

HISTORY OF KILLEIGH:

Compiled by the late Fr. Dan Kennedy, Parish Priest of Killeigh from 1955. to 1977, for a series of newsletters addressed to emigrants from the parish, as a means of keeping them in contact with home. This project was carried out during his retirement. [1977 – 1998]

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It is hoped in the forthcoming numbers of the Emigrants' Letter to write something of the history of Killeigh. It seems to the present writer that whatever is known of the past of Killeigh is known in a very confused way. Further, it seems that unless some attempt is made now to revive the memory of the past, all memory of it will be lost forever. There are very many sources from which we can draw in order to learn our past. Best known of these is the History of the Dioceses of Kildare & Leighlin, written by one of its Bishops, Most Rev. Dr. Comerford. Another Bishop, Archbishop Healy of Tuam, gives us some knowledge, as also does Cardinal Moran. Then there are various articles in Historical Magazines and Journals, such as the Kildare Archaeological Society Journal, the Irish Ecclesiastical Record, and many others. In addition, there are various Histories of Ireland such as Lecky's History of Ireland, Dalton's History of Ireland, and very many more - some ancient, some less ancient.

When studying the History of a Parish, it is difficult to avoid something of the history of its immediate surrounding territory, as also indeed the general history of Ireland - for it is in the context and environment of the whole country that a Parish has its being.

Firstly then we should look at the area we will be talking about - the Parish of Killeigh. Killeigh, like all ancient Irish Parishes, derives its shape, size and boundaries from the system of Kingship, Chieftancy and family structures of ancient Ireland which was governed by the Brehon Laws. It is an historical fact that St. Patrick made special reference to this system; in every case he approached the local rulers, pagan though they were, whether civil rulers or religious Druids, to secure, where possible, their permission for his work amongst them. We shall see in a future chapter how important and necessary, in the case of Killeigh, such permission was.

Killeigh and Geashill were from the earliest times not only in the area known as Offaly, but were indeed the headquarters of the whole area of ancient Offaly and were ruled by the O'Connors of Geashill. Under these were various sub-chiefs, notably the O'Dunnes and the O'Dempseys.

The area we now call Offaly did not exist before the English invasion of Ireland. Present-day County Offaly was created by an English Decree and was known as the King's County. The name Kings County was changed to County Offaly after Ireland gained its independence. The present area of Co. Offaly is much greater than that of the ancient Kingdom of Offaly. The ancient Kingdom of Offaly did not have Tullamore within it at any time. The Western bounds of Old Offaly were always the

same as the Western bounds of the Parish of Killeigh. Ancient Offaly extended from Killeigh and Geashill eastwards into Co. Kildare -to Rathangan, Kildare, The Curragh, and for some time as far as Suncroft. It varied somewhat in size from time to time, due to success or failure in battle. But it always expanded eastwards, All the immediate area West of Killeigh belonged to the O'Molloys and at no time did it belong to the O'Connors.

We see now that the first factor in arranging the boundaries of the Parish was ownership and permission of the O'Connors and their sub-chiefs.

A second factor was the walking ability of the Monks for, as we will see, Killeigh had Monks and a Monastery and in its earhest years the Parish extended as far as the Monks could walk. A later factor determining the Parish boundaries wa's a Decree of a National Synod of Bishops - about the, 12th. century.

It is interesting to note that Killeigh seems to have had almost the same boundaries down the years from its very beginning. I say almost the same, for the coming of the canal made some slight change The canal cut through the townslands of Ballycommon and Clonmore. In doing so, it. left some of Clonmore on the Daingean side and some of Ballycommon on the Killeigh or Ballinagar side. I am not sure that these slight changes ever received any official Ecclesiastical approval, but this is not of great present importance because no one resides in the changed areas.

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The name of the Parish - KILLEIGH,.

This name derives from the fact that from its beginnings as a parish there was a monastery in Killeigh and it was in that monastery that its first priests lived. The name Killeigh (in Irish, CILL ACAID) means **The Church of the Level Place**; Acaid means a level place or a broad held or a small Plain. There are a number of places or townslands throughout Ireland called Killeigh or Killeagh. For that reason, our Killeigh was usually known as Cill Acaid Droma Fada, or the Church in the small plain near the long ridge, because of the long ridge of hills that surround it. At a somewhat-later date in history, because of two Saints named SINEL or SENCHELL who lived in the monastery, the name became Cill Acaid Droma Fada an Da SinCheall - a name which must be one of the longest in Ireland. We have little information about the area before the coming of **St.Patrick** and what we have is not always too accurate rate or certain. During this period, history was recorded by the poets, in verse. The poets' language was often more picturesque than accurate; so facts are often confused by word pictures. However, there is one fact relating to the area in pagan times which is admitted by historians as genuine:

Most readers are aware that Ireland was invaded in ancient times by a group of people called Milesians. The date of their invasion is uncertain; various historians give various dates. "Keating says they landed in 1300 B.C.; MeGeoghegan gives the day and year as 17th May 1029, while O'Flaherty puts it at 1100 B.C.

The Milesians were so called because their leader, a military man, was named Milesius. After some resistance by the locals, Tuatha de Danann, these Milesians won. Their leader Milesius, became King of Ireland, but before too long he died. "On his death the leadership or kingship of Ireland was divided between his two sons, Heber and Heremon. Two years later, they quarrelled; a battle between them was fought at Geashill. Heber was defeated and slain and Heremon became sole monarch of Ireland and the first in a long line of kings which ended with Roderick O'Connor - so writes Rev. E.A. D'Alton in his HISTORY OF IRELAND. Our Diocesan Historian, Dr. Comerford, gives us more detail of this battle: "In the Annals of Ireland we read that in the year of the world 3501, a dispute arose at the end of this year between Eremhon and Emhear in consequence of which a battle was fought between them on the brink of Bri-Damh at Tochereterda-Magh and this was called the battle of Geisill. The battle was gained by Emhear and he fell therein. There fell also three distinguished chieftans in the same battle - Gorsten, Setgha and Suirghe were their names. After this, Eremhon assumed the sovereignty."(FOUR MASTERS)

In a note, Dr. O'Donovan remarks that this Bri-Damh, i.e. the Hill of the Oxen, is the place referred to in the Tripartite Life of St. Patrick as Mons-Damh, but there is no elevation near Geashill higher than 355 ft. In the description of this battle, preserved in the Dinnsenchus, it is stated that there were many mounds in this place in which Heber and the other Chiefs were interred." The place, of course, is BALLINTOGHER. "The accuracy of the statement in the Dinnsenchus has been remarkably confirmed by the great quantities of human bones found in the locality, popularly pointed out as the place of the engagement. The writer (Dr. Comerford) had an interesting conversation with a person who rents a small farm adjoining. This man, some 27 years ago (about 1850) whilst engaged in removing, for agricultural purposes, a mound on his land, came upon a structure composed of large stones, placed upright, and forming an oblong vault or recess. Within was found embedded in yellow clay the full skeleton of a man. There can be little doubt of this being the resting place of a warrior of distinction, and it is not unwarranted to suppose it to be the grave of Heber himself."

The Four Masters state that it was in the reign of Erithrial, son of Irial the prophet, son of Eremon, who fell in battle in A.M. 3549 that Magh Geisill (the plain of Geashill) was cleared of wood by the Offalians The Four Masters also record that Conmael, son of Emer, who fell in the battle of Emenia in A.M. 3570 is recorded to have fought a battle at Geashil in which fell Palaph, son of Eremon.

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Coming of 'St. Patrick in 432 A.D

I have already stated that it was very necessary for St. Patrick to obtain the permission of the local king or chief wherever he went throughout Ireland before he began his work of Christian conversion in the local area.

Archbishop Healy of Tuam is our informant; in his Life of St. Patrick he tells us who was the local chief in the Killeigh and Geashill area at the coming of St. Patrick and what reception St. Patrick received from him.

"Cathair Mór, the famous Leinster King, who flourished in the second century of the Christian Era, bequeathed this territory (Offaly) as well as a great part of Western Kildare to his eldest son, Ros Fáilge; and his descendants held the land in the time of St. Patrick.. Now the ruling Prince at that time was called Failge Berraide, and when he heard that Patrick was coming into his territory he boastfully declared that he would kill the tailcend in revenge for Cenn Cruach or Crom Cruach, Failge's god, whom Patrick had overthrown at Mach Slecht in Leitrim.

Patrick's servants heard of these vain boastings still they concealed their fears from Patrick, who knew nothing of the special danger to which he was exposed in Offaly. His devoted charioteer, Odran, said to Patrick "I am now a long time driving for you my good master, Patrick; "will you take my place today and let me sit to rest myself in your Place?" Patrick readily granted this request of his old and faithful servant. So they drove northwards from Brittas to Killeigh, so far as we can judge and to a place now called Geashill which was then named Bridam - it is, in fact, the same name under another form. No doubt, there was a royal dun at this place for it was always one of the strongholds of Offaly, and many a bloody struggle took place in its neighbourhood between the Gael and the Saxon in later ages. There it was that the accursed, Fáilge Berraide approaching the chariot of the Saint, gave suddenly a spear thrust to Odran who sat in Patrick's seat and thus received the fatal blow intended for his Master. Patrick at once cried out in anger, "My curse "...On the tree of Bridam" added the dying Odran, who thus diverted the curse of his master from his slayer to the tree. Patrick yielded too when he saw the great charity of his servant. "Be it so" he said. 'Still says the Tripartite Life of St. Patrick: "Failge died at once and went down to hell". But as to Failge Ross, who appears to have been his brother, he meditated no guile against the Saint, and it is his children who are in the land today.'

He was the ancestor of the three great families; the O'Connors, the O'Dempseys and the O'Dunns, who, in after times, ruled all the land. The O'Connors, the eldest branch of the line, hold the kingship for many centuries and dwelt chiefly at Geashill and at Croghan, where they had a strong fort on the southern slope of the hill. They did not dwell at Philipstown which was an Anglo-Norman stronghold. O'Dunns chief fortress was on the southern border at the foot of the Sheve Bloom; and the O'Dempsey, who became Viscount Clarmahere in the time of Charles the First had his chief fortress at Ballykeane, about six miles northwest of Portarlinton.

Patrick blessed their common ancestor, Fáilge Ross, and the writer of the Tripartite Life adds that from him, is the sovereignty of the land for ever. It was so then and for many centuries afterwards, but Cromwell and King William made many changes in Erin never dreamt of by the holy Men who wrote, the Tripartite Life of St. Patrick. Still the Gael may get his own again and verify the prophecy.

Patrick was badly treated in Offaly, and if we can judge from the brief narrative of his journey, he made only a short stay there, merely passing through it. We are not told that he founded a single Church or left a single one of his disciples in that territory."

Such is Archbishop Healy's account of the death of St. Odran, the only martyrdom for the planting of the faith in Ireland. You may enquire where precisely it occurred - between Brittas and Killeigh or Geashill. It was obviously in Killurin, but where precisely? Does anyone know? The name Killurin is in Irish Cill Odran- -which, in old times, was pronounced as it is now, Killurin. I have come across a reference indicating that there was a church in Killurin.

Was it near the old school, or where?

The most recent school was built about 1934- its predecessor was almost immediately beside it - now an old shed, that goes back deep into the last century and there is evidence of a hedge schoolmaster before that. It would be nice to know if there is any tradition.

The name Odran was to become common. There are other Irish townlands called Killurin. It is thought that the name of the patron saint of Waterford, Otteran, was formerly Odran and so changed by the Horsemen. In St. Columba's Monastery at Iona, -Scotland, there is a graveyard called Relig Odran.

Saint Senchall

In our last chapter Archbishop Healy stated that there was no evidence that St. Patrick founded a single Church or left a single disciple in Offaly. However, at a later date there came into Killeigh a holy man named **Senchall** or Sinnell who was very much a disciple of St. Patrick. The Four Masters tell us that he was the first person St. Patrick baptised in Ireland. A number of ancient documents state this fact of his baptism. The Martyrology of Tallaght and the Feilire of St. Aengus mention that the 5th April was the Feast of the first baptism conferred in Ireland by St. Patrick. To quote the Feilire "excellent Patrick's baptism was kindled in Ireland." The Leabhar Breac says "I, Sinnell, son of Finchad of the Ui-Garrchon, he is the first person Patrick baptised in Ireland."

At this point we must refer to the fact that there are a number of ancient and authentic Lives of St. Patrick. Because of these various Lives some variation of account occurs. One of these variations is the account of who was St. Patrick's first convert; for one account states that the first convert was Dichu in Saul. Co. Down. The historian, Colgan, suggests that both accounts may be true in so far as Sinnell was the first convert in the South and Dichu in the North.

The author of that Life known as the Vita Secunda, as well as the Book of Armagh, inform us that St. Patrick made one convert in Wicklow. Readers should know that when St. Patrick came to Ireland he first landed in Wicklow. Here he was opposed by the local chief, Nathi, and so could make no success. He stayed there but a very short time, possibly as short as a few months, when he left and went by boat to Co. Down where he landed near Saul. However, before he left Wicklow he had made one convert. This convert., according to the Vita Secunda, was Sinell, son of Finnchad - the same whom we have already seen quoted by the Leabhar Breac, "son of Finnchad, the first person Patrick baptised in Ireland."

The historian, Dr. Todd., has observed that this Sinell was of the race of the Kings of Leinster, of the clan of Hy-Garchon, and a cousin of Nathi, the chief who drove St. Patrick out of Wicklow.

The historian, Colgan, tells us that Sinell was tenth in descent from Cathair Mor, Monarch of Ireland. But we have already noticed that Ros Failge was the eldest son of Cathair Mor. From this it follows that Sinell was related to the O'Connor-Faly and Faile Berraide was the chief of the O'Connors at this time.

In the Four Masters we find a list of Patrick's household. This household consists of people whom St. Patrick brought with him to Ireland, as well as some of those who had been converted to Christianity. Among these people were Bishops, priests, scholars, a cook, three blacksmiths, three

artificers, that is metal workers, carpenters, Odhran, his charioteer who was killed at Killurin, and Sinell who is described as his bell-ringer and door-keeper. In that life of St. Patrick known as the Tripartite Life, Sinell is described as Sinell of Kildare.

We next hear of Sinell as a hermit in Clane, Co. Kildare. Here he was given a cell as his hermitage at Cluan Damh by St. Ailbe who later became the Patron Saint of the Diocese of Emly (Cashel). We do not know at what date St. Senchell changed from Clane to Killeigh, but all the old writers make it clear that he came to Killeigh and there founded a monastery. Before we speak of monastery, it is desirable to note two facts: first, that Senchell was a hermit; secondly, that he was not only a disciple of St. Patrick, but of St. Ailbe also. St. Ailbe was one of the four saints who had been baptised by Palladius who had preached for a short time in Ireland before St. Patrick came. Indeed he was forced out of Ireland by Nathi of Wicklow -the same who opposed St. Patrick and caused him to leave Wicklow and go to Co. Down.

The four saints whom St. Patrick found preaching were St. Ailbe, St. Ibar, St. Ciaran of Saigher (Seir-Ciaran) and St. Declan of Ardmore. St. Patrick found these four men preaching, especially in Munster, with slight success. Making contact with St. Patrick they soon acknowledged his Apostolic authority and he, in turn, blessed them and confirmed their Mission.

Each of these Saints had established religious communities and for that purpose each had set up Rules governing their communities. St. Ailbe's Rule was of a very severe and ascetical nature and it was such a Rule that Senchell inherited and it was this that he brought with him to Killeigh. Add to this experience that Senchell (or Sinell - he is known by both names) had been a disciple and intimate of St. Patrick also. We learn from the Hymn of St. Fiac, who wrote one of St. Patrick's Lives, that St. Patrick sang each night a hundred psalms to adore the King of Angels. His bed was on a stone and a rock his pillow and for all covering he wore only a wet sackcloth for he would not allow his body to be in warmth. By day, he preached in the open air upon the hills.

Our second point for consideration in the life of St. Senchell, is that he was, like St. Ailbe, a Hermit. This implied that he lived alone with little or no contact with the rest of the world. His residence was a hut or, as we call it, a cell; very occasionally a cell was made of stone, but more often it was composed of wattles and covered with straw or turf sods. The hermit's bed was the bare earth.

In these circumstances, the hermit lived his life, spending his time in prayer and the study of the Scriptures, and in collecting and preparing whatever little food he needed. Their food would consist of water, herbs, and perhaps a little fish.

We leave it to ***another chapter*** to consider the growth of the monastery.

In our last issue we learned of St. Senchell's coming to Killeigh. He came, not only as a hermit, but as an intimate disciple of both St. Patrick and St. Ailbe. He had been in St. Patrick's household as a

bell-ringer and door-keeper. He had taken over and occupied a cell in Clane, Co.Kildare, which St. Ailbe had previously occupied.

The Historian, Colgan, says in his Book of the Saints (A.A.SS. Page 748 that "Saint Senchell, senior, was Abbot first in the Church of Cluain-Damh (Eccl de prato Bovum, Meadow of the oxen) at the bank of the river Liffey in Leinster; afterwards the same (person) also (as it seems) exercised the Office of Bishop in the Church of Killachmidh, called by former writers Killachmidh Drumfada, in the western county of the same Leinster.,'

Colgan in the same book, Chapter 3, states that "He (Saint Senchell) inhabited for some time that first place granted to him by St. Ailbeus, Abbot and afterwards Archbishop of the (two) Munsters and first founder of it (the place, viz. the Moanstery of Clane)."

From this statement of Colgan we learn that St. Senchell came to Killeigh, not only as a hermit, but also as an Abbot and Bishop. We do not know the date of his coming to Killeigh, nor the reason of his coming. We have already pointed out that he was a cousin of the O'Connors of Geashill who were chieftains of all the area which is now Killeigh Parish. St. Senchell may have been influenced by the O'Connors to come and establish a school in their territory and, no doubt, they made him a present of sufficient land to do so.

Before we consider further the story of Saint Senchell and his Monastery, we would do well to be clear in mind as to the sort of place and the conditions he found when he came to Killeigh.

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Physical conditions which St. Senchell found when he arrived in Killeigh

First of all, we must put out of our minds any picture we may have of present-day Killeigh. There was no Church, no Abbey, no village, and, in all probability, no house or residence of any sort. Recall what we have already said about the attack on St. Patrick in his journey through here, and St. Odran's death. We were told that St. Patrick was on his way between Brittas and Bri-damh (Geashill). There is no mention of Killeigh. It seems likely that there was no sort of built-up area, however small, between these two places - Brittas and Bri-damh. So the picture we should have, as St. Senchell comes to Killeigh, is one of open country and clear helds without a house or hut of any sort in view. We feel justified in referring to clear helds because, as we have already learned, the Four Masters state that "It was in the reign of Erithrial A.M. 3549 that Magh Geisill (the Plain of Geashill) was cleared of wood by the Offalians." An ancient writer says of Offaly:

"Magh agus Moin, Moin is Fidh, Fidh 'gus Moin, Moin is Magh."

Plain and Bog, Bog and Wood, Wood and Bog, Bog and Plain.

Indeed the whole country was heavily wooded and continued to be so till a very late date. The many townlands in Co. Offaly that have the word "Derry" in their names are evidence of this; thus in the

Parish of Killeigh we have Derrybeg and Derryclure. The word Derry means an oak wood and Co. Offaly was renowned for its oak. All the area south and west of Killurine was, in ancient times, known as Coill na gCran (Wood of Trees).

This area extended from the borders of Killurine to Lumcloon. Indeed a very considerable area West of the Parish of Killeigh was known as Feara Ceall or Feara Coill which might be translated as Woodman or Woodland in later times called Firceall or Fergal. In addition, the area between Geashill and Tullamore was known as Cranagh Geisill or Geashill Wood. It is possible and likely that all the area between Geashill and Tullamore and towards Derrybeg was one large wood. So that area, known as the Plain of Geashill, which had been cleared of wood before the coming of St. Patrick, was the only cultivated area in the most part of the present parish; this plain extended from Geashill to the furthest borders of Killurine. Absence of roads was another feature of these times. It is easy to understand that there were very few roads when we recall that there was so much woodland. The combination of numerous and extensive woods, with few roads, was a safeguard and a security to the population for it prevented easy progress of enemy armies. This security was further helped by the great extent of bog. With the arrival of the English in Ireland, we find them continually complaining of the difficulty of making any progress and extremely slow movement.

The English had scarcely occupied this central part of Ireland till the reign of Philip and Mary, when they created the two new Counties, Kings and Queens Counties. As late as the year 1563, a map of Offaly was drawn up. In this map the whole area is depicted as covered by woods and bogs. No indication is given in the map of any regular roads. Here and there are strokes to represent passes through the woods. These strokes do not correspond to any of our modern roads. They were merely bridal paths by which pedestrians or pack-animals could pass. However, we can deduce from the fact that St. Patrick used a chariot for travel that there were a few tracks, which might be described as roads. The existence of the well-known road from Dublin to Galway, passing through North Offaly by way of the Esker, is also evidence that a few highways did exist. Such are the physical conditions which St. Senech found when he arrived in Killeigh.

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Buildings in the time of St. Senech.

We recall from our last issue that when St. Senech came to Killeigh he found nothing but a held - no house or residence, no village, no shop, no Church or Abbey - nothing but a bare held. So his first work would have been to provide himself with some sort of shelter. This shelter would have been a wooden one - a hut or, as it would have been called at that time, a cell. The saint would have driven some stakes into the ground, filled in the spaces between with rough slabs of timber or wattle and covered it with straw or some other vegetable matter or turf-sods. At a later date the timber might have been plastered over with mud. All houses of this period, as well as the churches and schools would have been of timber. History records many of our old churches and monasteries as being of

timber. For example, we have a record of St. Kieran driving the first stake to construct the Monastery of Clonmaenise. St. Columba's Monastery at Iona, Scotland, consisted of monks' cells constructed of wattle, covered by sods, arranged around the church which occupied a central position. The Church of Rahan, built in 747, was described as a "jointed structure requiring 1,000 boards." Likewise, Seir-Kieran was of timber. A timber church was known as a Duirtheact. In these churches the timber was mostly of high craftsmanship and decorated. Furniture was not a matter of great importance in these early days. The hermit's and monk's bed was the bare earth. We are told that St. Columba's bed in Iona was a slab of stone; likewise, St. Kevin's bed in Glendalough was a cave. St. Columbanus' bed also was in a cave. On the other hand, the monks took the greatest care of all that related to the honour and glory of God. There are many examples of their writing and decoration of the books of the Gospels and of the Scriptures, as well as their ornamentation of sacred vessels such as chalices, monstrances and crosses. Call to mind the many beautiful high crosses still to be seen.

St. Senchell came as a hermit, though he was already a bishop. We learned in our last issue that the historian, Colgan, states that he exercised the Office of Bishop in Killeigh. As a hermit he would have lived alone, providing his own food and observing a highly disciplined life of prayer and study. History does not tell us when or how soon others anxious to live a Religious life joined him. However, we know that it was customary in those days that when a Religious Superior changed from one abode to another he took with him some friends or disciples. Thus, in a previous issue we learned from the Four Masters that St. Patrick brought with him to Ireland a number of people, bishops priests and lay people. Likewise, we know that when St. Columbanus left Ireland for the Continent, he brought with him a number of monks. So we may assume that St. Senchell brought some companions from Clane. Assuming that he did, separate cells would have been constructed for each one and a little church or oratory (a place for prayer) would have been constructed - the cells surrounding the oratory. Though we do not know how many monks came to Killeigh at their first coming, nor their names, we do know that there was one who was called Senchell, a relative of the first Senchell. There are many references to the fact that there were two Senchells, usually distinguished from each other as the senior or elder, and the junior or younger. Thus, for example, Petrie, the historian, states that St. Kieran of Clonmacnoise and the two Senchells died of plague in the same year, 549.

We might at this point give some thought to the life and work of these monks. But I prefer to go aside a little and have another look at the set-up of the Monastery or Abbey. I use these words, Monastery or Abbey indiscriminately, though the tradition in Killeigh has always been to refer to the buildings, which I am describing as 'The Abbey.' This tradition was and is very accurate, because an Abbey is a place that is under the care of an Abbot and St. Senchell was an Abbot.

Further, the term Abbey is properly used because it distinguishes this institute or building from another which came into existence in Killeigh at a much later date, and which was properly called a Monastery, or indeed a Convent of men. We will have more about this at a later date. For the present, we will continue to talk about the Abbey, which, for almost 900 years, was the only Religious Institution in Killeigh.

The Abbey buildings consisted of a central church, surrounded by cells, all wooden. As the number of monks increased, there would have been added a refectory or a place where all of them could eat in common. Then, as schools developed, wooden structures would have been provided for classes. To add these structures, ground would have been required. We do not know how much land St. Senchell was given, but it seems fair to assume the boundaries. An Abbey was, from the earliest

times, a sacred place - a place primarily for the Glory of God and for the use of the monks. Therefore, certain parts would have been confined to the use of the monks, into which all others would not have been permitted to enter. On the other hand, one of the very strict Rules of the Abbey would have been a prohibition to the monks to leave the area of the Abbey without the permission of the Abbot for certain well-defined reasons. In addition, since it was a sacred place, everyone, whether monk or not, had a special protection and freedom within the Abbey or Monastery grounds. This protection was that no one might be taken prisoner or arrested while in the Abbey grounds. For this reason, it was very important to mark out the limits and boundaries of the Abbey grounds. Erecting mounds of earth at certain points on the boundary made this marking. So in Killeigh we still have some of these mounds: There is one in Mr Choisseul's held facing the door of the Church of Ireland, a second almost behind the curate's house in Mr Corbett's held, a third is in the grounds of the old parochial house. This last has been partly cut away near what is now Mr McEnroe's shop; it extends from that point through Mr John Walshe's garden into the old parochial garden. No doubt, there would have been others, but with time they have disappeared.

What a shame it would be if the remaining ones were interfered with or damaged: mounds erected by the loving hands of the monks, giving them and all who entered their grounds immunity and protection - a protection so sacrilegiously ignored by wicked men throughout the centuries - notable by the Norsemen. If a circle were completed, the circumference passing through the above three points with the Abbey in the Centre we would have the area of the Abbey grounds. It is true, of course, that in the course of time the monks acquired more land for agricultural-purposes (in Fenter), but this was outside the Abbey grounds properly so called.

There may be some variation in describing the grounds as a circle. We recall the seven springs or seven wells. These springs were the source of water for the use of the Abbey and so would be a place of daily resort. It is likely that these springs would have been within the boundaries of the Abbey grounds.

One other point about Abbey grounds - the monks' graveyard. In all probability, the present graveyard beside the Abbey was the Abbey monks graveyard. On the other hand, this graveyard was, through the centuries, the place where the local Kings and Chiefs were buried.

If we would be allowed the word in relation to burial, it was the place of prestige to be buried - hence used by the O'Connors, O'Dempseys and O'Dunnes. For that reason, I have always inclined to the view that originally the graveyard was much larger and possibly included all of the Green. That view has been strengthened by what I have been told. I was told that when a nearby bridge was being re-constructed it was found that headstones from graves had been used in its construction. The fact that the graveyard is walled-in proves nothing. In the Geashill area there is a graveyard which was taken over by some family and walled-in for the family's use, leaving many of the graves outside the wall as part of the surrounding held, the wall itself being formed in parts of grave-stones taken from some of the graves now outside the walls.

It is strange that we do not know where the Saints Senchells were buried. There was another graveyard in Killeigh, now forgotten and largely unknown, but it was of much later date and belonged to the Monastery to which we have already referred. The road to Tullamore passes through this graveyard.

To sum up, the Abbey for 800 or 900 years consisted of a number of wooden buildings. It was only after so long a period that stone building began to come into existence. Later on we will learn that the Abbey was to be burned by enemies on a number of occasions. The possibility of such burning will be easier to understand if we-keep in mind the wooden nature of the place.

The life and work that existed within the walls of the Abbey of Killeigh.

Having considered the spartan conditions, which St. Senchell entered into on his arrival to Killeigh and having accommodated him in wooden structures, we may now look into his life and work.

As we have very little written information - the Annals of Killeigh not being available to us - we must rely on what we know about St. Senchell's early training as well as on the work of those with whom he was trained and acquainted.

He was an intimate disciple and a member of the household of St. Patrick. He had been so acquainted with St. Ailbe that he had inherited his cell in Clane. By reason of these two friendships he had acquired some of the life-style of both of them.

When we think of the life of St. Patrick, we almost certainly think of him as a Bishop travelling throughout the length and breadth of our Island, preaching to the people. Thus, we tend to lose sight of his need to train young men for the priesthood as well as that of his own preparation for the priesthood.

He was trained for the priesthood in monasteries, after his escape from slavery in Ireland. He spent about four years at the great Abbey of Marmouher, under the direction of St. Martin of Tours - his relative and perhaps his uncle. From there he went to the renowned School and Abbey in the Island of Lerins. Afterwards he put himself under the guidance of St. Germanus of Auxere - the great master of the spiritual life. Later, in the company of St. Germanus, he preached in England. It was St. Germanus who sent him to the Pope St. Celestine with a recommendation that he be sent to Ireland. So, we find that his training for the priesthood was entirely monastic; he never lost sight of this training and introduced it into his method of training young Irishmen for the priesthood.

In the early years of his mission, the work of conversion from paganism was of prime importance and had to take priority over everything else. During these years young men who were anxious to become priests accompanied him in his travels; these he instructed by his own practise and example. As their number increased and Christian life became more organised, St. Patrick deemed it necessary to set up a college for the purpose of the better training of these young men.

So, the great school and monastery of Armagh began. The first President and Principal of the professorial staff was St. Benignus. He had been baptised by St. Patrick in his first year in Ireland, just as St. Senchell had been the first person baptised by St. Patrick in Ireland. St. Benignus and St. Senchell were therefore well known to each other and must have been together in that group of young men travelling with and trained by St. Patrick in the course of his travels. This acquaintanceship would have given St. Senchell a great intimacy, not only with St. Benignus, but also with the School of Armagh and its work.

At a later date St. Senchell was to be acquainted with St. Ailbe, who, if we recall the Four Masters (already quoted), had a well-formed monastery in Clane, of which both St. Ailbe and St. Senchell were in turn Abbots. St. Ailbe had been converted to Christianity before the coming of St. Patrick, had become a priest and engaged in the work of conversion of the Irish. He had drawn up a Rule of Life for his monastery independently of St. Patrick; so we find that there are variations of detail in

the Rules of St. Patrick for Armagh and of St. Ailbe of Clane and later of Emly, of which Diocese, with Cashel, he is still patron.

In fact, there are eight recognised monastic rules in the early Irish Church. Monastic life has been ever the same in its essential features, no matter under what rule it has been practised. It is essentially based on the Gospel Counsels. Hence the observance of voluntary poverty, of chastity and of self-renunciation has formed an integral part of monastic observance from the beginning. We are therefore to attend only to matters of detail, when endeavouring to ascertain what gives distinctive features of any particular form of Rule.

St. Patrick, while imparting to the founders of religious houses in Ireland a knowledge of the broad and essential features of monastic life, with which he was himself familiar, left them entirely free to regulate details, each for his own community.

Though there were eight distinct rules recognised in early Ireland, Dr. Comerford, historian of the Dioceses of Kildare and Leighlin, quotes a learned editor, whom he does not identify, as writing "there are eight monastic rules of early Irish Saints available: we may add that we have ourselves discovered another, somewhat different from these, in the Isodore M.S. (Rome) and we regret that want of space alone prevents us from laying it before our readers. It is entitled - The Pious Rules and Practises of the School of Senchell. This was Senchell, surnamed the Elder. The rules and practises are 38 in number."

Regrettably, I have been unable to see this document or any copy of it. I hope to be able to learn more about it. If, and when, I do, I will include it in the Newsletter. Meanwhile, I understand that St. Senchell's rule was a little less severe than many of the other rules. It would almost certainly have been influenced by the rules of St. Benignus at Armagh and of St. Ailbe at Emly.

The rule of St. Ailbe is extant and one of the oldest and most complete of early Irish monastic rules. It specifies the Offices of Superiors, their spiritual duties, the virtues to be practised, faults to be shunned; it gives the quality and the quantity of food to be used. Obedience was of paramount importance: "Let not Satan take thee in thy ways; be submissive to everyone who is over you." Punishment for disobedience was set down. Monks were forbidden to move from one monastery to another. Dispensation to be absent from the monastery was given only for the cause of religion or of charity. Each monk was obliged to renounce all earthly goods. A solitary daily meal had to supply the wants of failing nature and this to be taken not earlier than mid-day; bread and water with a slice of honeycomb; older members were permitted, in addition, mead and water cress. The sick were allowed flesh meat.

Silence was essential to holy recollection: "except you be an Abbot or Vice-Abbot, till the hour of one you speak not, afterwards for those who perform penance, each one in his silence shall be silent." Frequent genuflections were prescribed: "A hundred genuflections at the Beatus, a hundred genuflections every evening." The Psalms and Divine Office were recited in common every day. Such was the daily life-style. Add to this the duty of work. Labour in the house and in the fields was prescribed. The duties of education were prescribed - studying teaching, copying the Scriptures, the Missals, the books required for the administration of the Sacraments and the Visitation of the sick, etc. In the matter of studying and teaching, besides Theology and Sacred Scripture, the other subjects were grammar, logic, rhetoric, geometry, music and astronomy.

As may be deduced from the character of the members of his household, St. Patrick promoted the physical arts and crafts. Aubrey de Vere, writer and poet, in a poem St. Patrick's Journey to Armagh - mentions Benignus, his psalmist, Lecknel, bishop, Erc, his brehon (judge), Mochta, his priest and adds:-

"And Sinnell of the bells Rodan, his shepherd, Essa, Bite and Tassach, Workers of might, in iron and in stone, God taught to build the churches of the faith with wisdom and with heart-delighting craft."

Sinnell of the bells is our Sinnell or St. Senchell. It is not unreasonable to deduce that he was not only a bell ringer, but an artificer of bells - a worker in metal and bronze. Whatever knowledge of art and handicraft St. Patrick found, he carefully used for the glory of God and the purpose of his mission. We have noticed above the copying of the various books required for the Altar and the Sacraments. All of these books were provided with covers or cases, in wood, leather bronze, brass or gold, beautifully worked and ornamented.

The great historian, Dr. Petrie, says "It would appear from the number of references to shrines in the Irish Annals that, previously to the irruptions of the Northmen in the eighth and ninth centuries, there were very few, if any, of the distinguished churches in Ireland which had not costly shrines."

Another writer lists items that were made: Altar plate, crosses, crosiers, shrines, covers or cases for missals and those beautiful copies of the Holy Scriptures.

It may be of interest to note that the Book of Armagh, written in the seventh century, states that the shrines of Saints Brigid and Conleth at Kildare were marvels of art, being adorned with gold, silver and precious stones. Saints Brigid and Conleth are the patrons of our Diocese.

The historian, Dr. Healy, writes about the Irish monks: "they lived in their wooden cells, in which they slept either on the bare ground or on a bundle of straw, covered with a rug, but always in the clothes worn by day. They assembled for their devotion in the church or oratory. They took their meals in a common refectory and cooked the food in a common kitchen, for they had no fires in their cells, however cold.

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Killeigh - the cradle of growing faith for all Europe

We have now considered the foundation of the Abbey, consisting of wooden structures set up on a site, which was probably granted to St. Senchell by the O'Connor Failge in a remote and isolated area surrounded by bogs and woods. We have taken notice of the life-style of the monks who dwelt here - a life-style severe and ascetical, lived for God in the presence of God - a life-style so severe that the reader may wonder how human beings endured such conditions of living and how such institutions could flourish'. But such was the working and the influence of God's grace that not only did they flourish, but they became the cradle of growing faith for all Europe.

If the modern reader wonders at such intensity of living in the presence of God, what must the neighbouring pagans of those early days have thought; for we must bear in mind that the Abbey was set up while paganism was still prevalent through out the land. The contrast of living as a pagan to that of living as a Christian must have been very great and have had a profound influence on any observers.

Despite all this, many thoughtful souls made application to join in the life of the monastery. Not only did the Irish join, but before long pupils were coming from England, France, Italy, and from all over Europe. Ireland and its monasteries became the centre of European learning and spirituality. The numbers of pupils in Irish monasteries grew and grew and soon ran into many, many thousands. Killeigh Abbey - known under the title of the Abbey of the Holy Cross, not to be confused with that other famous Abbey in Munster of the same title - was no exception. We have already quoted the great early English historian, St. Bede of Durham, Patron Saint of Durham, England, and frequently known as the Venerable Bede. We will be pardoned for re-quoting him for he so emphasises the charity and the generosity of the Irish Monks: "The Irish willingly received them all" (i.e. the English and Europeans as well as native Irish) "and took care to supply them with food as well as to furnish them with books to read and their teaching gratis."

This great growth of the monasteries and schools did not take place immediately but developed slowly over a few centuries. We learn this from such writings as have survived, one of which is known as the Feilire of St. Aengus. This Feilire is a long litany of the Saints of Ireland written poetically. St. Aengus was a monk of the great monastery of Tallagh, Co. Dublin, who frequently travelled to our Midland area and spent much time there. He wrote the litany about the year 799, which would be two or three hundred years later than the foundation of Killeigh Abbey. Writing about the Saints and Holy men of Killeigh whom he asks to intercede for him with God, he gives the following list of some of them:

Thrice fifty holy Bishops with twelve pilgrims, under Senchell the Elder, a priest Senchell, the younger, a Bishop, and the twelve Bishops who settled in Cill Acaidh Dromfata in Hy Failghi. These are the names of the Bishops of Cill Acaidh:

Three Budocis, three Canocis, Morgini, six Vedgonis, six Beuanis, six Bibis, nine Glonalis, nine Ercocinis, nine Grucimnis, twelve Uennocis, twelve Contumanis, twelve Onocis, Senchelli, Britanus from Britain, Cerrui from Armenia. All these I invoke unto my aid through Jesus Christ."

In another place we read: "The twelve Conchennaighi, with the two Senchells in Cill Achaidh, I invoke unto my aid through Jesus Christ."

The foregoing list of Bishops belonging to Killeigh may seem strange to many of our readers. Indeed it requires considerable study and interpretation from us all.

Firstly, we may state that there was a short period of time in all our ancient monasteries when, it would appear, almost all the monks were Bishops. This was a very unusual arrangement. It would seem to have grown out of the idea that a Bishop had the fullness of priesthood by reason of his ordination and consecration and that therefore he received greater grace and was better disposed to spirituality and to monastic life. This was an idea that did not receive approval from the Universal Church. The word Bishop means an overseer or shepherd, one who has a flock. But these Bishop/monks did not have a flock (or flocks).

Neither did they have dioceses. In the course of time they received another description; they were called 'choir-bishops'(Latin, chorepiscopi). But however they were described, they did not win ecclesiastical authority. Bishops, as we know them, have jurisdiction or ecclesiastical authority or the right and power of directing and regulating for the spiritual welfare of those committed to their

care. Those chorepiscopi did not have such jurisdiction, for they had no one to direct, though they were genuine Bishops and had Bishop's power - supposing they had a flock. Eventually, the whole matter of their existence was discussed at two synods of Irish Bishops - the first in the year 1110 - the Synod of Rathbreasil; the second the Synod of Kells, somewhat later. It was decided that the Order of Choir-bishops be allowed to die out gradually, their place to be filled with Arch-priests or rural deans. These Synods, Rathbreasil and Kells, also regularised the boundaries of Dioceses and Parishes and set them up very much as they exist today.

Now to return to our Litany of St. Aengus and its list of Bishops.

The names seem very unusual to us. The last three names give us the least difficulty and also give us to key to interpret the remaining names.

Senchelli are our two St. Senchells. Britanus from Britain means simply an Englishman from England. From these we learn that the Feilire was written in Latin and also that, with the exception of Britanus and Cerrui from Armenia, all the names are in the plural number; likewise the names are descriptive, telling us the country or town from which these men came.

Cerrui from Armenia is interesting for a number of reasons: Armenia is a country of Western Asia, lying between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. It is no longer an independent country, though readers may have heard from radio, news of the 'Armenians.' The Church there dates from almost the time of the Apostles and was formerly so important that it was known as the Armenian Church with a status and prestige parallel with the Greek Church. When the country lost its civil independence it was divided between Russia, Persia and Turkey, Turkey getting the greatest portion. So we have clear evidence from the Feilire of Aengus that an Armenian citizen became a choir-bishop in Killeigh.

With regard to the remaining names in this Litany of Aengus, one writer has attempted to interpret them as follows: The names are descriptive names indicating the place, town or country of origin. Notice the numbers, indicating that men came in groups, thus: Budocii were a number of people from Budua, a town in Lusitania in modern Portugal. Canocis were three people from Canopicus, a town in North Africa; Morgini from Morgynia, a town in Sicily. Vedgonii were six monks from Vesonna, a town in Aquitania, a part of Gaul near the Pyrenees; Benanis, native of Bóón, a town of Pontus, the country adjoining the Black Sea. Bibis, inhabitants of a town called Bebia, by which name two towns are known, one in lower Italy, the second in Etruria in Italy. Glonalis, possibly a Greek town, Clonalii or Kleinalia, Erocinis, the Herates, a people of Cisalpine Gaul. Grucimnis - perhaps a corruption of. Graecismus, a Greek or a Greek speaker; Uennocis from Onesiae, a place in Gallia Aquitania, near the Pyrenees; Contumanis, natives of Candanum, a town of Dacie on the Danube, modern Wallachia and Transylvania; Onocis, natives of Onne, a town of Arabia Felix on the Arabian Gulf.

The foregoing is at least some attempt to identify the people concerned and to explain the Litany to us. No claim is made that the identification is accurate. If any of our widely dispersed readers can discover errors or improve on the interpretation, we would be very glad to hear from them. It should be remarked that the Litany of St. Aengus, which gives us this list of Killeigh Bishops was written in Latin and metrically, that is, in poetic form. Again, the ancient writers, particularly the poets, had an intense devotion to the Holy Trinity; hence they loved the number three or its multiples, six, nine, twelve, etc. Their devotion tended to overcome their accuracy. We are not suggesting that the numbers in the Litany are not exact or accurate, but we think we need not give too much attention to the numbers - at least they indicate that there was a number of people from various places. Nevertheless, the litany - for it was a litany seeking the prayers of those in Heaven - gives us a very good insight into the life and type of persons of our early monastery - a

place of very great sanctity, so spiritual that its former inmates were considered worthy to be asked to make intercession for us in Heaven; a place of peace and prayer for men of all nations.

One last note about the Litany: It begins by saying "Thrice fifty holy bishops with twelve pilgrims under Senchell the Elder, a priest, Senchell, the younger, a Bishop, and the twelve Bishops who settled in Cill Achaid, Dromfata in Hy-Failghi." The number thrice fifty which amounts to 150 is much greater than the total number of those identified by their place of origin. This may be accounted for either, because Irish monks are not specifically identified, or because St. Aengus did not know the place of origin of the remainder, or because, as we have just noticed, the numbers suit the meter of the poetic litany.

The mention of "twelve pilgrims under Senchell, the Elder a priest; Senchell, the younger, a bishop and the twelve bishops who settled in Cill Achaid" seems to the present writer to indicate that when St. Senchell came to Killeigh he brought with him twelve companions. The litany uses the word "pilgrims" (Latin, peregrini). This word was commonly used to designate a person who left his own locality to go to another place to promote the Glory of God. In this connection we find that St. Columba took a number of companions with him when he went to Iona in Scotland; likewise, St. Columbanus when he went to Europe and as he continued to change from place to place in Europe, setting up more and more monasteries, always took twelve companions with him - leaving behind others to continue the maintenance of the monasteries. These travelling companions were known as peregrini or pilgrims. The number twelve derives from Our Lord's choosing twelve Apostles.

The mention of twelve bishops under Senchell, the younger, is possibly a repetition for poetic purposes or it may indicate that when the younger Senchell began monastic life elsewhere and later moved to join his relative in Killeigh, again bringing the usual twelve companions.

We know little more about St. Senchell, the younger. He is stated to have been a relative of "The Elder," perhaps a nephew. St. Senchell the Elder lived to be a very old man; 'some say 130 years old. The two Senchells died in the same year 549, the Elder on 26th March, the younger on 25th June. In this year a great plague prevailed throughout all Ireland. Because of it, St. Kieran of Clonmacnoise also died, having been in Clonmacnoise one year.

St. Aengus in the Feilire states that the 26th March was annually observed as the "Feast of the two perennial Senchells of vast Cill Achaidh." We do not know whether the word "vast" applies to the Abbey or to the area served by it or both. The death of St. Senchell, the Elder, was the occasion of very great grief. The Martyrology of Donegal says of him: The men of Heaven, the men of earth, a surrounding host, thought that the day of judgement was the death of Seancheall. There came not, there will not come from Adam, one more austere, more strict in piety; There came not, there will not come, all say it, another Saint more welcome to the men of Heaven.

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Why come to Ireland?

A number of questions may occur to readers. For example How did it happen that so many from all over Britain, the Continent and even Asia had heard about the Abbey of Killeigh - a remote inland place in this little island of Ireland and what attraction had it for them? Even to us, moderns, with all our ease of travel, it is a very long and expensive journey from Armenia to Ireland. In those days of the fifth and sixth century it must have been a most demanding journey, requiring the utmost dedication to complete it.

To begin to understand this, one ought to be familiar with conditions worldwide in those centuries. There were two main factors operating worldwide: The first factor was the increasing knowledge of Christianity -its teaching of peace to men of goodwill, its general, philosophy of justice among people of uprightness of character, and its clear teaching about God and His purpose of life.

In our last chapter I stated that Armenia had become one of the very important centres of Christianity - so much that we still speak of the Armenian Church. In addition, in the country just south of Armenia, the Emperor, Constantine, from whom Constantinople (now Istanbul) took its name, had become a Christian and had made Christianity a State religion. Christianity was spreading all along the Mediterranean Seaboard. St. James, the Apostle, had preached in Spain, to which, it is thought, St. Paul also reached. By the sixth century, our own Irish Saints had begun their missionary journeys abroad - St. Columba to Iona in Scotland, St. Columbanus to the Continent of Europe, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy. Everywhere people were experiencing the joy, the peace, the knowledge of Christ. So there arose in many hearts the desire to serve Christ in as perfect a manner as possible.

During these same four to five hundred years from the death of Christ, the Roman Empire had been dominant in a very great portion of the world - not only in Britain, but in Gaul or France and all along the Mediterranean Coast. We all know since our schooldays that the Romans had conquered and occupied Palestine in the time of Our Lord. They had penetrated not only into the North of the Mediterranean, but into the South also, Ethiopia, the Sudan, and all North Africa. They had set up great organisations of Transport and Communications, developing trade, shipping, commerce and agriculture. People living in England are well aware of Roman remains in that country - of military barracks, prisons, walls around the more important towns. Who could be unaware of the great Roman system of roadways, for example, the Great North Road. The story of St. Patrick reminds us of the Roman soldiers in Britain, but also of the shipping ability of the Irish who could make a raid on the English Coast and come back with a load full of slaves. The Romans, of course, never got as far as Ireland. That may be due to the fact that by the time they had organised Britain, they had become worn-out. Just as in modern times, those who come into too much property may soon lose it. The cost of upkeep becomes too great. So it was with Rome. I quote one historian: "On December 31st 406 a vast horde of Germanic tribes pierced the Rhine frontier at Mainz and swept like a tidal wave through Trier, Tournai, Rheims, Arras, Amiens and on towards Paris, Orleans, Tours. The army passed through Aquitaine to the Pyrenees and eastwards to Toulouse. Of the devastation left in its train, the pithiest phrase about it was 'All Gaul burned like one gigantic funeral pyre.' By Autumn 409 they had penetrated Spain. A year later, Rome fell. The days of the Roman Empire of the West were numbered."

The invaders were heathens or heretics called Arians. Raw, rough, cruel, bloodthirsty were their characteristics. The invaders swept eastwards also and soon reached Armenia. Such unstable and turbulent conditions continued for the next two to three hundred years - not only in Europe, but East as well, as far as India and down into modern Turkey. During the years 622-628 all the

Christian people of Armenia were evacuated to the Tigris Valley. No place was safe. War was a constant companion. One sad result of all this was that the world was left open and prepared for the spread of Islam, which is Mohammedanism.

It is no wonder that peaceful people longed and sought for peace. They could not find it from Britain to Asia, North or South. This gave rise to the great emigration to Ireland. Knowledge of Ireland had increased through the great success of the Irish Missionaries. The Romans had built roads throughout Europe; shipping was very available. Ireland alone was peaceful. The Brehon Law of the country had been revised by St. Patrick and brought into conformity with Christianity. This law was accepted in every part of the country. The country was well known for its hospitality. I will quote again St. Bede:

"Many Englishmen, both of noble and yeoman blood, had gone there (Ireland) for the sake of sacred knowledge and of stricter rule of life. Some of these yielded themselves to keep monastic discipline; others rejoiced in study, passing from cell to cell of the masters of learning. All of them the Irish welcomed and most gladly and zealously gave them their daily food, with books and the teaching of schools, entirely free of charge."

St. Willibrand went to Ireland, according to the ancient writer and historian, Alcuin

"Because he heard that scholarship flourished there and also because he was attracted by the reputation of certain holy men who, despoiled of this world, but full of God, were there, far away, drinking in daily, in their solitary life, the most sweet fruits of contemplation."

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Why to Killeigh?

So we have the motive and the means of coming to Ireland; but still I often wonder why Killeigh? I think this is a point to ponder carefully. Writers and historians are accustomed to mention the great early Monasteries, for example, Armagh, Clonard, Durrow, Clonenagh, etc. - seldom they seem to mention Killeigh. One might reply and point out that there were monasteries all over the place - in almost every parish and our midland area had perhaps the densest concentration of monasteries. It would be impossible to mention all of them. Nevertheless, Killeigh was one of the oldest of them, founded by a disciple and companion of St. Patrick, St. Senechell, and dating from as early perhaps, as 512. As we already learned, St. Senechell had his work done and his fame established in 549, the year of his death - the same year in which St. Kieran of Clonmacnoise died, and the great Clonmacnoise Monastery was only one year in existence in that year. Dr. Comerford, in his History of the Diocese of Kildare, quotes from the Irish Annalists that in the year 1163

"Glendalough was burned with the house of Kieran, the house of Kevin and the Church of the two Senchells." He then goes on to quote the historian, Petrie, who writes

"I am disposed to conclude that the unnamed Church at Glendalough is that called by the Annalists 'The Regles of the two Senchells and he surmises that these two churches were built by St. Kevin in honour of St. Kieran and in honour of the two Senchells and he adds that St. Kieran (Clonmacnoise) was the dearest friend of St. Kevin.

Very Rev. Myles Ronan, D.Litt. Historian, in his guide-book to Glendalough states that St. Kevin built St. Kieran's Church, Glendalough, in honour of his friend, the Abbot of Clonmacnoise, and another in honour of the two Senchells of Killeigh, Kings County. A Senchell had his church, Domnach Senchelle, at Donoughmore, near Dunlavin, Co. Wicklow. St. Senchell was born in Co. Wicklow.

Fr. Ronan also quotes the Annals for the year 1163:

"Glendalough was burned with Cro Ciaran, Cro Caimhghin and the Church of the two Senchells." Fr. Ronan adds that "the foundations of St. Kieran's church were found in 1875; those of the two Senchells have not yet been unearthed."

The importance of all this seems to me to be that St. Kevin, who is typical of all the early Irish Saints, held the two Senchells in equal esteem and honour with St. Kieran, the founder of the great Clonmacnoise. It was a great and a very unusual honour indeed that St. Kevin, the founder of Glendalough should build two churches in honour of the founders of Clonmacnoise and of Holy Cross, Killeigh, and within a hundred years of their deaths. St. Kevin died in 618; the churches were burned in 1163 - a period of about 500 years. With such honour awarded to the Abbey of Killeigh, it's so close a relationship with both Clonmacnoise and Glendalough -is it any wonder that those seeking a place of prayer and scholarship should turn their faces to Killeigh? What a lesson to us today that our two patron saints were held in so high esteem.

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Church organisation in Offaly

Killeigh was indeed a very important place in Church organisation. The Abbey served a two-fold purpose, that of being a monastery and of being a parish church. There were no other priests in the area. The priests of the Abbey served not only the spiritual needs of the monks, but also the spiritual needs of the whole surrounding clan or tribe area. It must be noted that Ireland had its own peculiar social and political structure - unlike what was to be found elsewhere. Ireland was structured according to the Brehon Laws. According to this law, the clan or tribe was the social unit; the clan owned everything in its area and governed everything in its area.

So when Church organisation and areas were being set up, the areas of organisation were based on the clan and the areas coincided with the clan area. It was in this way that the area of what we now call a parish was decided. Accordingly, in the earliest years of the Abbey, the area to be served by the Abbey was the ancient area of Uí bFáil (Offaly) or the O'Connor territory. As years went by, the O'Connor clan subdivided and so also the church area. Firstly, the O'Dempseys and the O'Dunnes were descended from the O'Connors; later these again subdivided. Killeigh Abbey continued to serve the O'Connor territory and for some years at least part of the O'Dempsey territory. An O'Dempsey - as we have already noticed - had a residence in Ballykane. Killeigh was then the oldest and the original parish of all ancient Offaly. Even when the other parishes came into being with their independent clergy, Killeigh retained its dominance and dignity in church organisation.

We find that when the Diocesan Chapter came into being, Killeigh became the centre of the Deanery and the Chancellor of the Diocese of Kildare was always Parish Priest of Killeigh. Evidence of this is clear from the inscriptions over two graves in Urney and Raheen. The first at Urney:

"here heth the body of Rev. Edward Kavanagh, Parish Priest of Geashill and Dean of Kildare, who departed this life the 8th day of October 1769."

The second at Raheen:

"Beneath this stone he the remains of the Rev. William Kennedy, Dean of Kildare and Rector of Geashill, etc., who departed this life on 8th September 1795, aged 69."

In the original diocese of Kildare, there were two deaneries, Killeigh and Naas. When this information came to my notice, I was rather surprised that Naas, not Kildare should be a Deanery of the Diocese. But on further thought it becomes clear that the Bishop himself lived at Kildare and therefore took care of that area. The Deans of the Chapter are known in Church law as Vicar's Forane. The words, Vicar Forane, mean one who takes care or charge (Vicar) out of doors (forane), that is, at a distance from the Bishop. This arrangement assists the Bishop as well as the laity by bringing the Bishop's authority within easier reach of all. These Deans or Vicars Forane are the successors of the Choir-Bishops of whom we spoke earlier.

In the course of time the parishes, which we now know, were established with their own priests who were not monks but were what we now call secular priests. But as far as Killeigh was concerned the monks of the Abbey had been and for long continued to be in charge of the Parish. For this purpose in order to overcome distance and the difficulty of travel, they set up sub-stations. At these sub-stations some of the monks would live - one of them becoming the superior, but all being subject to the Abbot of Killeigh. It is probable that in the earliest days of Christianity all the other present parishes of ancient Offaly were sub-stations of Killeigh Abbey. This arrangement of sub-stations or branches accounts for the existence of Urney, Temple Tyrine, Ballykane, Geashill, Anaharvey Fenter, Killurin. We may refer to these sub-stations later.

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Monasteries as centres of parish life.

In our last issue we mentioned two matters which deserve some further consideration: These were the question of monks, rather than secular priests looking after the care of the laity; the second question was the existence of sub-stations to Killeigh Abbey.

When **St. Patrick** began his conversion of the Irish people to Christianity, he followed the practise existing on the Continent of Europe where he had been prepared for the priesthood and appointed Bishop. In Europe he found the Church organised into parishes under the care of secular priests. In addition, in some of these parishes there was a monastery or even more than one monastery. The monasteries contained men who were not priests but were merely under the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, whose aim was to seek spiritual perfection by following an approved regular rule of life, especially in the matter of prayer. These monasteries always had within them a few who were ordained priests, in order to provide for the spiritual and sacramental needs of the other Brothers.

Very often, but not always, one of these priests became the Superior or the Abbot. In the monastery, a monk might be directed, in virtue of his vow of obedience, to prepare for ordination and become a priest. The monastery would contain in this way as many priests as were necessary for the spiritual welfare of the community and of all lay people who depended on the monastery. In addition, some monks might desire to become priests - though not strictly necessary for the spiritual life of the monastery. Such monks - being bound by their vow of obedience - might be permitted to be ordained. St. Francis of Assisi is the best example of a monk or friar and of a superior who never became a priest for the reason that he did not think himself worthy to be a priest.

The ancient Irish monasteries seem to have contained a large number of priests and indeed, as we noticed previously, even a large number of bishops. Strangely, in the early years of Irish Christianity it would seem that the monasteries dominated in the pastoral care of the laity, though St. Patrick is well known to have set up a parochial system rather than a monastic system. St. Patrick himself, of course, had been trained as a monk and had lived as a monk for all the years before he returned to Ireland. Many writers think that St. Patrick continued to live the life of a monk in Ireland in so far as his work permitted him.

Eventually, throughout Ireland the parochial system - as we know it prevailed and parishes came into the care of secular priests. That this should happen can be more easily understood if we remember that ancient Offaly stretched from Geashill to Kildare town and beyond it down to Monasterevan and back to Emo. In the **early centuries there were but two large monastic centres - St. Brigid's, Kildare, and St. Senchills, Killeigh.**

There was for some time a small monastic centre or convent in the parish of Rhode where St. Brigid became a nun at Croghan. As the number of Christians increased it would have been an almost impossible task for the monasteries to provide for the needs of so many in so wide a territory. But the great over-riding reason for the staffing of parishes with secular priests was that St. Patrick so established the practise.

Nevertheless, in the case of Killeigh it would seem that the monks continued to look after the needs of the parish for many centuries. I have found a record

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Sub-stations of Killeigh

Parish of Geashill

One issue of the Kildare Archaeological Society Journal states that the Parish priest of Geashill entered into an agreement with the monks that he would have the right to enter the Churches of Geashill, Ballykeane and Killeigh twice a year for the purpose of collecting his dues.

We do not know the precise date of the coming of secular priests to the parish. The record just referred to indicates that while the monks were in Killeigh the secular parish priest lived in Geashill and the parish may have been known as the parish of Geashill in those past days. We began this issue by noting two questions, the first we have just dealt with - the staffing of the parish; the second concerns the matter of sub-stations to the Abbey of Holy Cross, Killeigh. Dr. Comerford in his history of the Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin states

"The church of St. Mary's, Geashill, was a rectory of the Priory of Holy Cross Killeigh".

We do not know the date of the establishment of this rectory, just as we do not know the date of the establishment of the other sub-stations or rectories. Dr. Comerford further states

"That it was at a synod, most probably held at Geashill, about the year 550, that sentence of excommunication is related to have been passed on St. Columba."

Dr. Comerford then quotes from 'Life' by Adamnan. I should state here that Adamnan was a monk of St. Columba's monastery at Iona, Scotland, who became a successor to St. Columba and wrote an account of his life. From that 'life' Dr. Comerford quotes as follows:

"A certain synod had issued a sentence of excommunication, not justly, as afterwards appeared, against Columba on account of some venal and excusable proceedings. On his arrival at said synod, Brendan, who had

seen him at a distance, rose up and saluted him with great respect and embraced him. Some of the elders then, taking Brendan apart, expostulated with him for his having shown such attention to a person whom they had excommunicated. He replied 'If you had seen what the Lord has been pleased to make manifest to me this day concerning this elect of His, whom you are dishonouring, you would never have passed that sentence, whereas the Lord does not in any way excommunicate him, in virtue of your wrong sentence, but rather still exalts him more and more.' On their asking how this could be, he told them that he saw a luminous pillar advancing before this man of God, when on his way, and holy angels accompanying him through the plain. Therefore, he added, I dare not treat with contempt him whom I see

pre-ordained by God as a guide of nations to life. Upon which the proceedings were withdrawn and the whole synod paid him the greatest respect and veneration."

"This synod was held at a place called Hiseilte, or the district of Scilte, which Colgan conjectures, with every appearance of justice, to have been the same as Maggesilde in Leinster, after contracted into Geisille, now Geashill."

From this quotation we learn two pieces of information, namely, that there was a well formed community of Christians in Geashill by the year 550, well established with meeting places; secondly, that this community must have been very highly esteemed to be honoured by the presence, amongst many other distinguished people, of St. Brendan and the very remarkable St. Columba. Soon after this synod St. Columba left Ireland and went to Scotland where he founded the great monastery of Iona in 563. He had already founded the great monasteries of Derry and Durrow, Tullamore, as well as Kells, which gives its name to the Book of Kells. Indeed there are those who think that St. Columba wrote the Book of Kells. Durrow Tullamore was one of the great, if not the greatest, monasteries and educational establishments in Western Europe. One writer points out that it was one thousand years old before the Dominicans founded the great University of Oxford. If Durrow had been allowed to continue, it would have rivalled in greatness Oxford or any of the European Universities.

Dr. Comerford states that the priory or rectory of St. Mary's, Geashill, occupied the site now occupied by the Church of Ireland. I stated earlier that in ancient times Geashill was known as Bri-Damh, translated as 'The Hill of Oxen.' I have been at a loss to discover how this name could be given to the village of Geashill. In spite of the name Geashill, the village is in a valley, not on a hill. I have come to the conclusion that Bri-Damh is the original Irish name of that townland that lies between Curragh and Geashill. It is on the side of a hill; its present name is English and of English origin. Geashill then was a sub-station or rectory of Holy Cross Abbey, Killeigh. While the monks were there, the secular Parish Priest lived at or in the Geashill area.

We also know that before Emancipation, the Parish Priest lived in Anaharvey in the house now owned by the Mrs Choiseul and in which the place of the Parish Priest's altar is still pointed out. It is likely that Fr. Kavanagh and Fr. William Kennedy, both of whom we referred to earlier, lived there as well as Fr. James Dowling who is buried outside Ballinagar Church. The period of their lives would be about 100 years. Fr. Dowling died in 1825. We do not know the date of Fr. Kavanagh's arrival in the parish, but it is likely to be about 1725 or 1730, Fr. Edward Fox preceded Fr. Kavanagh. He lived at Shranure and, according to Dr. Comerford, he is buried in Ballinagar - the headstone of his grave facing in a direction opposite to the rest. This arrangement is usual for a priest's grave and is said to recall that he stands facing the people when instructing them. We do not know precisely the date of Fr. Fox's appointment to the parish, but we do know that he was here in 1704 - from British Government documents. Fr. James Kinsella succeeded to Fr. Dowling in 1825. I believe it was he who transferred from the Geashill area to Killeigh in 1827.

Urney

A second sub-station to the Abbey of Killeigh was Urney. The name comes from the Irish name for prayer. Nowadays, we would call it an oratory or a place of prayer. We know from the Inquisitions of Queen Elizabeth 1 of England that Urney was a rectory of the Abbey of Killeigh. In earlier times the place was known as Cluain-an-Dobhair. We learn from the Four Masters that there was at least one martyr there. The Norsemen killed Flann Ua Cathaill (Cahil) in 938. St. Cronan is said to be its

patron, whose feast day is 30th August. Dr. Comerford quotes the earlier historian, Dr. MaeGeoghegan, who was a bishop of Kildare, as saying that there was another church in this district called Kilmalogue. Dr. MaeGeoghegan compiled a list of all the churches in the Diocese of Kildare. He says that Kilmalogue belongs to the Parish of Nurney. Dr. MaeGeoghegan was bishop of Kildare during the years 1629-1644.

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Ballykeane

Another sub-station of the Priory of Killeigh was Ballykeane. Again, the official inquiry, called Inquisitions, made on the occasion of the closing down (dissolution) of the monasteries is the source of our information. I quote from them as they are written:

"The Abbot of Killeigh was possessed also of the rectory of Ballykeane. The said rectory of Ballykeane extendeth into the townlands of Ballykeane, Enaghan, Kilconye, Corbailhe, Urney, Ballinboher, Aghenanoghe, Clonyghgawny, Clonygawiebeg, Tiren, Backecrewe, and Sharaneure."

From this statement it is not clear how much land the monastery owned, but if we are to assume that most of the land in these townlands belonged to the monks, there must have been a very numerous community in Ballykeane. Another point about the statement is the inclusion of the townlands of Urney and Tiren. Are we to conclude that the Superior of the Ballykeane Community was also the Superior of both the Urney and Teampul Tyrine Communities? That may be possible and I think likely because the Inquisition states there was only "a chapel in Tyrine, with three acres of glebe-land."

Teampul Tyrine

It is clear that Teampul Tyrine was a rectory of the Abbey of Killeigh and as such belonged to the Abbot of Killeigh. In addition to the three acres here, there was also a graveyard, which dates back to the time of the Abbey. There are two blessed wells here which are still venerated, but not to the extent of their former use, for their curative properhes.

"The custom was to use the upper one for internal and the lower one for external application."

There was formerly a Patron Day here - the date of which is still remembered - 24th June - the Feast of St. John the Baptist.

The name Teampul Tyrine has always puzzled me. I have often wondered what it means. The word Teampul is easy enough; it means a church and it generally refers to a more ornate or larger church. But Tyrine? One could guess tir-een, a little land, could that refer to the 3 acres? I have often wondered whether Tyrine was a corruption of Kieran. I understand that in Portarlinton parish there is a townland called Kilkieran - so called in memory of Ciaran Cluana Sasta, a monk of the monastery of Clonsast. For the same reason could Teampul Tyrine be more properly Teampul Ciaran?

Anaharvey

Anaharvey has already been noted because of Fr. Fox's grave there. Dr. Comerford is of the opinion that there was not a church there, though there is some trace of local tradition that there was. We know for certain that it dates back to 1704, but we have no evidence that it goes back to 1500 or earlier. However, there is a strong local tradition that there was a Mass rock in Ballinagar, and Dr. Comerford states that this rock was used as an altar for Mass during the penal times.

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Fenter

The Inquisition states

"The said Abbot was also possessed of the following rectories: Killeigh with the Chapels of Killeigh and Fenter.'

From this statement it is clear that there was a chapel in Fenter away back in monastic times and that it existed at the same time as the chapel in Killeigh. The word 'chapel,' strictly speaking, refers to a place of worship attached to some community such as a Convent or Christian Brothers' house. During the penal days the word got extended to any place of Catholic worship, because Catholics were left without any means of assisting at Mass except in the secrecy and privacy of a private house or in the open air. Eventually, any place, which was used for the celebration of Mass, became known as a Chapel. We have a lot to be grateful for nowadays since we can call our public places of worship by the name of Church, while a place of worship in a private place, convent, hospital, etc. is still properly called a Chapel. If we are to take the Inquisition statement in a strict sense and I think we must - it is a statement in English used properly by Englishmen - we must assume that the

Chapels of Killeigh and Fenter were parts of a monastic building. The Abbey structure in Killeigh makes it clear that the place of worship was part of the monastic building. The same must be true in the case of Fenter, which means that not only was there a chapel in Fenter, but that it was part of a monastic building, or residence. In all probability it would have been a wooden structure; hence there are no remains of it. It was common practise for the monasteries to house on the land those monks who worked the land. On the great Feasts, Christmas, Easter, perhaps even on Sundays, those monks would return to the Abbey for Mass and the Sacraments. The Queen at the Dissolution confiscated the monastic chapel and residence of Fenter, together with the lands. Dr. Comerford states that

"the Chapel at Fenter was replaced by the humble thatched Chapel of the Penal Days, of which no vestige now remains, but that there are old inhabitants still living (1883) who heard Mass in it in their childhood."

During this period of the penal days there was no Catholic place of worship in Killeigh. The thatched chapel of Fenter was replaced in 1808 by what is now the old chapel of Killeigh. This has now also disappeared and is replaced by a new Church

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Killurin

In our last chapter I referred to all the outposts or outstations of the Abbey of Killeigh, except Killurin. I left Killurin to this issue because it has a longer history than those already considered. It is probably older than the others because of its *connection with* the attempt on St. Patrick's life. Because of that attempt, it may have been a place of very special reverence for St. Senchell or his early disciples. St. Senchell, as we have seen, was baptised by St. Patrick and became a disciple and follower of St. Patrick, and so it is possible that he was in St. Patrick's retinue on the occasion of that attempt. If he was, there can be hardly any doubt but that he or his immediate successors would have a great desire to evangelise that area. But whatever the date of the monastic foundation there, there is no doubt but that there was not only a Church there, but also a monastic house. I quote Dr. Comerford:

"Within five and a half miles of Frankford, a ruin, probably that of a church and monastic house, is to be seen. Interments used to take place here and were continued up to thirty years ago; in latter years none, but unbaptised infants, were interred."

Dr. Comerford, writing in 1883, then states that Dr. MacGeoghegan recorded the chapel of Killurin in the list of chapels of the Diocese of Kildare. We learn from the Four Masters that there was also a castle in Killurin. The historian, O'Donovan, states

"No ruins of this castle now remain, but the entrenchments which surrounded it are still to be seen."

I append here extracts from two letters I have received *in* relation to Killurin. I am extremely grateful for both letters; I admire their sharing of knowledge with me and their diligence in taking time to write to me:

From George Dunne, Killurin.

re: Killurin Church - It was built in the fifth century. The ruins are still there, covered in ivy. It was built in a place called Mohie, which is a small area of West Killurin. In the 20's and 30's people came for miles around to get warts cured in what was known as the wart well. They left pennies and medals in it; it really was a holy water font. Legend has it that there is a chalice-buried near the church - some people thought it was buried in a small hill just a few yards (200) from the Church, that is known as Gurteen-Og. Legend also has it that there is a tunnel from Killurin Church to Killeigh Abbey. There is the ruins of another old church west of the Blueball and legend has it that the monks and priests went to and fro, so that Killeigh, Killurin and Blueball were linked, and it was said that the monks built a wooden road across Mohie bog so that they could get from one church to the other. I have proved this right because I cut turf off it over fifty years ago and it was down about 10 feet at that time; it was made of bits of timber, much like railway sleepers. I think this road linked them up with the old church or churches in Lynally. About 40 yards south of the old church at Killurin runs the River Sconce. Sconce means a high bank. I remember potato ridges, or perhaps they were graves, alongside the church. The held is under tillage now. I came on sheaves of flax in Mohie bog - the bog is very near the old church. Maybe the monks grew flax. Flax was put in sheaves and buried in the bogs. I heard old people saying it was used for thatching houses and the seeds were sold."

Extract from letter from Jack Dooley, Kamo, Whangarei, New Zealand, and formerly of Killurin:

"The history of the parish is very interesting, especially Killurin (to me). I remember the ruins of a building on Miss Eliza Dunne's property, but I think it was outside the Killurin boundary. There was a stone font there amongst the rubble; if you put money in this, it was supposed to cure warts. I think the fairies took it sometimes to buy the odd packet of Woodbines! However, it could well be the Church Fr. Kennedy mentions in his article."

George Dunne is incorrect in the first paragraph in thinking that the ruins in Mohie are the ruins of the original ancient church. The ruins in Mohie are, I believe, of very much later date. I hope to refer to them at some future time. The name Mohie is a very beautiful name - a real old Irish name -Magh or Moy - a plain, fiadh, a deer - when these two words are joined they become Moyfhiah - Mohia - the plain of deers or deerpark. Incidentally, I believe that Mohia is not a part of West Killurin - though it lies west of Killurin; it is a townland on its own.

The second paragraph seems to be more in accordance with the-statements of Dr. Comerford and O'Donovan. I cannot comment on Jack Dooley's letter, though it may well be that he is correct about the most ancient ruin. I welcome both letters.

So far, we have learned that there were religious houses, branches of the Abbey, in all the foregoing areas. In every case, the monks would have owned some land. Historians are agreed that development of the land to agricultural purposes was the concern of the monks, the clearing of forests, the draining of bogs, etc. The number of monks living in any area would depend largely on the extent of their land and the development to be made on it. I refer again to George Dunne's reference to a wooden road in Mohia. As we stated previously, the monks would return to the parent Abbey in Killeigh for the greater feasts, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, etc. Though each of these houses would have a superior, it did not follow that the Superior would be a priest in every case. St. Patrick himself, we are told "did not leave a bishop in every church. In some he left a priest, in others an archpriest, in others a deacon, in others a number of his household." This arrangement of sub-stations helped in the evangelisation of the whole country. I quote from the historian, Dr. McCaffrey:

"From the central houses disciples were sent to different parts of the country - generally to their own tribe - and these founded new institutions, all of which were attached in some way to the parent institute. The collections of houses, lands and subjects, thus united under a central house, are spoken of as the "Parochia" (parish). At the end of the seventh century we find quite a number of these existing in Ireland."

From this last statement we may deduce that evangelisation or conversion to Christianity was a very slow process in Ireland. It is not a fact that all Ireland was Christian at the time of the death of St. Patrick. St. Patrick has left us two documents, one of which is known as the 'Confession of St. Patrick.' In this document he expresses his disappointment that so many princes rejected his teaching. Indeed the Ard Ri or High King of Ireland was still a pagan in the early years of the sixth century. We ought not to forget that our own tribal king, the O'Connor Ui bFáile tried to kill St. Patrick. All the early Irish Saints complain that the country continues to be full of pagan superstitions. In fact, if we are honest with ourselves we will recognise that many pagan superstitions continue to this day - amongst others, think of the May bush.

To sum up about the outstations, they served to evangelise the remnants of pagans in the early centuries. So useful have they been that they continue to this day to spiritualise the lives of all our people, feeding them-with the Breed of Life.

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Confederation of Monasteries

In addition to this great union of monks in the various out-stations which had been established by the parent monastery at Killeigh, there seems to have developed, in the course of time, another union of religious houses - a sort of confederation of monasteries; a confederation of monasteries that did not have the same Saint as founder and did not belong to each other as parent and child.

One of the earliest examples of this is found in the case of a monk named Mochuda who had become a member of the monastery of Rahan. He was a Kerryman who had been associated with the great monastery of Lismore in Munster. Because of this he brought with him certain ideas and practises, which the Rahan monks did not agree with. A dispute broke out between them, with the result that Rahan wanted to expel him.

Being a stubborn Kerryman he did not want to go. As a result, Rahan appealed for help to its neighbouring monasteries of Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Clonard and Killeigh. Clonmacnoise decided to draw lots to discover which of its confederated monasteries should deal with the appeal of Rahan. The lot fell on Killeigh. Killeigh did not like the burden so it, in turn, decided to cast lots to discover which of its subordinate houses should take the burden. The lot fell on Cluain Congusa.

I have been unable to discover where this Cluain Congusa was. I am inclined to the view that it is not in the present parish of Killeigh. Previously I pointed out that Killeigh Abbey had pastoral care of most if not all the ancient area of Offaly in the early years. This incident of Mochuda happened in the year 636. It clearly indicates the two sorts of monastic union: the union of parent to child, of Killeigh to Cluain Congusa; the union of confederation between Killeigh and Clonmacnoise.

This idea of confederation is further shown when Dr. Comerford quotes the Four Masters to state that "Seanchan was abbot of Cillachaid Droma Fada and of Birra (Birr)" in the year 796. Again Dr. Comerford quotes Dr. MacGeoghegan stating that "Saint Moylervayn was Abbot of Killeighie and of the Churches of Tihelly (Teagh Teille, the house of Teille, now Tihelly, parish of Durrow, King's County) and Disert-Dermot (Castledermot, Co. Kildare)" in the year 871.

The practise of confederation was not confined to the midland area. It was common throughout the whole country. It is not clear what was the reason for it. If it had happened after the year 800 we could agree that it was for the purpose of protection against the Danes. But as we have just mentioned, it was in existence as early as 636, which is about one hundred years after the death of St. Senchell in 549. Some historians give as a reason that because of natural disasters the population had fallen and so also the number of monks. St. Senchell the senior, as we have seen, died of the plague in 549; so also did St. Senchell, the junior, St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise and St. Finnian of Clonard. A second great plague occurred in 664 when it is said that one-third of the population died - amongst many other monks, St. Manchán of Lemonaghan. Recurring plagues have been a feature of Irish history; strangely, they seem to occur about the middle of a century. In addition, there were periodic droughts, causing famine. Historians point out that because of the deaths of monks due to plague and famine, a shortage of teachers arose in their schools as well as a shortage of senior monks.

Another possible explanation might be the need to defend the monasteries against the interference of local chiefs or other lay interested people. As we have seen, some religious houses did not have ordained superiors but only lay brothers in charge. Again we find very often that some of these lay brothers would leave the monastery to pursue some personal lay interest. This being completed, we find the individual returning to the monastery. The reason of his leaving might have been to go to war against the family enemy. In this way, external interference in the internal matters of the monastery began to injure the work and discipline of the monastery. Hence the need for joint action to combat the interference.

Consideration of such interference and disturbance in the peaceful pursuit of prayer, contemplation and virtue in the religious houses arouses in us a greater admiration for the wonderful work of the monasteries. In reference to the plague of 664, the Annals of Clonmacnoise say:

"Many princes, bishops and abbots died of the said pesthence. It was called the 'Buidhe Connail' or yellow plague, sparing neither sinner nor saint."

Kilmalogue.

Earlier I mentioned that Dr. McGeoghegan had included in his list of chapels in the diocese of Kildare a chapel of Kilmalogue. This name, Kilmalogue, has puzzled me for a very long time. The only Kilmalogue I could think of was in the parish of Portarlinton, and not in the parish of Killeigh as Dr. McGeoghegan states. Now I have been very fortunate in receiving a letter from Mr T.J. Goode, who states he was born near Cloneygowan. He has had sufficient interest to check up some map he has -an Ordnance Survey map of 1838. He writes:

"The map shows in the old estate of Aghanvilla (Anvilla) near Raheen Church, about one-quarter mile south-west of Estate house, an old graveyard described as Kilmanogue Church in ruins."

I am extremely grateful for this information. I have been familiar with this graveyard, but have been perplexed with its situation and the little information available about it. I am delighted to know that this site is the Kilmanogue or Kilmalogue of Dr. McGeoghegan's list of Chapels. What a sorry site it is today!! What shame and disgrace to the individual of the past who grabbed the Catholic burial-place, pulled down and removed all the ruins of its chapel, left most of it unbounded and wide open to cattle and sheep, enclosing a small portion for his own family burial, despising the religious rites of those already buried, the enclosure walls being constructed in some cases of the head-stones of the Catholics who had gone before him. Mr Goode also states that there is another old church in ruins, described as "site of R.C. Chapel" in the townland of Killelery in a held called 'Chapel Held' to the rear of a large estate called 'Glebe East.'

He also states that the map shows the site of an old chapel and burial ground called 'Templeshenane' - one-quarter mile north of Bogtown Cross in Dunne's held.

Previously, in referring to Templetyrene, I wondered whether it should not more properly be called Templekieran. I am told that the 1838 map supports this supposition. My own view is that this chapel was named after a St. Kieran who belonged to Clonsast and was known as 'Ciaran Cluana Sasta.' There is a townland near Clonsast called Raheenakeeran. Dr. Comerford, in his history of the diocese, states that "in the adjoining parish of Portarlinton" there is another "townland called Killkieran. "

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Troubled times

The people of Offaly and the monks of Killeigh lived in comparative peace in the years up to 800. From 800 onwards, for about 200 years, conditions changed. Instead of being a privilege and joy to live in or near a monastery or abbey, it became a great risk to normal living, contentment and peace.

First of all, the Clan Ui Falghi began to change. Through the preceding centuries there had been battles between local chiefs, or even on a greater scale between the Leinstermen, Munstermen and Meathmen. The result of all these battles left things much as they had been. But in the year 789, according to the Annals of Ulster, two cousins of the Lords of Offaly, Hugh and Aengus by name, disputed which of them should succeed to the chieftaincy. Aengus defeated Hugh in battle at Kilclonfert. This Hugh had a younger brother, Riagan, and a second brother, Flaithnia. Riagan was allotted the land and territory near and around the Sheve Blooms. This territory then became known as Ui Riagan, and Riagan, its Chief, became the ancestor of the O'Dunnes: eventually the territory became known as O'Dunne country.

The second brother, Flaithnia, succeeded Aengus as Lord of Offaly. He was killed in battle at Rathangan in 807. A first cousin who became the grandfather of Conor and the ancestor of O'Connor-Faly succeeded him. This O'Connor-Faly became the father of a son called Maolughra. This Maolughra was given the territory east of the clanship. The territory and tribe then became known as Clan Mahere. Clan Mahere comprised the country of the barony of Upper Philipstown, of Portnahinch in Laois, the district of Narragh and Rheban and barony of West Offaly in Co. Kildare.

Ui Riagan comprised Clonaslee, Rosenallis, and Sheve Blooms. So now, old Ui bFailge was divided into three parts. Though this division arose, the people of the three areas continued for long to be known as Offalians. Maolughra became the ancestor of the O'Dempsey; Clan Mahere is sometimes known as O'Dempsey country. In subsequent years, though family and blood related, the chiefs of the three areas, were frequently at war with each other. This became their great weakness and undoing. At this very time - about the year 800 - a great and disastrous peril and trial was brewing.

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The Danes

The Danes were becoming familiar with the coasts, the land, the wealth of Ireland; in a word, the Danish invasion was about to take place and develop for the next 200 years. The unity of the Irish might have saved them; their division, dissension and self-seeking was ruinous. These Danes were described variously as Danes or Norsemen. In fact, they came from Scandinavia, either Denmark or Norway. In Ireland they became known either as Finngalls or Dubh-galls. The Fingalls (white strangers) because they were fair-haired, were from Norway. The Dubh-galls, or black strangers, because they were of dark complexion, came from Denmark. In religion they were pagans. They sought to ensure the triumph of paganism. Their leader, Thorgils, better known as Turgesius,

caused himself to be proclaimed in Armagh the head of the religion of Ireland. His wife, Otta, was enthroned on the high altar of the great Church of Clonmacnoise and from there proceeded to deliver her pagan oracles. Thorgils was named after Thor, their pagan god - god of war. Their belief and way of life was the way of war. They believed that Thor would reward them after death and consequently the more daring, savage and warlike they were, the greater the reward they expected.

Their invasion began in small raids around the Irish coasts. These raids grew in frequency and soon they were able to force their way inland. They ravaged the whole coastline, East, West, North and South. Dr. D'Alton, in his History of Ireland, states "the trembling natives along the coast saw with dismay their lands laid desolate, their homes in ruins, their cattle and sheep carried off, their Churches burned, their sacred vessels profaned by impious hands, their monks and priests massacred, their sons led away into slavery, their daughters to slavery and dishonour."

Very Rev. Dr. Moran, Cardinal Moran, writes,

"More than once they seemed to have secured for themselves almost a complete mastery over a great part of the island. The chieftains of the subjugated districts were led away to work as slaves for the Danish Lords; a Danish soldier was billeted, not as a guest, but as a master, in every household; each church and monastery had a pagan Chieftain appointed to it and a heavy tax was imposed as well on those who administered as on those who received the sacred rites of religion. Wherever the invaders went the schools were closed and the teachers slain, and it was an imperative command that all books which were met with, should be burned or carried away."

In sadness the annalists add:

'No Irish Chief was able to give deliverance from the foreigners because of the excellence of their armour, the greatness of their prowess, their strength and valour and the excess of their thirst for the fruitful, grassy lands of Erin. '"

In our last chapter we saw the inhumanly harsh and penitential nature of the rule imposed by the Danes on the Irish people in their own homes. This imposition and rule was to *continue for over two hundred years*.

As we might expect, there were many and continual efforts on the part of the Irish Clans to overcome and remove it. Through the years, hence battles took place in almost every part of the country, frequently resulting in the deaths of thousands. In spite of some Irish success, the Danes were able to establish footholds, first In **Limerick**, then in **Dublin, Waterford, Wexford** and **Wicklow**.

Urged on by success, new hordes of armed men, under new leaders, continued to come into the country, making their defeat more difficult. However, the first seventy or one hundred years were the worst and most destructive. In those years they had robbed all the gold and precious ornaments, imposed severe tribute or tax of gold on all the inhabitants, leaving the Irish people in poverty.

The Monasteries were to suffer most. They were the first objects of attack. They had the gold and silver vessels used in the service of the Church; they had the precious shrines of the Saints. But

there was another reason: The Monasteries could be described as the Banks of their day. They were used by many for the safe-keeping of their precious articles, knowing that the Monasteries were respected even by the most lawless of the Irish. But respect for places of Christian religion had no part in the thinking of Danish herce heathen fanaticism. In dishonouring Christ and His Church, they felt that they were honouring their own pagan gods and for this reason they not only desecrated the Churches and laid the Monasteries in ruins, but they also massacred the priests and monks.

The Danes invaded and attacked not only Ireland but also **France, England, Wales and Scotland**. They attacked, among many others, St. Columba's Monastery at **Iona** the same St. Columba who founded the great Monastery of **Durrow**, Tullamore. At Iona "they burned the monastic buildings, carried away the gold and silver vessels of the Church and as well as the smoking ruins of the monastery they left the slaughtered remains of sixty-eight monks." But savage as that was, the fate of the Monastery of Bangor, near Belfast, - one of the greatest Irish Monasteries was worse where they murdered nine hundred of its monks. They attacked Armagh three times within one month, where "they murdered the monks like sheep." Civilians also were attacked and killed. They made no distinction in their total barbarism. Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Kildare, Glendalough, Clonenagh, all were ravaged.

Throughout the land no Monastery escaped. In the year 800 - as we have previously mentioned - **Killeigh** also was attacked and "its new oratory burned."

In 840, The Four Masters record "the destruction of Cill-Achaidh Droma Fada by the foreigners." In 843 "An army was led by the foreigners of Ath-Cliath (the Danes of Dublin) to Cluana-an-Dobhair and burned the fold of Cill-Achaidh. Nuadhat, the son of Saiger, was martyred by them Cluana-an-Dobhair was the name given to the monastic sub-station at Urney - some ruins remain still.

It is remarkable that this district continued its affection for this monastic institution by retaining the Church of ease, both the old one and the present newer one at Raheen, though there is no built-up area or concentration of people there. When the Four Masters use the phrase "the fold of Cill-Achaidh" one might wonder whether all the out-stations were destroyed or only the buildings in Killeigh. In 844 "Robhartach, son of Suibhne, Prior of Cill-Achaidh, scribe and wiseman was slain." In 872 "Donagh MacMoylduin, Abbot of Killealga, was this year slain in battle by the Danes." Though the spelling, Killealga, is unusual it is generally accepted that the place is Killeigh.

We have a strange entry by the Four Masters for the year 937: "The men of Munster, under Ceallachan, King of Munster, plundered the Churches of Cluain-Eidhnach (Clonenagh) and Cill Achaidh." Ceallachan was, of course, an Irishman as were the men of Munster. We learn from this record that **Irish Chieftains**, on occasions when it suited their purpose, were not averse to attacking a Monastery. On this occasion they must have come from Roscrea, to Mountrath and Clonenagh and then over the Sheve Blooms.

In these early days an Irish Chieftain might become a Monk, an Abbot or a Bishop, but he did not cease to be a Chieftain. So we may find that an Abbot or Bishop is leading an army in battle. The Church has long since taken control over that sort of situation; nowadays if a civil ruler of any sort were to become a priest he would be obliged to renounce his civil authority. Too often the monks had to join in battle in obedience to their superiors who were Bishop or Abbot as well as Chieftain. This led to a great disruption of monastic life - not merely taking Monks from their Monasteries, but taking them from their religious customs and practises as well.

The general result of this two hundred years struggle against foreigners was a lowering of the standard of religious life and spiritual practises. Hence, Historians say that the golden era of religious and monastic life had passed because of the Danish Invasion.

The Danes in the course of time, about 950, became Christian with the result that marriages between them and the Irish became more frequent; but as Dr. Dalton, historian, observes

"The Christian prohibition not to rob or steal they little understood or at least little observed. As Christians, they made war as readily and with as little justification as when they were yet pagans."

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Brian Boru

At last, there came two Irish leaders who were determined to defeat them; the first, Malachy, who came to the throne of High King of Ireland in the year 980 the same Malachy of whom the Poet sings "Malachy who wore the collar of gold which he won from the proud invader." The second leader was Brian, King of Munster, a very determined, courageous and cautious leader.

To understand Brian's position as King of Munster, we should know that at this time Ireland was divided not only into Clans and Provinces, but also had been divided for a long time into two parts by a line or highway running from Dublin to Galway. North of this line was Conn's part; South was Moya's part. The King of Munster was regarded as King of Moya's part - the South of the dividing line, which included Leinster as well as Munster. The Leinster men had for years objected to being subject to the King of Munster, who had imposed a tribute or tax on the Leinster men. The payment of the tax had fallen into disuse for some time, but now Brian re-imposed it as a result of his victories. The tax was really a war tax - a sign that the Leinster men had been defeated by Brian and so were subject to him. It is because of this tax that he is known as Brian Boru, or Brian of the Tribute or Tax.

When Malachy became High King of Ireland in 980 he determined to attack the Danes; he defeated them in 980. But in 983 the Danes joined the Leinster men under Maelmorra, King of Leinster; again Malachy defeated them and took possession of the Danish City of Dublin. The combination of Malachy's defeat of the Leinster men with Brian's taxing them brought both men closer together though they had been enemies.

Brian now attacked the Connaught men and defeated them, but Malachy intervened and defeated the Munster men. The general result of all this upheaval was that Malachy and Brian made a new alliance. Malachy agreed to recognise Brian as King of all Moya's part of Ireland, Munster and Leinster. Brian recognised Malachy as King of Conn's part, Ulster & Connaught.

The Danes of Dublin were not happy with Brian being King over Leinster, including Dublin. So they revolted. In their revolt they again allied with the Leinster men under their King, Maelmorra.

No sooner had Brian heard this than he set out with his army to meet them. He travelled so fast that he encountered them in County Wicklow in a narrow Glen called Glenmama near Dunlavin. The Danes had hoped to get as far as Co. Kildare where their horses and cavalry would have open ground.

Brian defeated them; they are said to have lost 4,000 men. Brian and his army went on, entered Dublin, captured spoils - gold, silver, bronze, precious stones, buffalo horns and beautiful goblets, as well as prisoners. Brian then returned through Leinster, levelled its fortresses and burned its woods. This happened in the year 1000. There now came a ten year period of peace. Brian turned from war to other tactics and pursuits. His ambition now was to be, not only King of Munster, King of Moya's part, but High King of Ireland. His tactics were to gain friends. This he did through marriages. We learn how far mixed or inter-marriage went when we are told that Brian gave his own daughter in marriage to Sitric, Danish King of Dublin. Then he himself married the sister of the King of Leinster, Gormfleath (Gormley) by name. Again Gormfleath was Sitric's mother by another marriage. With new alliances so formed, Brian decided to invade Meath; he set up his residence at Tara and demanded that Malachy would abdicate the High Kingship in his favour. Faced with this choice, and knowing that the men of Connaught as well as the Leinster men and the Danes had been defeated, Malachy had no allies on whom he could call - the Ulster Chiefs refused to intervene - Malachy conceded and so Brian became High King of Ireland. He then made a tour of all Ireland with his army, going from his residence of Kincora, near Killaloe, through Connaught, Sligo, Donegal, Tyrone, Antrim, Down, Dundalk, back to Meath and so to Kincora, taking hostages on his way as a sign and ransom of subjection to his rule. This was in 1004.

In the subsequent ten years there was peace, stable government, and one leader for the whole country. Roads and bridges were constructed, harbours built, ruined Churches and Monasteries restored, new ones built. Confidence was restored, religious practise revived, schools again equipped with books and teachers. The Danes settled down to commerce and normal life.

Nevertheless, the tribute was still imposed causing discontent amongst both the Leinster men and the Danes. This discontent was brought to breaking point by a simple local Offaly incident: Part of the tribute was the supplying of masts for Brian's boats. In the year 1013 Maelmorra decided to have three pine trees cut in Clonsast bog in order to bring them to Brian as boat masts. The local tribes were assembled for the operation - the Offalians, The Dempsey of Clan Mahere, the Ui Faelains or the O'Byrnes of Wicklow. A dispute broke out as to who should go first with the masts, as carriers. This annoyed Maelmorra: he decided in favour of the Ui Faelains, then jumping from his horse he clapped his shoulder to the mast carried by them and took the first place himself. In doing so, one of the silver buttons of his tunic got torn off. When he got to Kincora he was welcomed by Brian and then he handed the tunic to Gormfleath, his sister, asking her to sew on the button. The tunic was precious to Maelmorra because it had been a gift from Brian to him. Gormfleath flew into a temper, threw the tunic into the fire. She then upbraided him as demeaning himself in carrying the mast and showing subjection to Brian - making a mere vassal of himself. Maelmorra stayed some days at Kincora. One day he passed the time by looking on at a game of chess played between Murrogh, Brian's son, and Conaing, Murrogh's cousin. Maelmorra suggested a move which resulted in Murrogh losing the game. Murrogh remarked that "this was like the advice you gave the Danes which lost them Glenmama" (the battle). Maelmorra in a temper replied "I will now give them advice and they will not be defeated." "Then, said Murrogh, "you had better remind them to have a yew tree ready for your reception." Maelmorra left Kincora the following morning. Brian sent a messenger after him to explain and apologise, but Maelmorra killed the messenger and went home to prepare for war.

I should point out here the depth of bitterness that was in the foregoing conversation: Both Maelmorra and Murrogh had been engaged in the battle of Glenmama. Maelmorra's side lost, but he ran away and hid himself in a yew tree where Murrogh found him and instead of killing him or

making him a prisoner, he let him go free. So Murrough could not have belittled him more by suggesting the preparation of another yew tree.

Maelmorra took it so badly that he went home to prepare for war and to incite the Leinstermen to revolt. He did succeed in getting O'Neill of Tyrone and O'Rourke of Breffney to invade Meath and attack King Malachy, but eventually, with the help of Brian, they were defeated. Meantime, Gormfleath was not idle, she grew in bitterness and hatred of Brian. She seems to have left him and encouraged the Danes everywhere from Denmark to Dublin to prepare for war.

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Battle of Clontarf

By Palm Sunday 1014 the Leinster men and Danes from every country and island had assembled in Dublin. The whole surface of Dublin Bay was covered with their ships. For battle they were drawn up in three divisions - the first, the Danes of Dublin assisted by some from Norway; the second, foreign Danes from all over; the third, the Leinstermen under Maelmorra, the Offaly men under Brogarbhan, Tanist of Offaly and Congallah, his grandfather, the Clan Mahere under Diumusaigh (Dempsey). The battle took place on Good Friday, 23rd April, 1014; it began at 6 a.m. and continued all day to sun-down; herce and savage hand to hand fighting. Nearly all the leaders died. Malachy's army did not fight, but withdrew some little distance to view the fight. However, when the Danes tried to escape westwards, Malachy's men engaged and cut them off. Those trying to escape eastwards were drowned in the sea as the wind and tide had been moving their boats out to sea and they could not be reached. The Danes were finally and decisively defeated. But Brian was dead; so was his son, Morrough. There was no one to succeed in leadership; stable, central government was at an end.

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Clan system

To understand the depth of meaning of these words, we should recall that up to this point in history, 1014, Ireland had been ruled and managed according to the Clan system. There had been High Kings of all Ireland but they could never get away from the independence of the clans. Each clan looked

after its own affairs, including its own army. This led to conflict between neighbouring clans; human nature being what it is -jealous, ambitious, selfish. There was always the temptation to try to extend one's territory, the result being invasion, resistance, and bloodshed.

The situation was bad before the Danish invasion; the Danes made it worse. Their paganism tended to destroy all the old traditions and customs. As we have seen, intermarriage with pagans became commonplace; normal monastic life became extremely difficult. A wise and prudent leader for the whole country was never so badly needed. There was none. There was no one who would be freely and universally accepted; no one strong enough to insist on one common law. Morality became almost unknown. Dr. Gilmartin, in his *History of the Church*, writes:

"The results of-the Danish wars were that the churches were mostly in ruins; the religious, that is, the monks and nuns, were nearly all banished or slain."

The historian, O'Hanlon, writes:

"Accounts in the Irish Annals during the tenth century reveal a series of disorders and crimes, having their origin in a state of social disunion and the clan system of semi-Independence which gave free scope to ambition and passions of rival chiefs and factions. The Northern invasions had their share in producing this demoralisation, as the invaders formed settlements in the country and had sometimes been the allies of native chieftains in their spoliation and ambition."

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the friend and biographer of St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, gives a more striking denunciation of the times to us. Writing about the circumstances existing when St. Malachy was appointed to the Archdiocese of Armagh, he states:

"The man of God discovered that he had not been appointed to rule over men, but over beasts. He had never met with such - so insolent in manner, so deadly in their rites, so unbehaving in religion, so rebellious against discipline, so filthy in their lives. They were Christians in name but pagans in reality. They would not pay tithes, nor give the first fruits, nor enter the bonds of wedlock, nor make confession; they would neither ask for nor perform penance. There were very few priests, but even those few were too many and had very little occupation.

What was Malachy to do? He stood an intrepid pastor in the midst of wolves, full of arguments by which to turn the wolves into sheep. Some he admonished publicly; some he rebuked privately; with others he shed tears. He passed whole nights sleepless, extending his hands in prayer. And when they would not come to church, he ran after them in the streets and searched through the city whom he could win to Christ."

The antiquarian, Miss Stokes, referring to this period in relation to 'the countless hosts of the illuminated books of Eireann' mentions that

"Up to the eruptions of the Danes, every church of any note had a reliquary and a copy of the Gospels together with a shrine or "cumdach' in which the sacred book was enclosed; the shrines themselves being made of some precious metal, generally highly-wrought and ornamented with precious stones. Many of these books are not now known to exist and are probably lost for ever."

The only gain of the battle of Clontarf seems to have been that no more battalions of fighting Danes came to Ireland.

Those Danes who remained had become Christians, especially those in Dublin. But whether Christian or pagan, greed, avarice and violence spread and took over the whole country. Brute force was to be the only means of acquiring anything, the only means of maintaining anything.

Killeigh was no different in this respect. The Annals of Clonmacnoise state that in 1065 Murtagh O'Connor of Offahe was blinded of both eyes by his own brother." Such blinding was commonplace.

The Four Masters report that in 1080 numbers of men of Teathbba, of Muintear Gearadhain and of the Gairbre men came upon a plundering expedition into Ui-Failghe and they arrived at the termin of Cill-Achaidh.

The Ui-Failghe overtook them and slew Guillamuire Ua-Ciardha, Lord of Cairbre, and Aedh, grandson of Dubhghall Mac-Finnbhar, Chief of Muintear-Gearadhain, and others of the nobility besides them."

The phrase 'the termin of Cill Achaidh' refers to the Abbey and the Abbey properties, Urney, Killurin, Templeyrine, etc.

The Annals of Clonmacnoise are more explicit about this Incident - The people of Teaffa came to the Termyn-land of Killeachie in Offahe and preyed and spoiled the whole Termyn-land and also killed Gillamone O'Keyrga, King of Carbery, and the son of MacFynbarr, Chief of the O'Gerans, with many others."

O'Hanlon, the historian, records this incident in this way:

In 1079 it is stated that the men of Teathbha and Cairbre set out on a plundering excursion into Hy-Failge and took many cows. However, the people of this district overtook them at Cluain-Fearta Mulua (more correctly stated to be Cluain-Fearta Mughaine - Kilclonfert) There a battle was fought between them; and the Hy-Failgeans killed MacCongeimhle, King of Teathbha, and Cairbre, while they made a great slaughter of his followers. In 1087 Conor O'Connor, Prince of Offaly, killed Donogh McDonnell Reawer (Fat), King of Leinster, and Donogh McDonnell MaeGillapatrik, Prince of Ossory. In 1115 a battle was fought by Domnall O'Brian, and the foreigners of AthCilath, against the Leinstermen in which Conchobar O'Conchobar, King of the UI-Failge and many others were slain. A very strange affair took place in 1127: a vacancy having occurred in St. Brigid's Nunnery In Kildare on the death of the Abbess. a quarrel arose between the D'Faelain (O'Byrnes of Wicklow) and the Ui-Failge, in the centre of Kildare, regarding the succession of a nun to represent either tribe. In this contest, Cearball, son of MacFiailain, and several others were slain. In 1133 the Clanmahere people, the O'Dempseys, his kinsfolk, killed Donnogh O'Connor of Offaile. This same year King Turlogh O'Connor spoiled portions of Leix and Ossory. In 1162 The Four Masters record "The Ui-Dimisagh (The O'Dempsey), Ceallach, Cubroga and Cuilean were slain by Maelseachlainn Ua-Conchubhair O'Connor Lord of Ui-Failghe, in the middle of Cill-Achaidh." This Incident was a revenge killing. It had its origin in a dispute between two brothers in 1130 as to which should succeed their father in the chieftain-ship - Donnogh or Malachy. The Clanmailere backed Malachy - so a battle took place in 1133 in which the Annals of Clonmacnoise state; 'Donnogh was slain by the Clanmaihere but Donnogh's men won'. They installed Donnogh's son, Hugh, in the Chieftainship and Hugh's son, Donnogh, as Tanist or heir. Again the Clanmahere slew this son, Donnogh, in 1142. This Donnogh's son, Hugh was slain by his cousin Malachy, In order to gain the leadership. The

Clanmahere intervened and deposed Malachy. To put an end to this ongoing feud, Rodgick O'Connor of Connaught and Tighernan U'Ruark led an army into Offaly in 1161 and replaced Malachy (Maelseachlainn) on the throne with his son, Donal as Tanist. But to the following year, 1162, Donal was killed in a dispute with the Clanmahere. This killing gave rise to the slaughter of the Clanmahere by Malachy, in the middle of Killeigh in 1162.

As we think over this miserable state of affairs and the great disunity in the country, is it any wonder that our neighbours, the English, or as they were called, Anglo-Normans, saw and availed of the opportunity of invading and taking us over.

I will leave to another time the remedies taken to improve public life and perhaps the first coming of the Anglo-Normans.

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REFORM.....St. Malachy.

In the last issue I gave some hint of the chief remedy used to correct the corrupt state of public life that Ireland was passing through after the Danish invasion. I quoted the very wonderful St. Bernard of Clairvaux in his biographical life of St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, when he wrote;

“Malachy stood an Intrepid pastor in the midst of wolves when they would not come to Church he ran after them in the streets and searched whom he could win to Christ, extending his hands in prayer.”

Reform had to be a spiritual reform and, as always in such like circumstances, it was the Church, which invented the means by which reform, could be achieved. There is little that a State, even a powerful State, can do in corrupt circumstances - much less a State fragmented as Ireland was. St. Malachy was born in 1095 and died in 1148 at the early age of 54. He became a priest and soon was made Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of Armagh by the then Archbishop, Celsus; he was made Abbot of the Monastery of Bangor in 1125 and in 1127 was made Bishop of Connor, which diocese he found to be in a very miserable condition. But under his inspiration and example, a wonderful change began to set in - the customs of the Church were once again received; Churches were rebuilt and priests were found to minister to them. Archbishop Celsus was at this time Archbishop of Armagh and before his death he recommended Malachy to succeed him. Malachy was appointed to succeed. However, it was one thing to be properly appointed, but another to be allowed to function. He met with very unusual opposition and could not gain possession of the See till 1132, a period of three years, and even then for a further two years he could not enter the City of Armagh except under armed guard, day and night.

It happened this way because of a practise, an abuse, which, among many others of various sorts had crept into the Irish Church in many places. We saw earlier an example of this when we

wrote that a small war or civil war, with many deaths, took place in the town of Kildare in a dispute as to whether a nominee of the O'Byrnes or of the O'Dempseys should succeed as Abbess of the Convent of St. Brigid.

In Armagh the ruling family had for almost 200 years usurped the right to nominate a succeeding Archbishop; in that time they had installed eight succeeding Archbishops. In fact, Archbishop Celsus, was also their ninth nomination. He was a man notable for his holiness and asceticism, greatly praised by the then reigning Pope. He was only too well aware of the great danger to the Church and to Christian living that could arise from such abuse of nomination. Hence, the recommendation of Malachy to his clergy as his successor.

In spite of the recommendation and the proper and valid appointment of Malachy, the ruling family, together with their nominee, named Maurice, held out: The affair ended when Maurice died in 1134. All this time Malachy had been winning the admiration and attachment of more and more people by reason of the example and inspiration of his life. It would seem as though God was leading his people and showing them the possibility, the advantage and the beauty of living a virtuous and Christian life.

Malachy now set about restoring and rebuilding the Churches as he had previously done in the Diocese of Connor. He caused a number of Synods or Councils of the Church to be assembled. He used every means in his power to overcome disorders and restore Church discipline. I may be excused for repeating now again that monastic life had been almost destroyed and made impossible by the action of the Danes. They had burned the monastic buildings, killed monks almost by the thousand, carried others off as slaves, burned the monastic books and sacred documents, stolen or destroyed their sacred and expensive shrines. In passing, I should note that the Four Masters record that

"A.D. 938 Coibhdeanach, Abbot of Cilleachie, was drowned in the sea of Delginis Cualann (Dalkey) while fleeing from the foreigners" (Danes).

They must have captured him as a slave, taking him overseas when he thought that he could escape. If they had taken the Abbot, it is possible, even likely, that they had others as well. Malachy's work was not confined to Armagh. He had to restore the whole country. For this reason it was necessary to seek the co-operation of all the Irish Bishops as well as Abbots of Monasteries; hence the usefulness of the National Councils or Synods. Almost all the Bishops and Abbots attended these Councils. I have always wondered about the means of transport used by those travelling so far - was it by horseback or on foot or by some sort of coach? Likewise, when the Danes brought their prisoners to Dalkey, did they make them walk or did they force them to use horses, etc.? I am told that Dalkey has a small harbour and that it is recorded in the Guinness Book of Records as the smallest harbour in the world. I would guess that it was when the Danes were loading their prisoners on to boats that the Abbot thought he had a chance by jumping overboard and swimming.

The Synods concerned themselves with regularising the discipline of the Monasteries, the election of Abbots and Bishops, their authority, the proper ordering of the Christian lives of the Monks. The boundaries of Dioceses and Parishes were fixed. Having brought about a considerable improvement in the lives of the people and the Monks, Malachy resigned the See of Armagh in 1137 and became Bishop of Down. In 1139 he set out to Rome to secure the Pope's approval for all that he had done. On his way to Rome he stayed for some time in the celebrated Monastery of Clairvaux where he met St. Bernard, the founder of the Monastery and of the Cistercian Order. They became life-long friends.

Before leaving Rome, the Pope appointed him as Papal Legate to Ireland. Malachy asked permission from the Pope to resign his See of Down in order to become a Cistercian Monk at Clairvaux. The Pope refused this permission because he was so greatly needed in Ireland.

In the year 1148 another National Council was held at Holmpatrick when those assembled requested Malachy to set out for Rome a second time to seek approval for all the decisions and decrees that had been made in the meantime, and especially to seek proper authority for dividing the country into four Church Provinces - Dublin, Armagh, Thurles and Tuam - all the Bishops in each Province to be subject as suffragans to the Archbishop of the Province - an arrangement which continues to this day. However, 'Man proposes but God disposes.' On his way to Rome again he stayed at the Monastery of Clairvaux where he became ill and died on the 2nd November 1148 - a day which he had foretold.

His work continued. In 1151 the Pope sent Cardinal Taparo to Ireland, with Christian, Bishop of Lismore, who had been recently appointed as Papal Legate in Ireland. They brought authority for the four Archbishoprics and for the other decisions of the Council of Holmpatrick. The holding of National Councils continued at Kells and at Rathbrasil. St. Bernard says of St. Malachy:

"he gave his orders with the authority of St. Patrick."

Another historian says of him:

"such was the reverence and honour in which he was held that the Kings and the rulers of the country, as well as the Bishops and the Clergy were subject to him."

The reader may ask how all the foregoing relates to the Parish of **Killeigh**. First of all, the Synod of Kells defined exactly the boundaries of all Parishes including Killeigh. It regulated the relationship between the Diocesan Bishop and the Monastic Abbot, thereby deciding that the Bishop of Kildare was the Bishop of Offaly including Killeigh. It also regularised the relationship of the diocesan or secular clergy with the monks.

We have noticed the irregularities whereby local rulers or even Church stewards could and did sometimes claim ownership or even Church Authority of Abbeys or Monasteries or Convents. Also there were diversities of life, rule and regulation - oftentimes causing stress or disturbance to religious life. These irregularities were to be overcome by unifying rules and consequently religious life by the introduction of a Law that every religious house must follow the rule of one or other of the great monastic founders. The majority of religious houses choose henceforth to follow the Rule of St. Augustine, who is known as the founder, though not the first monk, of monastic life.

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Cistercian Order

Up to this time Killeigh would be described as a Patrician Abbey, following the rule of St. Senchell. Henceforth the monks of Killeigh are known as Canons Regular of St. Augustine or Austin Monks. Not necessarily connected with the Synods and their work, it is worthy of note that about this time the Abbey buildings began to be of stone. The exact time is uncertain. However, some assert that Killeigh had stone buildings much earlier. They give the reason that there is some evidence that Rahan built an oratory of stone in imitation of Killeigh. They go on to say that the oratory that was burned in Killeigh in 804 was of stone.

The Annals of Ulster state that

"A.D. 804 Cill Achaidh was burned with its new oratory. Another and important factor in reforming the country was the coming of the **Cistercian Order** to Ireland. St. Bernard is the founder of the Cistercians in 1115. Their coming to Ireland is due to the friendship of St. Malachy and St. Bernard.

To sum up the history of this time and to explain the immense change from lawlessness, barbarism and, as St. Bernard called it, 'semi-paganism'. I quote another historian:

"Owing to the devastations of this country by the *Danes* for four centuries and to the constantly recurring-burnings of the Churches and the slaughter of the clergy by these heretic marauders, not merely along the sea coast but even in the very heart of the country, few, if any, monuments of that time are in existence. During the short interval of peace that elapsed between the defeat of the Danish power at Clontarf and the coming of the English, the revival of religious life was almost as wonderful in its effects as the preaching of St. Patrick. We will mention but one fact as proof of that assertion; Within the last thirty years of this period nearly twenty Cistercian Monasteries were erected throughout the country, not merely in one territory or under the sway of one Prince, but in every part of it; At Mellifont, the fountain of honey, in Louth. and at Corcomore. the ferthe rock, in Thomond; at Boyle in Connaught and at Holy Cross. in the richest part of Munster".

Sadly he adds

"but burnings and mauraudings as herce and relentless as these *of the Danes* and wars as unceasing as theirs, but conducted with more skill, followed quickly on this peaceful time"

Having learned in our previous issue that the effort to restore normality after the devastation of the Danish invasion resulted in a revival of religious practise, chiefly through the restoration of the old Irish Monasteries and the introduction of some new Orders like the Cistercians.

In this matter, Killeigh played a part. We have already seen that the parish of Killeigh had, in addition to the Abbey of Holy Cross, a Chapel at Fenter, subject Monasteries at Ballykeane, Urney, Temple Tyrine, Killurin, Kilmalogue and Geashill. Canons Regular of St. Augustine, or Augustinians staffed all of these Religious Houses.

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Franciscan Monastery

Now in the year 1393 another Monastery was established - a **Franciscan Monastery**. There is some confusion about the date of its foundation; the Annals of the Four Masters give the date 1393. However, another historian, Ware, in his book, 'Ware's Bishops,' records that

"Donal O'Bruin, Guardian of the Minorites of Killeigh, was appointed Bishop of Clonmacnoise in 1303."

If that record is accurate, and there is some evidence to believe that it is, the Monastery must have been founded even earlier than 1303, since at that date it was already occupied by Friars and their Guardian. I should point out that the word or title 'Guardian' signals a Superior of a Franciscan Monastery. The word 'Minorites' also appears in the above record. The Franciscans in their early days, after their establishment by St. Francis, were often known as Minorites. This word signals the poverty and humility that Franciscans embrace; the word comes from the Latin word, 'minor' which means lesser, hence humble people, poor people.

O'Connor Faly founded this Monastery for Franciscan Friars. A number of members of the O'Connor Faly family became members of the Monastery. The Friary continued till the general suppression of the Monasteries begun by King Henry VIII of England and continued under Queen Elizabeth I. Otherwise; we have very little information about the Monastery. We are told that it was the third most important Franciscan House in Ireland and was a very beautiful building. It exercised a very considerable influence, not merely with Holy Cross, Killeigh, but also with Clonmacnoise.

We seem to know more about the Friars after the closing of the Monastery than we do while it was in active existence. It is obvious that though the laws of England could close the building and attempt to destroy the Friars, they could not remove them from the Parish. It would seem that they stayed somehow, somewhere in the area. Long after the suppression we learn that a Father Bonaventure Mellaghlin was Guardian there in 1651-1652: he is described as Chancellor of the whole Franciscan Congregation of Ireland; 1651 is more than one hundred years after the official suppression.

We may also understand Father Mellaghlin's situation a bit better when we learn that during the period of the Confederation of Kilkenny the clergy of Leinster both Religious and Secular - chose him as one of their delegates to the General Assembly of the Confederates, meeting in Galway. Apparently he and his brother Friars had plenty of local support in the area.

Passing on another hundred years to 1717, a Chapter of the Friars Minor meeting in Dublin appointed Fr. Simon Waters as Guardian of the Monastery of Killeigh. Again in 1729 a Chapter meeting in Dublin appointed Fr. Eugenius Molloy as Guardian of Killeigh.

We may wonder, because of these appointments, where did the Friars reside? Did they, after the first fury of the suppression had passed, creep back into their former home and manage in some secrecy as best they could, or did they find refuge in the scattered homes of sympathisers?

Two hundred years of living as outlawed people: as Ministers of the Gospel: two hundred years with a price on their heads. All these facts and possibilities add up to a great story of courage and perseverance. Did they eventually disappear from recorded history because their numbers decreased and there was no one to take their place?

Just a word about the suppression: In order to enforce the suppression throughout the British Isles, inspectors were appointed whose business it was to visit the Religious House and remain there, take control, till a full record had been made of every person attached to the House, and of every item of property of every sort belonging to the institution. Meantime, the Religious members would be on house arrest. The inspector would take charge of every detail of the working of the house even of every item of food. A day would be set for the handing over of the premises to the King. Everything was to be banded over. Yet the King was interested only in movable articles of every sort - not in the land. The Monks had to go, but the land and the buildings remained. Hence, we find that the land and buildings were given to chosen tenants at a rent.

A gentleman from Kildare named John Allee or John Lee got Killeigh and much more at a rent. He was not very interested in so many empty buildings over the country. Hence, those buildings that remained empty for about twenty years or more went to ruins, slates, roofs, etc. at the mercy of the rains and winds. So we note that the Friars may have been able to make some secret use of the buildings after their suppression. A similar fate was to be the lot of the Augustinians in Holy Cross, but that story must remain for another time.

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Suppression of Monasteries.

So far, we find the Friars beating the suppression, for more than two hundred years. But the end of the Friars is not yet. Bishop Comerford, the historian of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin, records the following for the year 1821(almost up to the date of Catholic Emancipation) when Dr. Doyle was Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin (who signed his letters J.K.L., that is, James of Kildare and Leighlin).

The record reads:

"In 1821, a friar, probably the locum tenens of the Franciscans, established himself at Killurin." Judging from the sub-joined letter, which has been found amongst that prelates papers, Dr. Doyle, the Bishop, appears not to have looked favourably on the enterprise:

"My Lord, I received your favour, and from the tenor of it, I had to regret the omission of more than one circumstance of not small importance in my late letter. Your Lordship disapproves of the establishment of a house in which a single religious resides, without the advantage of conventual discipline or regular domestic occupation. Nothing could be worse just, but it is my very settled plan, and which, aided by Divine Providence, I shall most faithfully execute, to render the establishment at Killurin in no way obnoxious to such objection. I intend to have a small chapel annexed, in which that portion of the neighbouring parishioners, when by necessity or circumstances they cannot attend their parish chapel, may on Sundays and Holydays have the benefit of assisting at Mass and hearing the word of God, or, at least, whither they can send their children to be instructed in the Christian Doctrine; and as to domestic life, I mean, even before I am joined by one or two other priests, which will not be a distant day, to associate with me some devout laics who wish to consecrate themselves to God in religion, and whose office will be (for one of them at least) to teach 'gratis' under my own direction the poor children of the vicinity, instruct them in the duties of our holy religion, and prepare them for the Sacraments. I must now apologise to your Lordship for this new trouble, but it seemed advisable to acquaint you with these circumstances, as the statement must alter the complexion of the whole matter. Allow me to add a request that you will favour me with a line at your convenience, and to assure you of the respect, with which I have the honour to be, my Lord, your Lordship's very humble and obedient servant Br. John Joseph Donovan,, Tullamore Oct. 30th 1821"

Obviously, Bishop Doyle did not look with favour on the project of Brother Donovan and so the Franciscans disappear from the Parish.

The closing and suppression of the Franciscan Monastery took place because of the Royal authority of England, under King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I. The Monasteries of England were suppressed under the authority of Henry VIII about 1535. The Monasteries of Ireland within the Irish Pale were suppressed in the following ten years - 1535-1545. But the Monasteries outside the Pale, like Killeigh were not suppressed till Elizabeth's time - about 1578.

It may be interesting to note a letter of Father James Kinsella who came to the parish as a curate in 1819 and continued as P.P. till 1859, writing about the destruction of the Monastery:

"The walls have been pulled down at different periods for building about the village. To the present day portions of cut stone, appearing to be bases and capitals of columns, etc.. are to be seen around the place. Many of these have been taken away to ornament the houses of the poor; some of the more opulent have worked them into their buildings. When first I took notice of these venerable ruins, I could not imagine that the same amount of destruction could have been effected in a century."

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Schools in Killeigh.

In this issue of our history, I have thought it appropriate, in view of the opening of a new, very modern, school in Killeigh, to make some reference to the history of schools and education in Killeigh. We should bear in mind that the ancient Monasteries or Abbeys, as in Killeigh, were essentially schools. There was no difficulty about education so long as they existed. When King-Henry VIII of England suppressed them, organised education came to an end; not only were the church buildings closed, but the schools as well. The campaign against the churches and schools became more fierce and destructive under Queen Elizabeth 1, Henry's daughter, and her successors. Priests, monks and teachers were hunted, arrested, and thrown into gaol till very few were left. In spite of this, priests, monks and teachers went into hiding, continued to offer Mass and to instruct secretly. A price was put upon their heads, resulting in a new sort of industry - priest-hunting. A campaign to exterminate and bring to an end Catholicism was now in full force and developing ever more strongly - a campaign resulting in what is now known as the "Penal Laws." Time and again laws were passed by the English Parliament making it a crime to be a priest or teacher. For example, in 1709, under Queen Anne, it was enacted (8 Anne, Cap 3, Section XVI):

"Whatsoever person of the popish religion publicly teach school, or shall instruct youth in learning in any private house or shall be entertained to instruct youth by any protestant schoolmaster, he shall be esteemed and taken to be a popish regular clergyman and to be prosecuted as such."

Section XX of this Act orders

"that the sum of ten pounds shall be paid for each popish schoolmaster, to be levied on the popish inhabitants."

Section XXVI lays down that

"all and every popish schoolmaster shall within three months be transmitted ... to the common gaol of the next sea-port town where he, they and every one of them shall remain without bail until transported."

In spite of such laws, Catholics were not to be deterred; priests, though very few, remained; they found ready helpers among the people who assembled their youth each Sunday in chapel or cabin to be instructed by well-informed men and women in the mysteries of their religion. Weekday or daily schools were fewer: Winter conditions made them almost impossible; in summer attendance increased. Conditions could not be worse; the people had been reduced by every means possible, but chiefly by eviction or threat of eviction, to the deepest poverty: ill housed, ill clad, hungry.

Dr. Doyle, the famous J.K.L. (James of Kildare and Leighlin), Bishop of this Diocese (1819-1834) writes about one of his predecessors, Dr. Gallagher (Bishop, 1737-1751):

"In the glen or cavern where they sojourned they taught the rudiments of learning. The Catholic Bishop of this Diocese, in a shed built with mud and covered with rushes, on the verge of the Bog of Allen; in this shed, the refuge

of a man not inferior in mind and virtue to Fenelon, he instructed youth with his own tongue and shared with them the crust which he had watered with the tears of his affliction."

Fenelon was a famous French writer.

Dr. Gallagher was succeeded as Bishop by Dr. Keefe (1752-1787).

He was educated in Paris where he took the degree of Doctor of Divinity at the Sorbonne. In Paris he observed the gradual development towards the French Revolution; he foresaw that for the future it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to have Irish students educated in France. Hence, when appointed Bishop, he decided to build a college in Ireland for the education of Irish students. In passing, we may note that this projected college was destined to send young Irish men all over the world as writers, teachers, professional men but chiefly priests - to America, North and South, Australia, even to England and Scotland - who in their turn were to be a boon, a solace to all Irish men and women forced to emigrate because of the poverty, misery and oppression at home.

But Dr. Keefe had no money, nor means of getting money, no wealthy friends, nothing but his own enthusiasm his own deep faith. He and his friend, Dean Staunton, the first President of the College, had between them less than 100 Guineas per year. The whole Diocese joined in: subscriptions of sixpence or one shilling were made. Not only was the college built, but the Cathedral also. Men, in cases worked for nothing; tradesmen worked on Sundays, when their women-folk carried the hods of brick, mortar and stone up the ladders. All this time Dr. Keefe was approaching his ninetieth year and nearly blind.

Owing to Dr. Keefe's great age, Dr. Delany was appointed his Co-adjutor in 1783. On the death of Dr. Keefe in 1887, Dr. Delany was appointed to succeed him. The new bishop continued to consolidate the work of his predecessors. He took advantage of some relaxation of the Penal Laws. He had chapels rebuilt, mostly thatched; he increased and improved schools; he established little libraries in every parish, strengthened Confraternities, set up religious processions, inducing people to be proud of themselves and their faith. But his great work was the establishment of two new Religious Orders - the Patrician Brothers and the Brigidine Sisters - thus extending the possibilities of second-level education. He so improved conditions that the people could now see some hope - a hope of the freedom or emancipation of the whole Catholic community. He died in 1814. Dr. Michael Corcoran, a very wise and highly cultivated man, succeeded him. Sadly, his health was not good and It seemed to grow weaker during his Episcopate. He died In February 1819.

Dr Doyle (J.K.L. - James of Kildare & Leighlin) succeeded.

He had been an Augustinian priest and, as such, was appointed a professor in Carlow College. As Bishop he took all possible advantage of the work of his predecessors as well as a continuing relaxation of the Penal Laws. He organised all the Irish Bishops in demanding greater liberty for the Catholic population. They petitioned the British Government to allocate to Catholic schools and education some money grants such as the Protestant schools had been getting. The British Government refused this and instead decided to set up a Royal Commission to inquire into the state of education in Ireland. To this purpose they sent to each Parish Priest a document containing fifteen questions to be answered by them under oath.

Dr. Doyle kept his ear to the ground and wrote to each Parish Priest asking to send him a duplicate of his answers to the Royal Commission. Obviously, he guessed that unless he had copies of the replies, nothing more - except perhaps misinformation - would be heard of them. The duplicates came to him and exist to this day in the Bishop's possession.

I should say here that the British Officials were accusing the Hedge Schools (i.e. Catholic Schools) of all sorts of misdemeanours - that the teachers were of immoral character, were unqualified to teach, that immoral books were used in the Hedge Schools. The replies of all the P.P.s state that all these accusations were false and fabricated. The immoral books were indeed the Catholic Catechism and such like.

In addition to the reports and replies of the Parish Priests, the British Commissioners made a further investigation and report called "A personal inspection of a great variety of schools for the lower orders in every County of Ireland."

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The reports of this inspection are given in what is called the "Blue Books." Both reports for Killeigh parish are given here:

PARISH: KILLEIGH (JAMES DOWLING, PP. 1795-1825)

1. KNOCKBALLY BOY: Mistress Eliza Demsey. A Catholic. Superannuated. Educated where she is. Average attendance: Summer 1824 - Males 11, Females 13;

Roman Catholics 24. Summer 1823:- 53.

2. BALNEGAR: MICHAEL FORD. A Catholic. Above 40 years of age; educated where he is. Average attendance: Summer 1824 - Males 35, Females 16;

Protestants 3, Roman Catholics 48.

3. DALGAN: OWEN GRIMLY. A Catholic. Superannuated. Educated in the neighbourhood. Average attendance: Summer 1824-Males 15, Females 30;

Roman Catholics 45.

4. KILLEIGH: JAMES MITCHEL. A Catholic. About 40 years of age. Educated In the neighbourhood. Average attendance: Summer 1824-Males 42, Females 40;

Protestants 12, Roman Catholics 70.

5. ANNAHARVEY: ROBERT FOX. A Catholic. About 35 years. Educated in the neighbourhood. Average attendance: Summer 1824 - Males 30, Females 27;

Protestants 15, Roman Catholics 42.

6. MILIHARO: JOHN WILSON. A Catholic. About 40 years. Educated in the neighbourhood. Av. attendance: Summer 1824 -Males 28, Females 25;

Protestants 2, Roman Catholics 52.

7. KILLINMORE: JAMES FEAGAN. A Catholic. About 40 years. Educated near this place. Av. attendance: Summer 1824 - Males 19, Females 7;

Roman Catholics 26.

8. KILERIN: DENIS MAHON. A Catholic. About 20 years. Educated in the Parish. Average attendance: Summer 1824 - Males 31, Females 24;

Roman Catholics 55.

9. RAHEEN: PHILIP DEVINE. A Catholic. About 40 years. Educated in West-Meath. Av. attendance: Summer 1824 - Males 33, Females 25; -

Protestants 6, Roman Catholics 52.

10. CLONEYGOWN: PETER KILDUFF. A Catholic. About 20 years. Educated by P. Devine. Av. attendance: Summer 1824 - Males 32, Females 16:

Roman Catholics 48.

11. BALMACREN (?): CHARLES DUNN. A Catholic. About 25 years. Educated by his father. Average attendance: Summer 1824 - Males 22, Females 13;

Protestants 2, Roman Catholics 33.

OBSERVATIONS: Some of these schools are of an old standing, more of them lately set up, some by me, and some by the people with my approbation, for the convenience of small children, open at all seasons of the year.

“All the school houses in my Parish are Hedge Schoolhouses except two, which were built under my inspection with good materials, lime and stone, a good roof, but covered with straw, at the expense of the parishioners. All the rest are clay walls, commonly called mud walls, covered with straw, also at the expense of those near it. I cannot tell what the cost of building them may be; it can't be much. The one at Killeigh cost £28. Is. 7d.; The one at Raheen could not cost less than about £20; all at the expense of the Parishioners.

The rates (of payment) are different in this Parish and higher in other parts and parishes of this neighbourhood; for a beginner to spell and read 1½d per week, for Writing and Figures 2d per week. The Parents make these payments only.

No one visits or superintends our schools but the Priests of the Parish when their other duties allow them time to do so. But lately, since this inquiry began the Curat Minister called at one or two of them a few times.”

The first four lines and half (i.e. of Query 14, referring to books) I cannot answer for, but this I can answer for, that no bad books or printed paper has been, with my knowledge, used in these schools for amusement or otherwise. The only bad and printed papers that I saw these twenty years introduced at the Catholic schools were the foolish, nonsensical, ridiculous, tracts sent to them from the Bible Society, which I soon committed to fire. The Holy Scriptures are not allowed to be read as a school book in the Catholic Schools. The Douay Testament is in the hands of discreet, informed Catholics, who can read them and are able to purchase them; there are a good many who have them, but I can't at present ascertain the number.

I never could find that any steps have been taken in either Protestant or Catholic schools for the above purpose (i.e. to induce Roman Catholics to become Protestants or Protestants to become Roman Catholics the parishioners).

I always understood and know by experience that the Protestants and Catholics frequented the same schools, both with Protestant and Catholic Masters and Mistresses, without even thinking of one converting the other, and got their education, such as it was, in the greatest harmony and brotherly love until the late Richard Digby erected his nine schools and new doctrines to convert at least this parish and put down both Protestants and Catholics. I have said more about his proceedings, but at present can't recollect it.

There are two other Catholic Masters who would not give me a return of their schools, but have given it to the Curat Minister and similar. The number they have is small, one of them in Killeigh, the other in Newtown. There are two others, one of them at Killeigh, kept by a pervert; his number is small. The other at Geashill who refused giving me an account of his school; Graham was with me. This is the school set up by the late R. Digby.

N.B. - A few bad Catholics in Geashill still send their children there; Graham published them last Sunday.

There is a Book Society, a Confraternity of monthly Communion; no Religious Order (in the parish).

12. KILLEIGH: (Blue Book Summary, p.680)

THOMAS CARNEY. Roman Catholic. Pay School. Income about £14. School-house built by Mr W. Dacres; a stone wall; cost £5.

Average attendance: Summer 1824, according to Protestant Return - Males 15, Females 10;

Established Church 3, Roman Catholics 22.

In connexion with no Society. Scriptures read, Authorized Version.

13. NEWTOWN: (Blue Book Summary, p.680)

PAT DUNNE. Roman Catholic. Pay School. Income £14. School-house mud walls and thatched; cost £5. Average attendance: Summer 1824, according to, Protestant return - Males 23, Females 20;

Established Church 4, Roman Catholics 39.

Scriptures not read.

14..CLINCON: (Blue Book Summary, p.680)

MORGAN DALY. Roman Catholic. Pay School. Income £14 15s. School-house mud walls; Cost £6.

Average attendance: Summer 1824, according to Protestant return - Males 20, Females 20;

Established Church 14, Roman Catholics 26.

Scriptures read in A. Version.

15..DERRYCLURE: (Blue book Summary, p.680)

TIMOTHY CONRAHY (Night School). Pay School. Income, rates 6s.8d. per quarter. School-house mud wall, thatched; cost £2.

Average attendance: Summer 1824, according to Protestant return - 7 Males.

Not connected with any Society. Not stated re reading of Scripture.

16.. CARHINA: (Blue Book Summary, p.682)

DANIEL LAWLER. Roman Catholic. Pay School. Income about £6.

Very bad accommodation. In connexion with no Society, etc.

Average attendance: Summer 1824, according to Protestant Return - Males 14;

Established Church 2, Roman Catholics 12.

Scriptures read, Authorized Version.

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Protestant Schools

1. CLONEGOWN:(Parish School). MICHAEL JACKSON. A Protestant; more than 50. Can't say where educated. Average attendance: Summer 1824 - Males 24, Females 12;

Protestants 10, Roman Catholics 26.

2. CLONEYGOWN: Mrs Pool. A Protestant. Can't tell her age or education.

She returned average attendance: Protestants 8, Roman Catholics 19.

3. GEASHILL (Blue Book Summary, p.680)

HUGH BRENNAN and his wife. Protestants. Pay school. The Parish school. Income £45; pupils pay from Is. to 3s.9d. per quarter. House built of clay and thatched; cost about £60.

Average attendance Summer 1824 (according to Protestant return): Males 70, Females 58;

Established Church 54, Roman Catholics 34.

In connection with Kildare Place Society, London Hibernian Society. Patrons Ben Digby, Esq. & John W. Digby of Geashill Castle who with the Earl of Digby contribute as follows: Ben Digby, Esq. £24; the Earl of Digby £10; The Rev. W. John Digby Wingfield the Incumbent £5. The late R.E. Digby, Esq. built the school-house.

Scriptures read, Authorized Version. 1 Copy Douay Testament.

4. KILLEIGH (Blue Book Summary, p.680)

JOHN BAYNHAM. Protestant. Pay School. Income about £7. School-house built by Dean Digby of lime and stone, bad repair, cost £8.

Average attendance: Summer 1824, according to Protestant return - Males 7, Females 8;

Established Church 6, Roman Catholics 9.

Scriptures read, Authorized Version.

5. KILLEIGH (Blue Book Summary, p.680)

JAMES BATESON. Protestant. Pay school. Income about £2 or £3; a house and 3 roods of land. School-house built by the late R.E.Digby, Esq.; a mud wall cabin.

Average attendance: Summer 1824, according to Protestant return - Males 12, Females 8;

Established Church 19, Roman Catholic 1.

Scripture read, Authorized Version.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

I can't say that this is literally and verbatim a copy of the return I sent, but this I can say, that the substance is. Had I got notice that such a thing would be required, I should have been more particular, and had not the Commissioners sent me a second form, I do not see how I could send this to your Lordship with

any satisfaction or regularity.

JAMES DOWLING, Roman Catholic Parish Priest.

Fr. Dowling makes reference to the Curat Minister. This person is obviously the Protestant Minister.

It is clear from Fr. Dowling's observations, at the end, that he was not aware of the Bishop's wish to receive a duplicate copy; he is therefore relying on his memory rather than an exact copy of the original report. For this purpose he is pleased to have two copies of the questions from the Commissioners.

Note also that he does not make reference to the type of accommodation in the schools, which was one of the questions to be answered. He was very old at this time, one year before his death. He wrote with a shaky hand.

I give some examples of accommodation:

“The most frequent are - mud walls, thatched, very middling, or thatched cabin.”

“Schoolhouse, mud walls, thatched, without windows, forms or any accommodation.”

"A small stable given to the master."

"Mud-walled thatched cabin 26 ft. by 12½, 7 ft. high, in quite an unfurnished state without doors or sash windows, quite unprovided with necessary furniture."

“A miserable hovel, partially thatched, built by the poor of the village.”

“School is vestry room of Chapel.”

"A farmer's barn."

Those of my readers who may be interested in more extensive and detailed information about education in Ireland during the years 1775 and 1835 may find it in Dr. Brennan's book "SCHOOLS OF KILDARE AND LEIGHLIN" which most probably may be held in any County Library. I have relied on this book very extensively for the contents of this issue.

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Augustinian Nuns

In my previous chapter of the history of Killeigh, I skipped forward in time to about the year 1800 in order to consider the growth and development of Irish education subsequent to the attempt by the Penal Laws to extinguish it altogether and to cause the Irish people to be destroyed through ignorance. The opening of a new modern school in Killeigh was an event that called for special notice; an event which indicates that Killeigh has not lost its tradition for the knowledge of its ancestors; an event which marks Killeigh as a place which is honourable and sacred, a place which is worthy of its founder, St. Senechell

In noting this event we recall St. Senechell and his foundation and the illustrious line of holy men and educators that continued here till forced out by the strength of alien laws. We have also noted briefly the work of the Franciscan Friars of Killeigh, through whose efforts the people of Killeigh were assisted in their endeavour to survive and retain their knowledge of God and their love of neighbours.

However, while we take good notice of St. Senchell's community in the Abbey and the Friars situated nearby in one of their most important convents - for Franciscan houses are properly called convents - we dare not forget that there was another religious institution in Killeigh, an **Augustinian convent for nuns**. We do not have much detailed knowledge of this convent - either of the number or names of its inmates or any description of its buildings. The little we know is that it was founded round about 1150 to 1200 A.D. by an English family named Warren. This family apparently gave the site and possibly provided the buildings also. The site of the convent lay at the back of Mr Corbett's house, from the Mountmellick Road right behind the present Post Office and all the other houses alongside. It is believed that some stones of the building he scattered around in the gardens and one of the outbuildings in Mr Corbett's yard may be the remains of an outbuilding of the convent.

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Finola O'Connor Faly

Having founded the convent, it would be surprising if some member of members of the Warren family were not among its first inmates. The convent seems to have continued in existence till the suppression of the Monasteries by the English. We are certain of one only inmate in all this time - a Geashill woman, Finola, the daughter of Calvagh O'Connor Faly and of Margaret (daughter of O'Carroll). She had been a married woman and being widowed became a nun in Killeigh. The Four Masters record this event as follows:

"In 1447 the most beautiful and stately, the most renowned and illustrious of her time in all Ireland, her own mother only excepted, retired from this transitory world to prepare for life eternal and assumed the yoke of piety and devotion (took the veil) in the Monastery of Cill Achaidh."

The Four Masters record the death of Margaret O'Connor Faly:

"A.D. 1451, Margaret, daughter of O'Carroll and wife of O'Connor Faly, the best woman of her time in Ireland - for it was she who had given two invitations of hospitality, in the one year, to those who sought for rewards (i.e. poets, minstrels and members of mendicant orders, etc.) died after the victory of Uinction and Penance, triumphant over the world and the devil."

The phrase "after the victory of Uinction and Penance" is an expression commonly used in the past, especially those who retired into religious houses. It simply meant that they had made a good Confession and were anointed: in other words, they had received the last Sacraments.

The following interesting account of the two feasts to the literati of Ireland, above referred to, one of which took place at Killeigh, and the other at Rathangan, Co. Kildare, is given by that lady's enthusiastic panegyrist, Duaid MacRirbis:

"A.D. 1451 - a gracious year this year was, though the glory and solace of the Irish was sett, but the glory of heaven was amplified and extolled therein; and although this is a year of grace (Jubilee) with the Roman Church, it is an ungracious and unglorious year to all the learned of Ireland, both philosophers, poets, guests, strangers, religious persons, souldiers, mendicant or poore orders, and to all manner and sorts of the poor in Ireland; also for the general support of their maintenance's decease, to wit, Margaret, daughter of Thady O'Carroll, King of Ely, O'Connor Faly, Calvagh's wife. It is she that twice in one year proclaimed to and commonly invited (in the dark days of the year, to wit, on the feast of Da Sinchell, in Killachy), all persons, both Irish and Scottish, or rather Albaines, to two general feasts of bestowing both meate and moneyeys, with all manner of gifts, whereunto gathered to recieve gifts the number or two thousand seven hundred persons, besides gamesters and poor men, as it was recorded in a roll to that purpose, and that accompt was made thus, ut vidimus, viz: The cheife kins of each family of the Learned Irish was by Gilla-nauoembhe MacEgan's hand, the Chief Judge to O'Connor, written in the roll, and his adherents and kinsmen, so that the aforesaid number 2,700 was listed in that roll with the Arts of Dan, or poetry, musick and antiquitie. And Maelin O'Maelconry, one of the chief learned of Connaught, was the first written in that roll, and first payed and dieted, or sett to supper, and those of his name after him, and soforth, everyone as he was payed was written in that roll, for fear of mistake, and set down to eate afterwards. And Margaret, on the garrots of the greate church of Da Sinchell, clad in cloath of gould, her dearest friends about her, her clergy and judges too, Calvagh himself on horseback, by the churches outward side, to the end that all things might be done orderly, and each one served successively. And first of all she gave two chalices of gould as offerings that day on the Altar of God Almighty, and she also caused to nurse or foster two young orphans. But so it was. We never saw nor heard neither the like of that day, nor comparable to its glory and solace. And she gave the second inviting proclamation (to every one that came not that day) on the feast day of the Assumption of our Blessed Virgin Mary in harvest, at or in Rath-Imayn (Rathangan), and so we have been informed that the second day in Rath-Imayn was nothing inferior to the first day. And she was the only woman that has made most of preparing high-ways and erecting bridges, churches, and mass-books, and all manner of things profitable to serve God and her soul, and not that only, but while the world stands, her very many gifts to the Irish and Scottish Nations shall never be numbered. God's blessings, the blessing of all Saints, and every other blessing from Jerusalem to Inis-Gluair be on her going to heaven, and blessed be he that will reade and heare this, for blessing her soul. Cursed be that sore in her breast that killed Margaret."

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Nuala O'Connor Faly

It was another Geashill woman, Nuala O'Connor Faly, who was responsible for the building of the Monastery of Donegal, the Monastery of the Four Masters who have handed down to us so much of the history of Ireland. It was in the year 1474, when the Franciscans were holding a provincial chapter in the monastery of Ross-Rial, that Nuala O'Connor, daughter of O'Connor Faly, one of the most, powerful of the Leinster princes, and wife of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, came, accompanied by a brilliant following of noble ladies, and a goodly escort of kerne and galloglass, to present an humble memorial to the assembled fathers. When the latter had duly considered the prayer of the Lady Nuala's memorial, they deputed the provincial to inform her that they could not comply with her request at that moment, but that at some future time they would cheerfully send a colony of Franciscans to the principality of Tirconnell. "What!" replied the princess, sorely pained by the refusal. "I have journeyed a hundred miles to attain the object that has long been dearest to my heart, and will you now venture to deny my prayer? If you do, beware of God's wrath; for I will appeal to his throne, and charge you with the loss of all the souls which your reluctance may cause to perish in the territory of Tirconnell.

" Earnest and energetic was the lady's pleading, so much so that she ultimately overcame the hesitation of the friars, some of whom professed themselves ready to accompany her to Tirconnell. Proud of her success, the lady Nuala then set out on her journey homewards, followed by a goodly number of Franciscans, who, when they arrived in the barony of Tir-Hugh immediately commenced building the far-famed monastery at the head of the lovely bay of Donegal. The site, indeed, was happily chosen, and nothing could surpass the beauty of the prospect which it commanded. Hard by the windows of the refectory was the wharf, where foreign ships took in their cargo of hides, fish, wool, linen, cloth, and falding, and there, too, came the galleons of Spain, laden with wine and arms in exchange for the merchandise which the lords of Tirconnell sent annually to the Brabant marts, then the great emporiums for the north of Europe. In sooth, it was a lovely spot, and sweetly suggestive of holy meditations. In the calm days of summer, when the broad expanse of the estuary lay still and unruffled, mirroring in its blue depths the overcanopying heaven, was it not a fair image of the unbroken tranquility and peace to which the hearts of the recluses aspired? And in the gloomy winter nights, when the great crested waves rolled in majestic fury against the granite headlands, would not the driving storm, wreck, and unavailing cry of drowning mariners, remind the inmate of that monastery that he had chosen the safer part, by abandoning a world where the tempest of the passions wreaks destruction far more appalling. But the Lady Nuala died before the building was finished, and good reason had the friars to cherish lasting remembrance of her piety and munificence. Her remains were interred in a vault which her widowed lord caused to be constructed almost under the grand altar, and he also determined that thenceforth his entire posterity should repose in the same crypt.

In the course of that year (1474) Hugh Roe O'Donnell took his second wife, Fingalla, daughter of Conor O'Brien, king of Thomond, and this lady, emulating the virtues of her predecessor, spared no pains in forwarding the work, till at length she saw the monastery, with its church, cloisters, chapter-houses, refectory, library, and other appurtenances, entirely completed. The dedication of the sacred edifice took place in the same year, and a more solemn spectacle was never before witnessed in Tir-Hugh - nay, not even in the days of blessed Columba, that greatest of all church-builders. The munificence of O'Donnell and his wife Fingalla to our friars was unbounded, for, not satisfied with presenting rich altar furniture to the church, they also bestowed some quarters of fertile glebe on the monastery, and, furthermore, gave the friars a perpetual right to fish for salmon - nay, and authorized

them to build a weir just where the Esk empties its silvery waters into the bay. This was a matter of great convenience to the monastery during the Lenten and other fasts which the rule of St. Francis prescribes; and, indeed, so much did salmon abound in the waters of the bay, that I, myself, in the time of my noviciate, have often seen the friars taking, right under the windows of the infirmary, prodigious quantities of this delicious fish at one haul of the net. "

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Franciscan Priests down the years

In this issue I wish to return again to the question of the Franciscan Monastery in Killeigh. As we look at the site of it now, we cannot fail to be dismayed at its almost total destruction - just one wall remains standing - not even the foundations of the destroyed part have been found - a place of learning and sanctity for centuries. It would be a continuing shame if we should allow it to pass completely out of mind and knowledge. The Annals of the Four Masters (and the Four Masters were Franciscans) record that

"A.D. 1393 the Monastery of Cill-Achaidh, in the Diocese of Kildare, was erected by O'Connor Faly for Franciscan Friars."

However, another ancient historian named Ware, asserts that its foundation was in the reign of King Edward I which was earlier than 1393. Ware goes on to state that Donald O'Bruin, Guardian of the Minorites of Killeigh, was appointed Bishop of Clonmacnoise in 1303. He is the first member of Killeigh Monastery known to us. After him, for a period of more than 300 years, we have not discovered the names of any Franciscans of Killeigh.

Meantime, King Henry VIII of England decreed the destruction of all Abbeys, Monasteries, Convents and religious houses of the British Isles, including Ireland, in the year 1535. Later, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I of England, it became unlawful to become or to be a priest or a nun within the British Isles, with the result that all priests had to go into hiding to avoid arrest or execution. For this reason, we cannot know the names of many priests during the days of the Penal Laws. However, we have been able to discover the names of some of the Franciscans of Killeigh, all of whom had been Guardians of the Monastery of Killeigh. We give their names with the years they were appointed Guardians:

The first name we know of is

Fr. Francis O'Sullivan O.F.M. who was Guardian of Killeigh about 1640 and who was put to death by the Cromwellians on Scariff Island.

Fr. Bonaventure McLeachlyn, O.F.M. 1645. He was appointed Vicar Provincial of the Friars in 1654. He is the one we wrote of in a previous issue who took a prominent part amongst the Confederate Catholics in 1651-52 and was chosen by all the Clergy of Leinster to represent them as their delegate to the General Assembly of the Confederation at Galway.

Fr. Lawrence Dalton, O.F.M., Guardian 1709-12;

Fr. Simon Watters, O.F.M. 1717;

Fr. Eugene Molloy, O.F.M., 1729.

Fr. Charles Delaman, O.F.M., 1735;

Fr. Anthony Fox, O.F.M., 1744-48. He was appointed Provincial Definitor in 1748 and again Guardian in 1751, 1755, 1763 and 1772.

Fr. Thomas Johnson, O.F.M., described as 'Sacral Theologicae Lector Emeritus' (which means he had been previously a Professor of Sacred Theology), Guardian of Killeigh 1778, 1779.

Fr. Dan Broderick, O.F.M., 1780.

Fr. Thomas Johnson, O.F.M., 1791.

Fr. Patrick Petitt, 1803.

Fr. John O'Brien, O.F.M., 1804-7.

This list seems to omit some or many names during this long period of Cromwell and persecution, but it brings us up almost to Catholic Emancipation and to the Episcopacy of Bishop Dr. Doyle (J.K.L.) of whom we wrote in the issue about Killeigh Schools. We should remember that all of these Franciscans had no house or monastery. They were "on the run," getting food and accommodation where ever they could; and whenever they could not, persevering in fasting. Not only had their monastery been closed and locked, but its very site had been taken into the King's possession and then leased for a number of years to a gentleman called John Alee or Lee, a native of Kildare, who also got the lease of Killeigh Abbey as well as the land and Abbey of Kildare. When the period of years of the lease expired, the properties were sold to one of the Royal favourites for a very favourable price.

During this time the Catholic community had neither church nor school nor parochial house. According to English Law, they had no priest either. The existence of a priest was contrary to the Laws of England - the Penal Laws. As the name 'Penal Laws' indicates, there was a great variety of such Laws from time to time - some more severe than others.

In spite of these Laws, priests and the priesthood persevered, but under the most severe and inhuman conditions. As we look over the foregoing list of priests and I am sure we should add to that list many other names from the Abbey and the secular priesthood - but all living in similar, almost

impossible conditions, we recall that these men, houseless, homeless, became a blessing to the people, not only of Killeigh, but of Ireland.

A blessing! Because they were able to organise the children into 'Hedge Schools'

where, in secret, they made it possible to secure the Catholic education of young people;

where, in secret, they were able to discover 'safe houses' for the celebration of Mass, or lacking these, they were able to explore bogs, valleys, rocks or mountain tops where they could assemble the faithful for Mass, instruction, Baptism, or marriage. Above all, their spirit of endurance and dedication was an inspiration to even the hardest sinner. Indeed the civil authorities, by imposing such penalties, were undoing their own expressed objective - the utter and complete destruction and annihilation of the Catholic Religion. But these priests - in spite of every law and every opposition and punishment held on, inspired by their fullness of faith, always hopeful that one day they might return to normal living in their old home. But their numbers were decreasing - as seems apparent from looking over the foregoing list - appointments were repeated so often, almost certainly due to scarcity of members.

Though Guardians continued to be appointed, they could not be anything more than Titular Guardians, for they had no settled community, no common rule or life lived in one house. Those men might be more correctly called Superiors; men who would direct and, in some way, regulate the comings and goings of others within a specified area.

In addition, by the date of their last appointment both Carlow and Maynooth Colleges had been for a number of years in existence for the training of young men for the priesthood, so that Catholic life was in its infancy of being restored and normalised. Dr Doyle (J.K.L.), though himself an Augustinian, had been a Professor of Theology in Carlow.

The following letter to Dr Doyle and Dr Doyle's refusal of its request marks the final end of the Friars in Killeigh:

"In 1821, a friar, probably the locum tenens of the Franciscans, established himself at Killurin. Judging from the subjoined letter, which has been found amongst the prelate's papers, Dr Doyle, the bishop, appears not to have looked favourably on the enterprise:

"My Lord, - I received your favour, and from the tenor of it had to regret the omission of more than one circumstance of not small importance in my late letter. Your Lordship disapproves of the establishment of a house in which a single Religious resides, without the advantages of conventual discipline or regular domestic occupation. Nothing can be more just, but it is my settled plan, and which, aided by divine Providence, I shall most faithfully execute, to render the establishment at Killurin in no wise obnoxious to such objection. I intend to have a small chapel annexed, in which that portion of the neighbouring parishioners, when by necessity or circumstances they cannot attend their parish chapel, may on Sundays and holidays, have the benefit of assisting at Mass and hearing the Word of God; or, at least, whither they may send their children to be instructed in the Christian doctrine, and as to domestic life, I mean, even before I am joined by one or two

other Priests, which will not be a distant day, to associate with me some devout Laics who wish to consecrate themselves to God in religion, and whose office will be (for one of them, at least) to teach gratis, under my own direction, the poor children of the vicinity, instruct them in the duties of our holy Religion, and prepare them for the Sacraments. I must now apologise to your Lordship for this new trouble, but it seemed advisable to acquaint you with these circumstances, as the statement must alter the complexion of the whole matter. Allow me to add a request that you will favour me with a line at your convenience, and to assure you of the respect, with which I have the honour to be, my Lord, your Lordship's very humble and obedient servant, - Br. John Joseph Donovan.
"Tullamore, Oct. 30th, 1821."

An interesting book now available –

OFFALY 100 YEARS AGO – first published in Birr in 1890 as “THE KING’S COUNTY DIRECTORY”.

This final section was prepared for the Autumn-Christmas 1989 Edition of the ‘Killeigh Parish Emigrants Newsletter’

I am glad to have had the privilege of saving and publishing this work by my predecessor, Fr. Dan Kennedy, P.P. of Killeigh from 1955 to 1977 .

John Stapleton, P.P. of Killeigh 1st July 2003.

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