of Armagh.'



FR. MATHEW—SEE ARTICLE ON ST. MOGUE'S CHAPEL

PAROCHIAL ANTIQUITIES

Ferns, the ancient capital of Leinster and Mother Church of the Diocese, ranks amongst the greatest historic centres in Ireland.

Few towns in Ireland have as much to offer as Ferns in the recapturing of our historic past. Its ancient ruins and relics bring one back over the centuries and, as stated, stamps the town as historically unique and a hallowed haven for tourists, historians and archaeologists.

The town of Ferns is situated 10 miles from Gorey and 7 miles from Enniscorthy and was for a time the Royal Seat of the Kings of Leinster.

Ferns, which was founded by St. Aidan (St. Maodhog), the first Abbot of the monastery of Ferns, was for centuries known as Fearná Mor Maodhog. Brandubh, King of Leinster, presented the district to St. Aidan in memory of the victory of Dunboyne in 538, and Ferns has since been the Episcopal See, although the Sedes Episcopalis has been transferred at various intervals to Wexford, New Ross and finally to Enniscorthy. The Irish Annals supply a list of the Bishops and the Abbots of Ferns from the 7th to the 12th century.

After the surrender of the town and its castle to Cromwell on September 18th 1649, Ferns lapsed to the state of an 'inconsiderable village. To-day it is a prosperous business town nestling in the heart of a rich agricultural district.

THE OLD CATHEDRAL

The city — for city it was then — was plundered and burned by the Scandinavians in the 9th century, but was in each case rebuilt. Burned down in 1577, the 12th century cathedral is of stone. It is now represented by its chancel, shorn of its aisles and incorporated in St. Edan's Cathedral (Church of Ireland—the smallest cathedral in Ireland) which was built in 1871. Evidently the original church was of stone as, under date of A.D. 787, there is a record of the death

of Cronan of the stone church of Ferns. St. Aidan died in 626. His relics were enshrined in a casket which, together with its satchel, is now preserved in the National Museum. Boolavogue (Buaile Mhaodhog) was St. Aidan's Buaile or cattle enclosure.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH

About the year 1058, Murchadh O Lynam, Bishop of Ferns, built the beautiful Hiberno-Romanesque church of St. Peter, now, alas, in ruins save the unique chancel said to be one of the two of its kind of architecture in Ireland. Of the window in the south wall of the church Du Noyer wrote: 'It strikes me that this window is a remodelling and lengthening of another window. The pointed arch of the exterior does not agree with the semi-circular form of the interior or style of ornamentation; perhaps the ornamental stones of an older and different church, and here applied as we see them. The style of ornament is precisely that of the doorway of the Old Church of Clone, about 2 miles south of Ferns.'

ST. MARY'S ABBEY

In 1154 Dermot McMurrough burned the city and monastery, but in 1160 he refounded the monastery as the Abbey of St. Mary for Canons and St. Augustine. The present remains of the Abbey are the vaulted sacristy, north-west bell tower, the north wall of the nave-and-chancel church, 64 feet long. The tower is over 70 feet high, square at the base and round at the top. The tower can be ascended by an interior circular stone stairway. The foundation of a cloister garth, 72 feet by 66 feet lie buried on the south side. The ruined belfry is square on plan as far as the level of the church roof, where it turns into a round tower. It is dated February 21st, but though the year is not given the date is almost certainly 1160-1, inasmuch as one of the subscribing witnesses (Malachy O'Byrne) was not appointed Bishop until 1160.

Donal O'Murphy was Abbot in 1464 and he was succeeded by Dermot O Druhan in

1477, by Owen Doyle in 1488, and by William Lacy in 1507. The last Abbot was William Doyle, and the Abbey was dissolved on April 7th, 1539.

Amongst its possessions were: Ballymore, Mangan, Ballintore, Kilcaysan (Clogue), Raheen, Ballymotey, Our Lady's Island, Kilbride, Coolnahorna, with the Rectory of Leskinfere and the titles of Our Lady's Island.

In 1835, Butler Bryan lined the town of St. Mary's Abbey with brick and sank a moat around it.

THE CASTLE

Although a castle was built by Dermot McMurrough in Ferns it was later burned and the present structure, which was built on the same site, was commenced in 1199 by William Marshall the Younger. In 1309 Nicholas de Sandford, Dean of Ferns, was Constable of the Castle. In 1331 the Castle was burned by the Irish, but it was soon after rebuilt and several Bishops of Ferns were custodians of it from 1349-1400. Art McMurrough held it from 1402-1417 and it remained in the hands of the McMurroughs until 1550. In 1570 Thomas Masterson was Constable and in 1583 he was granted the Castle and Manor and Abbey of Ferns. Edmond Masterson joined the Confederates and became a Catholic in 1642. His Ferns property was confiscated in 1650. In 1694 it passed to the late Mr. Richard Donovan, Ballymore, whose family held it up to recently when it was handed over by Mr. Richard A. Donovan to the Board of Works to ensure its

restoration and preservation as a national monument and its development as a tourist attraction.

The massive stone-groined roof of the chapel in the Castle is a most striking feature—a unique feat of architectural design and construction.

TOBAR MAODHOG

The ancient well of St. Mogue (or St. Aidan) is adjacent to the Old Abbey of St. Mary's, and its waters are noted for their curative powers. The original well lies underneath the ground and access may be gained by descending a stone stairway. This practice was considered somewhat dangerous, especially for children, and some years ago the water was piped from the well to a more accessible shrine adjacent to the original well. The old well was arched over in 1847, during the Famine period, and over the stone capped roof are some sculptured stones taken from Clone church. The keystone belonged to one of the arches of Ferns Cathedral.

Tiobra Maodhog go maíse
inm na glaise go gnach;
beidh os gach uisce iodhan
sreabh na tiobrad gan tra.

—Beatha Maodhog

The fountain of Maodhog
is the usual name of the stream;
pure above every water,
never-ebbing will be the flow of
the fountain.)

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