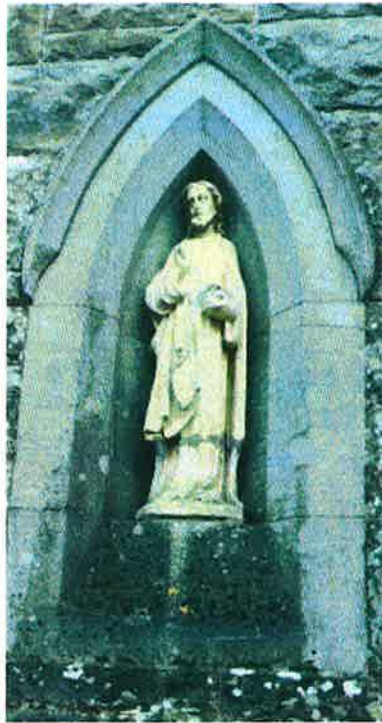


A history of Saint Colmcille's Church, Skryne



By Louis Morris, Aged 10





Figure 1 St. Colmcille's Church in Skryne, Co. Meath

The church in Skryne is called the church of St. Colmcille. Skryne gets its name from 'Scrín Cholm Cille', meaning the shrine of St. Colmcille which was brought to Skryne in 875AD. The church was first started in 1827/MDCCCXXVII and the foundation stone was laid by Fr. Berry. It took five years to build the church.¹ The Corbally Stourton family, Baronies of Skryne and Ratoath since the 1800s², gave the land for Skryne church to be built on.

The Corbally Stourton family lived in Corbalton House in Skryne. They are known locally as the Corbaltons. The Corbalton family were very wealthy.

They left the parochial house to the Catholic Church (where the priest lives). We think the original part of the house was built in 1880. Father Tomas lives in this house and there's an old clacker on the door to knock on. This could be heard from all over the house, because there was no music or T.V. Here is a photo I took of it.



Figure 2 The 'clacker' on Fr. Thomas' original front door



Figure 3 The plaque in Skryne church in memory of the Corballys

The Corbalton family are buried in a special vault under the church. There are two plaques inside the church mentioning Matthew Elias Corbally who died in 1870 and his wife Matilda who died in 1888.

¹ <http://www.skryneandrathfeighparish.ie/parish-churches/church-of-st-colmcille-skryne/?on=>

² The History of the Noble House of Stourton, of Stourton, in the County of Wilts By C.B. Joseph, Lord Mowbray, Segrave, Stourton

There's a door at the back of the church leading into the family vault, where Matthew and his wife Matilda Corbally are buried. This vault is now sealed off and secured with a steel door. The Corbaltons descendants went to visit Ireland and wanted to open the door to see their buried ancestors. The door didn't have any way to open, so they cut through the door and the hole was covered with a metal barrier.



Figure 4 The vault where the Corballys are buried under Skryne church

Local Margaret Hayes remembers that the Corbaltons held a sports day at Corbalton Hall every year. They had food in the garage and prizes. People walked there every year. The Corbalton family went to church every Sunday. They travelled by a pony trap which was like a car in the 19th century. If the Corbaltons passed, you would bow to them, eventually that rule stopped at early 1900. In the church the Corbaltons had their own seats which was at the front of the balcony and if anyone else sat there they would be 'thrown' out of the church. The Corbaltons owned many houses in Skryne. They even owned the houses next to the Gaelic football pitch in Skryne. The Corbaltons had a beautiful garden and sold plants. They also had their own tailor/shirt maker, gardener and steward. The steward looked over the land that they owned.

In 1829 Catholic emancipation was given in Ireland and Britain. In the late 1700s and early 1800s the British government passed many laws that gave the Catholics in Ireland and Britain more freedom. The final law was the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. It allowed Catholics to serve as members of the British Parliament.³



Figure 5 The first commemorative postage stamps of Ireland, issued in 1929, commemorate the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 with a portrait of Daniel O'Connell.

After this time, churches which had started as mud huts were re-built. The first church in Skryne had mud walls and a thatched roof, which you could get to in a large field. They call it "The Chapel Field". The Chapel Field was between the village and the castle of Skryne. There was a church built approximately every three miles so that people could walk to mass. When cars were not around.

There were five local parishes Skryne, Rathfeigh, Macetown, Tara and Templekieran. Every parish had two churches and many of the old graveyards can still be seen today. Father Thomas O' Mahony and Father Joe Gleeson are the parish priests in the Skryne and Rathfeigh parish today. Father Berry was the parish priest when the church was built in 1827. Father Healy was the parish priest when the church was extended 1986. See the photo below I took in Fr. Thomas' parochial house for further details.

This Church of St. Colmcille, Patron of the Parish, erected by Rev. Michael Berry, P.P. in 1827, was extended by Rev. John Kelly P.P. in 1863 Rev. Gerald Cooney P.P. 1983

	<u>Parish Priests</u>	<u>Bishops</u>	<u>Popes</u>
1827-	Michael Berry	Dr. Plunkett	Leo XII
-1837	Christopher Halligan	Dr. Logan	Pius VIII
1837-1858	Patrick O'Connor	Dr. Cantwell	Gregory XVI
1858-1882	John Kelly	Dr. Nulty	Pius IX
1882-1901	Michael Gallery	Dr. Gaffney	Leo XIII
1901-	James Kelly	Dr. Gaughran	St Pius X
1901-1908	Bernard Guinan		Benedict XV
1908-1918	William Egan	Dr. Mulvany	Pius XI
1911-1939	Christopher O'Farrell	Dr. D'Alton	Pius XII
1939-1976	Gerald Cooney	Dr. Kyne	John XXIII
1976-	John Healy	Dr. McCormack	Paul VI

Figure 6 A list of all the parish priests in Skryne church and the Bishops and Popes at the time

³ <http://kids.britannica.com/elementary/article-487483/Catholic-Emancipation>

There are about 750 houses in Skryne giving an estimated population of 3000 people today. The number of people was bigger in the 1970s so the church needed to be extended. The Parish of Skryne covers a wide area touching the Parishes of Ratoath, Curragha, Dunshaughlin, Duleek, Johnstown and Kilmessan.

By the 1980s the church roof was in a very poor state and it was decided to take the opportunity to extend the church for the number of people.

At one point rumour was going round that the church was going to be knocked and be re-built because the place started to rot. They thought that it would be cheaper to get a new one, instead of getting it fixed. Apparently it didn't happen in the end because it was so nice. Instead they renovated it and extended it, and put copper around the outside.



Figure 7 Main aisle in Skryne Church

Two naves were added to the sides of the church in the extension in 1986. Beautiful stained glass windows one showing Our Lady and the second showing the sunrise.



I talked to the builder Christie Barry from Garlow Cross and he said he also built a confessional room, a boiler house with central heating, a new porch with special terazza floors. He also did lots of renovations to the roof putting in new slates and new wooden joists. They ran short of

slates and were able to get more from the Corbally Estate now called Corbalton Hall as they had old slates in storage from their own buildings.

Also new gutters and copper downpipes were installed. The foreman was Chris Traynor ex Cormac Murray builders. Cormac Murray had built Skryne National School and the grotto in 1954.

The architect for the extension and renovations was Eugene Caffrey. Eugene Caffrey was born in Donegal in 1915. He was my great great uncle, my Granddad, Gerard Caffrey's, uncle. He qualified as an architect in 1937. Only four qualified from UCD School of Architecture in 1937⁴. He worked for the Board of Works until he retired in 1982. He worked on a number of projects after he retired including the renovation of the church in Skryne and he also designed the extension of the school in Kingscourt in 1983-1984. Eugene lived in Dublin while he was doing this project. Christie said that every time my great uncle Eugene came out to see the work was going in the church in Skryne he would climb to the very top of the scaffolding (which was up to the top of the spire).

Before the church extension was finished Eugene became really ill and his daughter (Grainne) took over the project. Eugene died shortly after the project in 1987. Grainne is my first cousin twice removed. Isn't it funny that even though my mom is from Cork, her great great grandfather (my great great great grandfather) was born in Duleek in 1840 and moved to Belfast, my great great grandfather was born in Donegal and his son, my great uncle Eugene, who grew up in Donegal and lived in Dublin, came to be the architect of my local church where I serve mass!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd like to thank Christie Barry, Margaret Hayes, Dr Clarke, Father Thomas and my Mom and Dad for the help with my essay. Thank you for all the interesting facts you gave me.

⁴ <http://www.ucdarchitecture.ie/events#event=9>

Here are a few of the questions that I asked to find out about the history of Skryne church:

Do you know about the Corbaltys?
Do you know when they lived in Skryne?
Why did they decide to build a church here?
Were they wealthy?
Why did they extend church?
How long has there been a priest in Skryne?
Did you start in Skryne?
How long has there been a school?
Is there any historical records in the church?

Here are some of the notes I took when people answered my questions about the history of Skryne church:

Corbaltons were very nice
Nigel
Vanessa → Saddy of Corbalton.
Stoutons has their own seats in the church
Used traps in the old times
His remains are their St. Cholmece
in the church that has it got name.
1946
Beautiful flowers
Patrick Miles Brian Smyth

I enjoyed researching the history of Skryne church and especially talking to people about it.