

HOLY WELLS IN ATTYMASS

Accounts vary as to just how many Holy Wells there are in the parish of Attymass, possibly as a result of the parish boundaries changing. According to Flannelly: ¹

"Originally it [Attymass] was probably united with Kilgarvan but soon became a separate parish and remained so till the end of the 17th century. Penal laws then brought it under the jurisdiction of the parish priests of Kilgarvan, up to 1831, when it appears again in the records as a distinct parish."

Historian Fr Liam Swords ² lists four Holy Wells: Tobbaracloon, Tobbar Patrick [Currower], Atty's Well or Tobar Attracta & Saint Fechín's Well [Mullahowney] and the Ordnance Survey of Attymass - 1838 ³ lists under wells:

"Tobar á Chluana, meadow-well in Treanlaur township and Tobar Phadruig, Patrick's well. In Corrower ... at which stations are still performed by the Roman Catholic peasantry."

Atty's Well or Tobar Attracta

O' Donovan in his Ordnance Letters 1839 ⁴ states:

"I was informed there was (an) Atty's holy well, in Irish, Tobar Athracha, in the Parish, but in what Townland I cannot tell. It lies, as well as I could learn, not far from the Parish Chapel, somewhere towards the mountain."

We can now confirm that Atty's Well or Tobar Attracta is indeed close to the church, opposite Saint Fechín's National School.

Illustrated right, Tobar Attracta was cleaned out by FÁS in 1997 when new entrance walls were constructed.



"Eight parishes [in Achonry] had wells dedicated to St Attracta. Her feastday was 11 August when patterns were held ..." ²

St. Attracta is Patroness in our Diocese of Achonry.



Toba Fechín or St Fechín's Well, Mullahowney, Attymass.

St Fechín's Well

Saint Fechín was clearly active in the Attymass area. Flannelly ¹ tells us that:

"In this parish of Attymass his name is commemorated in Tobar Fechin or Fechin's well in the townland of Mullahowney, and in the townland of Rathreedane in the parish of Kilgarvan is a well bearing the same name. " Kilgarvan parish borders Attymass.

"... St. Fechin is said to have founded the churches of Kilgarvan Many miracles were attributed to him."

Saint Fechín's feast day is the 20th January. The **parish National School** is dedicated to Saint Fechín.

Tobar Pádraig or Patrick's Well

"A well, in the townland of Currower in this parish also carries the name of Tobar Pádraig or Patrick's Well and there is a tradition that a Celtic Crossrests at the bottom of it. We cannot say, however that St. Patrick had any personal contact with the place but it is quite probable as, apart from the peculiarities of the well itself, a large and important fort, 'Traig Buide', stands above it and in very few districts in Ireland are forts as numerous as in the locality, showing how populous was the area in ancient times and what a field lay there for his sacred mission." ¹

Visiting Holy Wells to perform "The Stations" or in the hope of a cure for illnesses was practiced in the parish within living memory.

Notes & resources:

¹ From a manuscript in the Attymass Parish Inventory hand written by Patrick Flannelly NT. Full transcription in the Historical Documents Archive at <http://www.attymass.ie>

² A Hidden Church by Liam Swords [1997 ISBN 1856072045]. Fr Liam Swords is historian for the Diocese of Achonry.

³ Ordnance Survey Letters County Mayo 1838 Vol 1 - Attymass by John O' Donovan. Full transcription in the Historical Documents Archive at <http://www.attymass.ie>

⁴ From the Ordnance Survey Field Name Book – 1838. Full transcription in the Historical Documents Archive at <http://www.attymass.ie>

The book Sacred Waters by Janet & Colin Bord [1985 ISBN 0-246-12036-3] the history & folklore of holy wells.