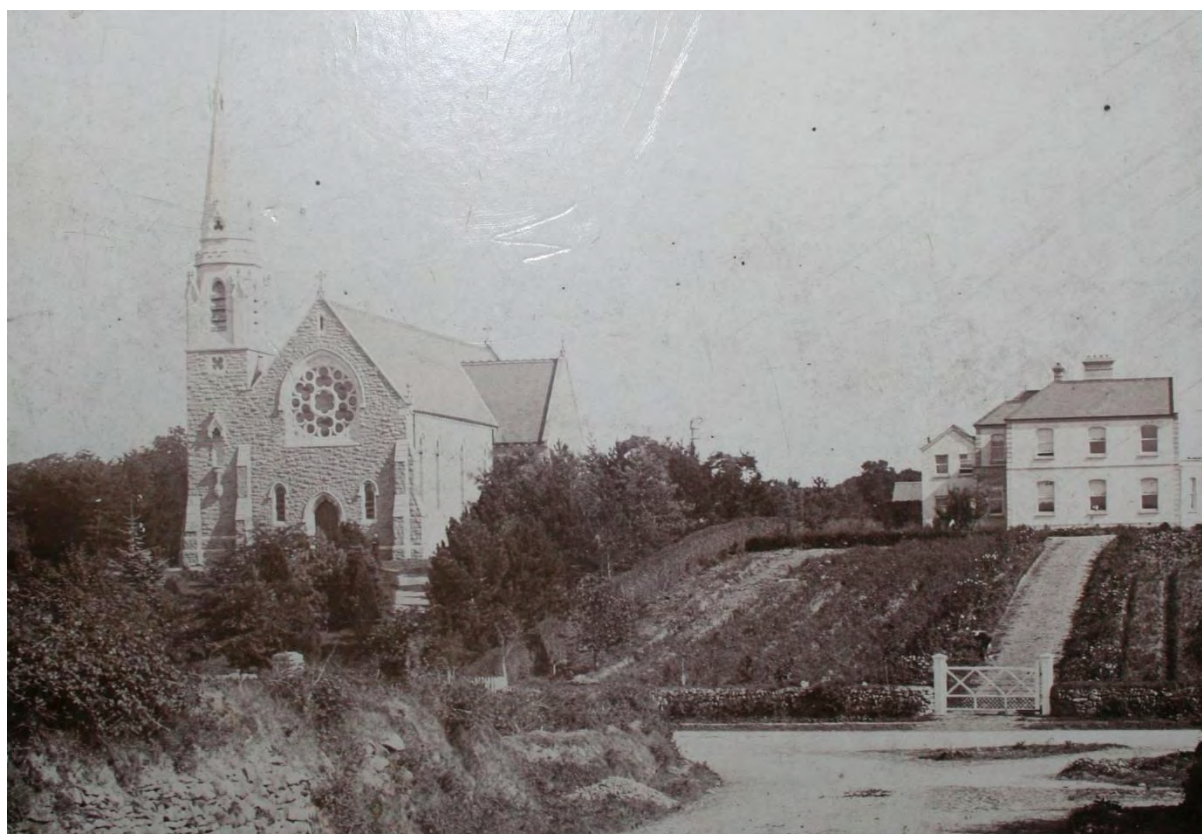


**The Church of the Immaculate Conception, Termonfechin Parish:
It's Background & Construction**

It was only around 1765 that public worship by Catholics came to be accepted in Ireland after a long period of persecution. Previous to this the priests had to go about their pastoral mission in secret. The persecution of Catholics which began in 1673 culminated in the enactment of the Penal Laws between 1698 and 1715. Various ways and means were adopted to defy the laws, teachers taught their pupils in the open, at the sides of lanes or roadways and were known as Hedge Schools. Priests were outlawed and hunted and moved in secret around the country performing their ministry. Mass was celebrated in barns and buildings sometimes loaned by Protestant sympathisers who themselves were also victims of the laws. The most famous of all places where Mass was celebrated was the Mass Rock. These were always located in remote areas to allow worshippers to disperse quickly and avoid capture in the event of discovery by forces of the Crown. The sites of two mass rocks are recorded in Termonfechin. One was at Maguires Mill between Sheetland Road and the River and the second at Crockadoctor at the junction of the townlands of Primatepark, Carstown and Betaghstown (Murphy 1988, 25).

Boyle's visitation of 1690 noted of Termonfechin '*Walter Dowdall, R.C. Parish Priest here above seven years. No mass house or meeting house.*' (Ibid, 25). Born in the parish of Termonfechin c.1658, Walter Dowdall (Parish Priest 1683 – c.1710) lived and ministered from a priest's house in Milltown and when '*An Act for Registering Popish Clergy*' was introduced in 1704, he was registered as parish



Church of The Immaculate Conception & Parochial House c. 1900

priest for Ballymakenny, Drumshallon, Monasterboice, Mullary, Beaulieu and Termonfeckin (Quaile 2001, 20). His date of death is unknown but his name is recorded on a Dowdall headstone in Termonfeckin cemetery together with other family members, including his brother Ulick (Garry & Murphy 1991, 301). After another quarter century we do not know who the Parish Priest was but we do know that a hidden priest was carrying on valiantly as a 1731 '*Report on the State of Popery*' reported: '*Termonfeckin: 1 mass house. 1 officiating priest. No school.*' The mass house was in all likelihood the Temperance Hall at the end of Big Street which served as the RC Church between c1731 and 1883 when the Church of the Immaculate Conception was consecrated.

Fr Alex Connolly who was a curate in Termonfeckin in the 1930s wrote an article for the Drogheda Independent at the time of the 1932 Eucharistic Congress. In it he mentioned the tradition of Mass Rocks in the Parish

"...there at Ganderpark and McGuire's Mill, the place is pointed out where the people knelt at dawn around the old mass-rock while the priest said mass with a veil around his head, so that the people should not have to swear against him..."

Fr Thomas Gogarty who was curate in Termonfechin from 1904 to 1910 was a great recorder of folklore. In his notes are preserved the tradition of the Mass Rock at Crockadoctor which he states was located at the junction of the three townlands mentioned above and in the north-east corner of the field known as the Altar Field. According to Fr Gogarty

"Sheets were used to erect a temporary covering for the altar. The floor around was paved and the priest was accustomed to come there with his box of vestments and chalices etc to celebrate Sunday Mass and to preach to his flock as best he might under the open sky. He used to come in his big frieze coat like a big farmer"

Whether or not there was ever an actual rock here will probably never be known but we can be quite certain that this is the site of the mass rock. The 1835 edition Ordnance Survey map shows this field to have a peculiar triangular shape at this point. The mass rock here was probably used between c. 1673 when the persecution of Catholics broke out and 1731 when we know there was a mass house in Termonfechin. According to Fr Connolly "*...tradition tells us that one Sunday when the people were gathered for mass in the glen at Maguire's Mill (between Sheetland Road and the River Ballywater) six brothers named McDonnell stood up and told the priest, that they would have no more skulking; that it would be either death or freedom for them. So the next Sunday the priest said mass here on Belton's Hill [Thunder Hill] in the centre of the village. The six brothers were the congregation and the gentry did not interfere...*"

Fr John Wall (c. 1759 – 1772) is first noted as the parish priest in Termonfeckin in 1759 following the relaxation of the Penal Laws and was known to have lived in Ballymakenny between 1766-1768, then part of the united parishes of Termonfeckin, Ballymakenny, Monasterboice, Drumshallon, Mullary and Beaulieu (Quaile 2001, 20). In a parliamentary return taken in 1765-66, two 'popish priests' are mentioned at Termonfeckin, these probably been Fr. Wall and his curate. He was appointed P.P. for Dunleer in 1772 and served there until his death on 1st April 1797. He is buried in Dromin cemetery.



First Post-Penal day chapel built c. 1731 -65

The church at Thunder Hill continued to be used until 1883 but following the passing of the Catholic Relief Act in 1829 a wave of new church building began in Ireland. Fr Bernard Mc Keown was appointed as Administrator to Termonfeckin Parish in 1846 and became Parish Priest in 1859 when Termonfeckin lost its Mensal status (Quaile 2001, 21). He was born about 1804 and after his ordination served for a time in Paris before being appointed curate in Dundalk in 1830. Following his appointment to Termonfeckin he immediately set about constructing a new church in Sandpit on land which had been recently donated by the Chesters of Cartown house. His curate in Termonfeckin from 1842-1872 was Fr Richard Flanagan, a native of Tobertoby who had served as chaplain to the Chesters for a time before being appointed to Dunleer in 1831. Fr Richard's connection with the Chester family may have been a factor in their donation of the land. Fr McKeown placed an advertisement in the Drogheda Argus in May 1846 (30th May 1846) seeking tenders to erect a church on the site. The church in Sandpit was completed around 1852 and dedicated to St Mary (Quaile 2007, 17-18). It was also about this time that Fr McKeown was thinking of a new church in Termonfeckin. As early as 1855 the site of the new church was being rented (Griffiths Valuation 1855) and by 1862

Fr McKeown was working on buying the land. In a letter from Archbishop Cullen to Dr Tobias Kirby who was Rector of the Irish College in Rome he stated that*Fr McKeon, PP of Termonfeckin near Drogheda wishes to build a new church to replace the thatched cabin that currently serves as his church. He wishes to obtain an acre of land from the Scully sisters, two of whom are nuns in Rome.* Cullen asks Kirby to speak to them on his behalf¹.

This acre of land which became known as the Church Acre was initially rented (Griffiths Valuation 1855²) but eventually bought by May 1877 from the Scully sisters and their descendants. They had inherited the land including the church site and most of the Primate of Armagh's lands in Termonfeckin from their uncle Thomas Joseph Eyre who was the registered owner by the time of Griffith's Valuation in 1855. Thomas had secured the land under conveyance dated the 29th March 1853 from the Right Honourable and Most Reverend Lord John George, Archbishop of Armagh and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of Ireland on foot of an earlier lease dated the 5th November 1844 whereby the said Archbishop granted to

'Thomas Joseph Eyre and his heirs, the great castle of Termonfeighan, together with all that parcel of land adjoining thereto containing 200 acres plantation measure, situate in the Manor of Termonfeighan and County of Louth, and also all the duty and custom fish that belongs of right to said Archbishop in right of the See of Armagh, out of such boats that should bring fish into any of the creeks or harbours of Kilcloughan or Baltra, or any other of the Manor of Termonfeighan, where the same land had been theretofore usually taken or paid, and also free liberty to fish with the boats in the Primates Pool near Baltra, and to take and receive all such salmon and other fish as should be due from the boats of other persons for the fishing there, together with all houses, orchards, watercourses, royalties, mines, minerals, quarries, and timber, and appurtenances whatsoever to said premises belonging' for the yearly rent of £156 6s. 6d³.

Thomas Joseph Eyre was born about 1783 at Highfield Hall near Sheffield, Derbyshire to Vincent Eyre and Catherine Parker⁴. He died the 8th May 1860 at Highfield Hall. He obviously made regular trips to Ireland and secured the land in Termonfeckin in 1844. His sister Catherine was born on the

¹ The New Collection Catalogue, Irish College Rome, PART TWO Kirby Series (1840-1871), KIR/NC/1/1862/12 Holograph letter from Dr. Cullen to Dr. Kirby Item 25 February 1862 Eng. 3pp.

² The church acre is indicated as Site 93 on Griffiths Valuation but unfortunately there is no record of who the immediate lessor is. All of the entries under 93 in the Valuation are for the town of Termonfeckin which is actually Site 94. Griffiths Valuation 1855 does however indicate that the neighbouring lands were being rented from Thomas Joseph Eyre and the Church acre was likely to have been rented then too by Thomas Joseph Eyre to Fr Mc Keown as is indicated on the later Marianne Scully Estate Map 1877.

³ Landed Estates Court Sale Particulars, Tuesday 8th May 1877 in the matter of the Estate of Marianne Scully & others. A copy of this map survives in the Flanagan Family Archives, in the private possession of Mr Peter & Mary Flanagan, Tobertoby, Termonfeckin.

⁴ www.eyrehistory.net

10th March 1784 also at Highfield Hall⁵. She married Denys Scully BL on the 8th September 1808. Denys Scully was son of James Scully and Catherine Lyons and was born in Kilfeacle Tipperary on 4th May 1773. He was prominent with Daniel O Connell in the movement for Catholic Emancipation (Webb 1878). He entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1794, and seems to have been the second catholic student admitted for two hundred years. After a short residence he left without graduating, and studied for the Irish bar, of which he became a member in Michaelmas term 1796. He practised on the Leinster circuit with success until delicate health compelled him to retire. He became known as one of the leading catholic agitators, and joined the important deputation which was appointed in February 1805 to wait upon Pitt with a petition to the House of Commons for emancipation. Pitt declined to present the petition, but Fox and Granville consented, and laid it before the house on 25th March. Scully prepared a famous 'Statement of the Penal Law,' which appeared in 1812, and resulted in the prosecution of the printer Hugh Fitzpatrick, who was fined, 200l. and imprisoned for eighteen months. Besides this work, which ran through several editions, Scully helped Edward Hay [q.v.] to prepare his account of the ill-usage of the Wexford people previous to 1798, and also contributed to the Dublin morning and evening 'Post'. In 1803 he published a pamphlet against the union, 'An Irish Catholic's Advice to his Brethren, how to estimate their Present Situation, and repel French Invasion, Civil Wars, and Slavery.' A paper on Scully's MS. diary of 1805 was read before the Royal Historical Society on 28th Feb. 1908 by the president Rev. William Hunt. He died on 25th Oct. 1830 at Kilfeacle. He lived for a time with his second wife Catherine Eyre in Merrion Square, Dublin between 1810 and 1821 when he moved back to Kilfeacle. The majority of their children were born in Merrion Square with the exception of their first born James Vincent (Sept. 1809) and their last born William Francis John (Nov. 1821).

James Scully writing in his diary on the 9th September 1808 ⁶- states "I have a letter from my son the Counsellor dated 1st Inst. He says he is to be married to Miss Catherine Eyre, near Sheffield England and gets about 14000 pounds fortune and a good Catholic connexion". In a further entry on the 22 Jan 1809 he states that "Mr Thomas Eyre returned from Dublin with me, a very uncommon well informed well behaved young man. This youngster's sister is in Dublin. She is one of the most promising young women I have ever met for to make a man happy in marriage both in fortune, temper and manners, a most accomplished, sensible and very beautiful young woman and does not need to know it herself"

Denys and Catherine's family included Catherine Juliana Maria Scully born 26th May 1813, Marianne born 18th January 1815 and Julia Maria Teresa Scully born May 20, 1819⁷. All three were born in

⁵ Ibid and also see Anthony McCann's McCann/Scully/Hayden family page below

⁶ See Anthony McCann's McCann/Scully/Hayden family page at <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/m/c/c/Anthony-Mccan-Cork/WEBSITE->

⁷ See McCann/Scully/Hayden page noted in 6 above

Merrion Square. Catherine married the Great Roman Prince of Santa Croce in Rome and the other two sisters became nuns while in Rome. In Augustus Hare's *Story of my Life* (Hare 1900) he recalls that *One of the Romans whom I saw most frequently was the Princess Santa Croce, living in the old historical palace which has the reputation of being the only haunted house in Rome, where two statues come down from their pedestals and rattle their marble trains up and down the long galleries. The Princess was one of the daughters of Mr. Scully in Ireland. He had three, of whom two were beautiful, clever and brilliant, but the third was uninteresting. The two elder Miss Scullys went out into the world and were greatly admired and made much of ; but the youngest stayed at home like Cinderella and was never known at all except as "the Miss Scullys' younger sister". Many people wished to marry the elder Miss Scullys, but they said "No, for we have a presentiment that we are to marry dukes, and therefore we will wait". But no dukes came forward, and at length old Mr. Scully died, leaving his daughters three great fortunes, and being Roman Catholics, without any particular call or claim, they determined to visit Rome before they settled in life. They took many introductions with them and on their arrival the good looks, cleverness and wealth of the elder sisters created quite a sensation, but people asked them , Roman fashion, "what was their vocation ?" Then they said they had never thought of it, and they went to spend a week in the Convent of Trinita de' Monti to consider it. When the day came when the three Miss Scullys were to declare their vocation, all Rome was interested, and the "great world" thronged the parlours of the Trinita de' Monti to hear it, but the expectants were petrified when the two elder Miss Scullys came out, for they had found their vocation and it was a convent ! No doubt whatever was felt about the youngest "of course she would follow her sisters". But no; she had found her vocation and it was marriage ! - and the youngest Miss Scully, additionally enriched by half the fortunes of her two elder sisters, went out into the world, and in three weeks she had accepted the great Roman Prince of Santa Croce, who claims descent from Valerius Publicola. I used often to watch with interest the Princess Santa Croce, who went to confess and pray at the Convent of the Villa Lante (which Roman Princesses are wont to frequent), for the two porteresses who opened the doors were her two elder sisters, the proud Miss Scullys; it was the story of Cinderella in real life. I was in Rome afterwards (1864) when the Princess Santa Croce died. All the princesses lie in state after their death, but by old custom the higher their rank, the lower they must lie; and the Princess Santa Croce was of such excessively high rank, that she lay upon boards.*

Hare's account includes some inaccuracies as the Princess Santa Croce was the eldest of the Scully sisters and not the youngest as he states. Catherine had married the Prince of Santa Croce Antonio Publicolo on the 25th November 1847 in Rome. The land in Termonfeckin obviously passed to the three sisters on the death of their uncle Thomas Joseph Eyre in 1860. All three were in Rome at the time that Fr McKeown was trying to buy the land for the church (February 1862) and he asked Archbishop Cullen to ask Tobias Kirby, the Rector of the Irish College there to approach the two nuns on his behalf. That approach was obviously successful as the land had already been sold to Fr Mc

Keown and Archbishop McGettigan by the time the remainder of the Scully Estate went for sale in 1877, the land by then being owned by Marianne and Julia Teresa Scully and their nieces Louise, Vincenza and Valeria (daughters of the Princess who had died in Rome on the 16th February 1863).

Work began on the church in 1879 in earnest when a Parish Committee was set up to advance the project. The report of a meeting of the committee in January 1879 (Anon 1876) stated

“A new church is about to be built.....which will replace the present thatched structure. An excellent site has been selected and a large quantity of stone carted to the place. The parishioners have appointed a committee to whom was entrusted the duty of appointing an architect to draw up the plans of the new church. At a meeting of the committee the names of Mr Ashlin of Dublin and of Mr Dodd, Drogheda were proposed for adoption. The majority decided in favour of Mr Dodd”.

By this time £1200 had been collected for the building fund and 50 tons of building stone had already been brought to the site (Quaile 2001, 21). According to local tradition, the first load of stones was brought to the site by young Philip McEvoy of Tobertoby (Quaile 2007, 20). The death of Fr McKeown in the weeks after this meeting (29th January 1879) resulted in the project being sidelined. His requiem mass was attended by Archbishop McGettigan and after a procession of people carried the coffin around the village he was laid to rest under the high altar of the old church. His remains were exhumed and moved in May 1883⁸ to their current resting place under the Altar of the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

Fr John Segrave was appointed PP of Termonfeckin in March 1879 and immediately reinstated the planning for the new church. Rather than proceed with PJ Dodd, he engaged Dublin based architect William Hague and by October 1879 tenders for the construction of the church were being sought to designs prepared by Hague (Geraghty 1994, 18). John Flanagan of Tobertoby in a letter to Michael Flanagan (Napa, California) in June 1879 states

.....Speaking of the new chapel, I believe they intend commencing this summer. We have a new parish priest here now, Fr Segrave from Dunany, an active energetic man who will carry on the work without stoppage. It is in the yellow gap they intend building it on the hill between the two roads. The site is purchased and there are some stones on the ground so I believe it will certainly be built there.....⁹

⁸ According to a plaque fixed originally to the altar rails in the church but now fixed to the skirting on the column at the front of the sanctuary

⁹ Letter from John Flanagan, Tobertoby to Michael Flanagan, Napa, California, June 1879 in the private possession of Peter & Mary Flanagan, Tobertoby, Termonfeckin, Co Louth

P. Callan was awarded the contract for the construction of the church which appears to have commenced early in 1880. In May of that year Fr Richard Flanagan the former curate to Fr McKeown and native of Termonfeckin fell seriously ill and continued sinking daily until he *finally "expired calmly and peacefully on the 11th of May"*. John Flanagan (jnr) in a letter to Michael Flanagan tells how he was *"wreaked with a terrible cough and numerous other ailments and sores - he lived in an earthly purgatory"*¹⁰. Fr Richard requested before his death that he be buried with Fr. McKone in Termonfeckin chapel and the intention was that he would be removed to the new church after a year. An account of his funeral appeared in the Democrat of the 29th May 1880 -

DEATH OF THE REV. RICHARD FLANAGAN C.C. The death of the above Clergyman took place at the residence of his brother Tubbertoby, Termonfeckin recently. Fr Flanagan was one of the oldest priests -if not the oldest - in the deaneries of Dundalk or Drogheda and the greater part of his long missionary life was spent in the parish of Dunleer and Termonfeckin. On Thursday his remains were removed to Termonfeckin chapel and placed on a Catafalque in front of the altar on which he had for so many years offered up the mass and from which he had delivered so many instructive sermons to the people of that parish. At eleven o'clock the Requiem office commenced, the Rev. George Taaffe P.P. Collon and the Rev. Thomas Taaffe C.C. Dundalk officiating as chanters. At the conclusion of the office high mass was celebrated by the Rev. Thomas Mc Evoy C.C. St Peter's Drogheda; the Rev.d John Rock C.C. Tenure officiating as deacon; the Rev. H. Mc Sherry C.C. Clogherhead as sub-deacon and the Rev. John Segrave, P.P. Termonfeckin as master of ceremonies.

After the high mass a procession was formed and the coffin was carried on the shoulders of the people out of the chapel and along the road as far as the Petty sessions court. The procession then returned to the chapel and the coffin was lowered into the grave prepared for it at the Epistle side of the altar. There was an immense concourse of people present at the ceremonies to pay their last tribute of respect to the memory of the deceased and to offer up their prayers for the eternal and happy repose of his soul.

Fr. Richard's remains were also exhumed and removed together with Fr McKeown's to the new church in May 1883 where a plaque under the epistle side of the altar indicates his final resting place. One of the stained glass windows in the left transept of the church reads - *The presentation in the temple in memory of the Rev. Richard Flanagan C.C. Termonfeckin who died 11th May 1880 and his nephew Michael Flanagan who died 10th November 1904 aged 64 years.*

By January 1881 the church structure was largely built as is evident from a letter that Fr Segrave wrote to the Drogheda Argus newspaper but all the interior work and roof had still to be done. The builders claim for the shell was £3,000 and Fr Segrave was appealing to the people of Drogheda for assistance.....

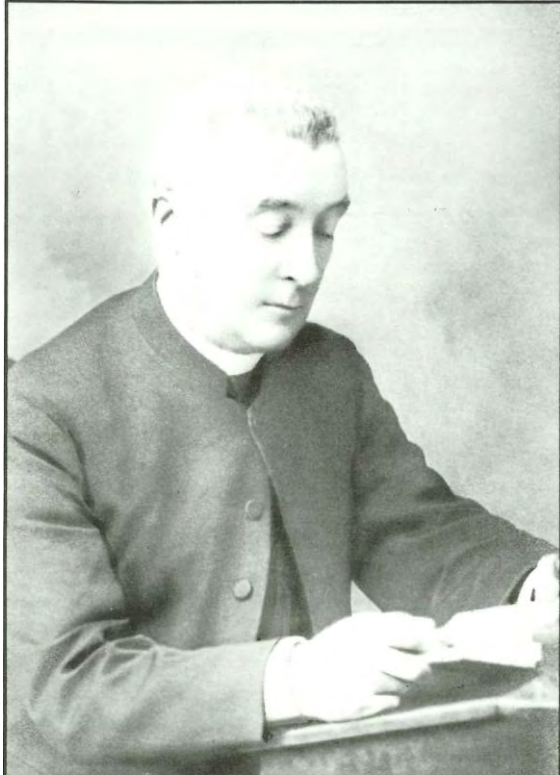
¹⁰ Letter from John Flanagan Tobertoby to Michael Flanagan Napa, California 12th May 1880 in the private possession of Peter & Mary Flanagan, Tobertoby, Termonfeckin, Co. Louth

To the Editor of the Drogheda Argus.

Dear Sir,

May I appeal to your charitable readers for some help towards our new church? The building is familiar to many of them, and, I believe, is much admired, but very few are familiar with the low state of our finances. However I am confident that when our case is known many will assist us.

The contract for the mere shell is £3000, of this sum the good people of the parish had, before my appointment, made up £1500. So you perceive we require as much more to meet the builder's claim,



Fr John Segrave PP

not to speak of flooring, plastering, slating, etc. I am quite aware of the many and pressing calls on the people of Drogheda, but I am sure they will admit that there is not a single charity in Drogheda to which the people of this parish have not repeatedly and generously subscribed. It is the first appeal we have ever made and we look forward to a hearty and generous response.

To enable me to meet part at least of our heavy debt I propose holding a bazaar on the 28th, 29th and 30th of June. Donations of articles for prizes will be most gratefully received.

I am, dear Sir, faithfully yours,

J. Segrave P.P.

(DA, 22nd January 1881)

Fr Segrave obviously succeeded in raising the remainder of the monies for the church but apparently not without problems along the way. The builder P Callan brought a lawsuit against Fr Segrave, the details of which are not known but it may have related to payments for the work. The church took another two and a half years to complete probably due to lack of funds. The remains of Fr Flanagan and Fr McKeown were interred below the altar in May 1883 while construction work was still in progress. By August of that year it was finally completed and the dedication of the church to the Immaculate Conception took place on Sunday August 5th

The beautiful new church was solemnly dedicated by the primate of Armagh, Most Rev. Dr McGettigan on Sunday August 5th 1883. On that day Mass was celebrated for the first time in the new church. The overflow congregation included a large number of clergy, representing parishes in this part of the Diocese, including the Reverend Archdeacon R Murphy PP who had only two years earlier seen his own great work, St Peter's Church in Drogheda consecrated. Also present was Mr Patrick

Reilly Mayor of Drogheda who had been married fourteen years earlier in the old chapel. High Mass was celebrated by the Rev. T Cassidy C.C., Drogheda assisted by Rev. Paul Ginnety C.C. also Drogheda and Rev J. Byrne C.C., Kilsaran. Master of ceremonies was the Rev. P. Segrave, C.C., Ardee. After the first Gospel an eloquent and impressive sermon was preached by a Jesuit, Very Rev. Dr. Walshe, who asked the congregation to subscribe generously towards the cost of completing the furnishing of the church. The music for the ceremony was rendered by a choir from Dundalk under the direction of Mr E. Comerford. Presiding over all was the genial and zealous pastor of Termonfeckin, the Rev. John Segrave P.P. whose labours had finally provided for his people this beautiful church (Corcoran & Garry 1983, 11)

The furnishings were gradually added over the next thirty or so years. The southern side altar was donated by Thomas Corrigan in 1883 probably prior to the dedication of the church and incorporates a statue of the Virgin and child¹¹. The spire was completed in 1886 by James McAdorey (Bassett 1886) and the bell installed which was the gift of Fr Segrave.¹² The High altar was commissioned in 1894 and was designed by William Henry Byrne and executed by Edmund Sharp¹³. It is constructed from Caen stone and white and yellow marble and depicts “The three Marys” in antependium on the front (Mary, the Mother of God, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the wife of Cleopas). A note found inside the altar when it was moved out from the reredos to its present location in 1977-8 reads¹⁴

Lord Have mercy on us all, Amen.

April 3rd 1895

John Segrave PP of Termonfeckin and all his friends living and dead.

This altar was erected in the year 1895 at a cost of £650. The church cost £5,000. All these names are placed here that God in the Most Holy Sacrifice, may have mercy on their souls.

The side altar on the north side with the statue of Joseph and child was donated by Mrs Maguire of Sheetland in 1913¹⁵. The windows and the Pieta at the rear of the church were done by Mayer & Co of Germany and were installed over several years up to 1927. They were all donated by parishioners in memory of deceased relatives according to the inscriptions on the windows. It is difficult to know when the windows started but according to the diary of Mary Anne Flanagan, the window dedicated

¹¹ Brass inlaid plaque mounted on the north end of the altar which reads “The gift of Mr Thomas Corrigan, Termonfeckin. In Memory of his uncle the Rev. T. Corrigan P.P. of Kilsaren. His Father, Mother and deceased relatives R.I.P. 1883”

¹² An inscription on the bell reads “Gift of the Rev. John Segrave PP 1885”

¹³ Dictionary of Irish Architects www.dia.ie under Church of the Immaculate Conception, Termonfeckin

¹⁴ Corcoran & Garry 1983, 8

¹⁵ Plaque mounted on side of altar “This altar is the gift of Mrs Maguire, Sheetland in memory of her husband Thomas Maguire who died May 1913 and his parents RIP”

to Fr Richard and Michael Flanagan was installed in March 1911¹⁶. The window behind the altar which is dedicated to Fr John Segrave PP, builder of the church gives the year 1894 and there is no reason to believe it was not installed at this time. It is clearly visible in the c.1910 photograph.

The Parochial House was completed early in 1898. Cardinal Logue while attending confirmation in Termonfeckin in April 1898 commented that he*is much pleased with the handsome appearance and proportions of the beautiful church and the new parochial house adjoining, the latter being only a few months completed....*¹⁷



Photo c. 1910

The site for the house was rented from Ralph Smyth of Newtown House according to the Valuation Lists¹⁸. The land on which the house stood belonged throughout the medieval period to the archbishops of Armagh and was then bought by Thomas Joseph Eyre who was renting it to Patrick Mooney up until 1877 when Eyre's niece Sr. Marianne Scully sold it to Ralph Smyth of Newtown House¹⁹. By 1884 Ralph Smyth was still renting the land (Plot 86) to Patrick Mooney²⁰ but in 1895 a note on the valuation list ²¹states that Rev. John Segrave became the lessee and gave £50 for the site (presumably to the Mooney family) and that a parochial house was to be built. By 1918 the Lessee was Rev. Thos McCullough and the landowner still Ralph Smyth of Newtown²². The ground rent apparently was never bought out on the site which was still being valued in 1983 by the Valuation Office.

The gallery at the rear of the church seems to have been an original feature as it leads to the tower door which was built by 1886. A railed enclosure at the rear of the church underneath the stairs to the

¹⁶ 'The Diaries of Mary Anne Flanagan 1903-1912' edited by Fr John Murphy & Donald Murphy 1993, P. 111

¹⁷ Drogheda Independent 23rd April 1898.

¹⁸ Valuation Lists Co Louth, District of Louth ED Termonfeckin 1883-1938, Pages 109-110

¹⁹ According to Marianne Scully Estate Map 1877 and Griffiths Valuation 1855

²⁰ Valuation Lists Pages 111-2

²¹ Valuation Lists Pages 109-110

²² Valuation Lists Pages 104-5

gallery was donated by the daughters of Captain Thomas Owens and his wife, Baltray in 1924²³. The enclosure here included the Pieta which was made by Mayer & Co of Germany who were also responsible for the windows and the baptismal font which has since been relocated to the north transept. The baptismal enclosure was removed during the renovations in 1978. The wooden pulpit removed during the 1978 renovation was installed in May 1912 in the front left side of the church²⁴. The two front seats had to be cut to facilitate its installation.

The earliest known picture of the interior is from c 1910 and shows the body of the church and main altar. The window behind the altar (dated 1894) is clearly visible as are the pews (made by the Murphy family of Garveystown, carpenters), the altar rails and altar of the three Marys (1895). The statue of the Blessed Virgin is clearly visible on the right hand side of the altar but does not appear to be painted as she is today. The two angels with candelabras are also visible at the back corners of the sanctuary though they too appear unpainted. A small area on the left hand side of the sanctuary appears curtained off and may suggest that some work was taking place at this location at the time (perhaps the side altar window being installed). The aisle appears tiled as it is today. The walls of the sanctuary and around the arch in the church are decorated with what appears to be gold leaf stencils. Traces of this stencilling were exposed in the present refurbishment project on the north wall of the north side altar behind the radiator. Other traces of earlier decoration were exposed behind skirting at the back of the main altar. The wooden pulpit used up until 1978 is not present which helps secure the date of the photograph before 1912 when the pulpit was installed.



Detail of early decoration revealed on north side altar wall

²³ Plaque fixed to gallery stairs "Erected in affectionate remembrance of Capt. Thomas Owens and Wife Baltray by their grateful daughters. 1924".

²⁴ 'The Diaries of Mary Anne Flanagan 1903-1912' edited by Fr John Murphy & Donald Murphy 1993, P. 221



Detail of early decoration revealed behind skirting at rear of main altar



Gold Leaf Stencilling

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