



KILDERMOTT ABBEY, ATTYMASS

Introduction



Probably the oldest remaining monument in the parish dating from historic times, the ruins of Kildermott Abbey overlook Ballymore Lough. As well as being an important national monument the abbey has several fascinating Folklore tales associated with it.

The Abbey, originally named The Holly Trinity Priory, was established in 1238 by Norbertine Monks who it is believed were already established in the parish at this time. It is possible the Abbey and its townland are now known as Kildermott (Cill Diarmuda: Dermots church) due to patronage by the McDermott Lordships during the reign of Henry 8th. No connection with a Saint of that name can be traced.



It seems likely that the Abbey was partially destroyed after the Cromwellian Act of 1697 persecuting the Catholic Faith at which time the McDermott Lordships lost their freeholds in the parish. Two Holy Water Fonts from the Abbey were recovered from the lake by a Mr. Thomas Gallagher where they were presumably dumped. One has been returned to the Abbey whilst the other resides in the National Museum.

In the Ordnance Survey Field Name Book of 1838 there is a note:

"In the north of the parish, on the N.W. margin of Ballymore lake, there stands within a graveyard the ruined church of Kildermot. Its western gable is pulled down to the ground, but its foundation is still traceable. Its side walls are intact, and its eastern gable remains standing.

In this gable is a lancet window, widened inside and arched above. It is between 3 and 4ft. high on the outside and 6ft. high on the inside; its outside breadth averages about 6 inches. It commences within 2 or 3ft. of the ground and rises to the height of the side walls; it is fashioned of ruder cut stones. The whole church, on the inside, was only 18ft. by 12ft.

To the west of this church was another building, about 31ft. in length and somewhat wider than Kildermot, as appears by its foundations."

Kildermott Abbey was declared a National Monument in 1939 due to the efforts of Patrick Flannelly, National School Teacher in the parish at the time. His account the Abbey and its associated folklore can be found in an extract from his hand-written manuscript *The Ecclesiastical History of Attymass* in the *Historical Documents Archive* at <http://www.attymass.ie>.

Folklore

Local legend has it that the Abbey once stood in the township of Killeen on the opposite side of the Ballymore Lough and was moved stone by stone by boat to its present location. Accounts vary, but it is said that several monks drowned during the operation and that their cries could be heard over the lake for some time after the event.

The original site is said to be in Killeen graveyard near a "T" shaped cross formed from two stones known as The Friars Grave. Legend has it that if the top cross-stone is removed it will be restored to its original location during the night.

A graveyard located on the lake side of the Abbey is thought to have been used for the burial of un-baptised babies and folklore suggests that a girl in her twenties is interred by a hawthorn close to the north wall of the chancel.



Archive documents relating to Kildermott Abbey:

[http://www.attymass.ie/historical_documents]

An extract from P. Flannelly's manuscript *The Ecclesiastical History of Attymass*.

An extract from the Ordinance Survey Letters of Co. Mayo 1838 Vol 1 – John O'Donovan.

Other sources:

History of Attymass, Bridie Padden. 2000