

TULLYBRACKEY CHURCH

By James Canon Costello

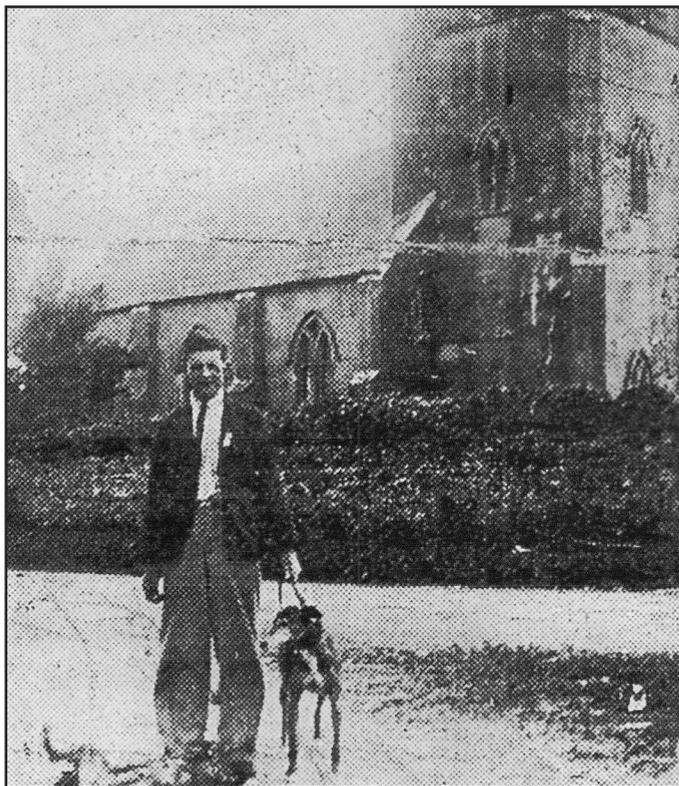
An article on Tullybrackey Church, written by James Canon Costello, Parish Priest of Bruff, which previously appeared in *The Dawn* is reproduced below, with permission. A number of people mentioned, who were alive when the article was written, have since passed to their eternal rewards. The Tullybrackey Church site lies within the parish of Grange.

Article

Publications like *The Dawn* play an outstanding role in cataloguing for the benefit of future generations – the fact and folklore that root us in our native place. A sense of history, a sense of place gives a perspective on people and enriches our appreciation of all that has made us what we are. Priest and people are one of the many sources of local history.

A chance conversation with Tom O'Brien of Rockbarton brought me across the road to a cemetery not known to many of the present generation of Bruff people. When he talked about the Church of Ireland that stood within the boundary fence, my interest grew. It was apparently built by Lord Guillamore for the benefit of his family and staff, who were both Protestant and Catholic. In passing, it is only right to mention that Guillamore gave the site for the present RC Church in Meanus. Like a dog scenting a bone, I began to forage for information.

During the Church Unity Octave, January 1999, Archdeacon Michael Nuttall, Church of Ireland Rector of Adare spoke in Bruff Church. This in turn gave rise to an invitation at the Old Bakehouse with the Archdeacon and Bishop Edward Darling, Church of Ireland, Bishop of Limerick. Fr Joe Foley, CC and myself appreciated this kind gesture of friendship, with its ecumenical and indeed historical overtones. Arising from our conversation, Bishop Darling suggested I get in touch with Raymond Refausse, Librarian and Archivist of the Representative Church Body Library, as a possible source of information on the “missing church”.



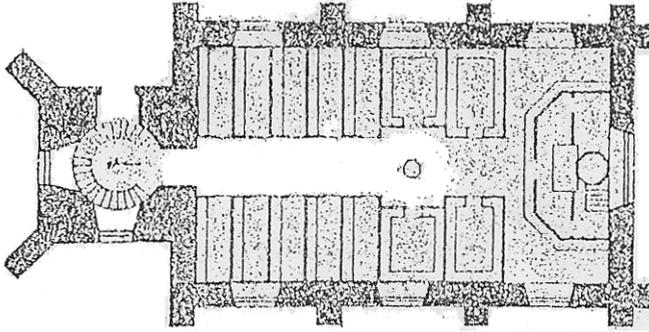
Church of Ireland, Tullybrackey in 1950s with Tom O'Brien of Rockbarton *in foreground.*

In his reply, the archivist gave the name of the church as Tullybrackey and the information that it was demolished in 1959, and the graveyard was transferred to Limerick County Council in 1960. In addition, he included items from the *Fourth Report of His Majesty's Commissioners on Ecclesiastical Revenue and Patronage in Ireland*, August 1838 and *Samuel Lewis Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, 1837. He alerted me to the existence of a mid-

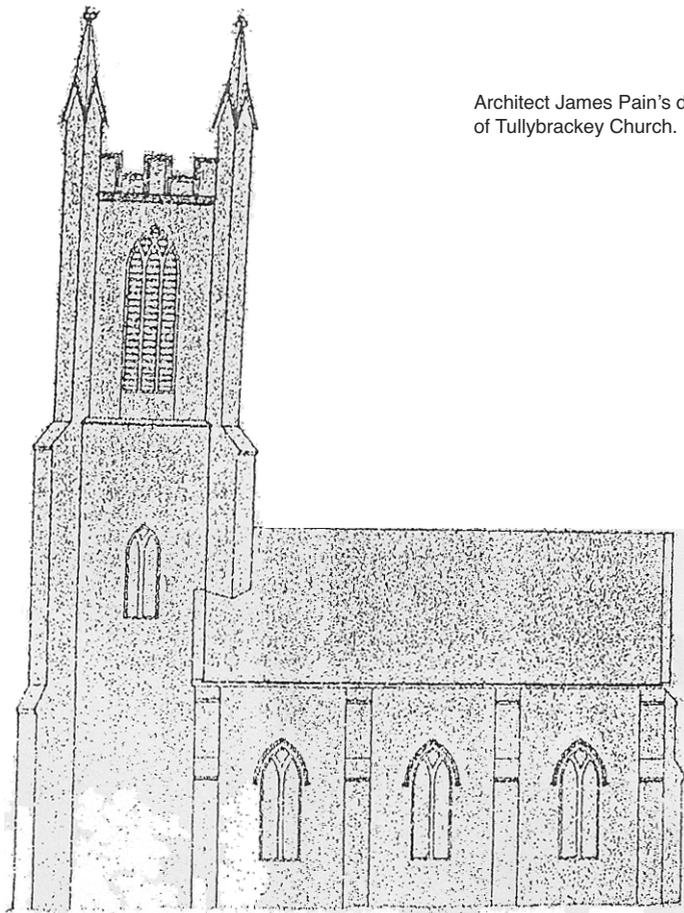
nineteenth century line drawing of the south elevation of the church by the architect, James Pain. I obtained a copy of this drawing from the Irish Architectural Archive.

According to Samuel Lewis, the church was erected in 1819 on a new site, about a quarter of a mile from the old building and about midway between Rockbarton and the Glebe House. He describes the church as an elegant edifice in the later English style, with a lofty square tower crowned with pierced battlements and pinnacles. It cost £2,500 of which £1,200 was contributed in two grants from the Board of First Fruits, and the remaining £1,300 was a donation from Lord Guillamore. Lewis also mentions two schools, male and female, wholly supported by Lord Guillamore and the Rector, also a private school in which 58 boys and 22 girls were educated. I wonder did the architect who designed the RC Church at Meanus (built 1850) borrow some ideas from his near neighbour.

The Rector, Rev John Fitzgerald, lived in the Glebe House, which was constructed in 1813 at a cost of £738-9-2d. He took up residence on 8th September 1821. In 1831, an addition was made to the house.



Architect James Pain's design drawing of Tullybrackey Church.



In the memory of locals, this church was known as ‘The Preaching Church.’ More than likely, this “title” indicated the high esteem in which the Word of God and its proclamation was held within the Anglican Community. The church was capable of accommodating 120 persons. Divine Service was

celebrated once on Sundays and the principal festivals. The Sacrament was administered four times in the year. Mai Harty of Grange told me that she recalls, as a child, walking on a Sunday afternoon with her father. A visit to the Tullybrackey Church has left her with an abiding memory of the “thumping and the tonguing” they both got from Mrs Harty when the details of the outing emerged that evening. Egan Clancy told me that the late Jack Clancy carried out a good deal of repair work on the church.

Bishop John J Hogan, a native of Caherguillamore, wrote an interesting memoir “*Fifty Years Ago*”, in 1898. He describes Tullybrackey as an “elegant church with its massive tower, commonly called the White Hall Steeple”. Perhaps the local people saw the church as a symbol of domination. Within the church grounds, I found four tombstones with the following inscriptions.

“Sacred to the memory of Gerald Wensly Tyrrel Rector of Tullybrackey for 29 years. Born Jan 5 1807. Died August 1884 Thess 4-14”

“In memory of Benjamin Hawkeshawe Esqr. Who died 20th Sept 1863 aged 54 yrs. Erected by his sister Charity Hawkeshawe. Jesus saith unto her, thy brother shall rise again. John 11-23.”



Mai Harty of Old Road, Grange.



Lucy and Mary O'Brien, sisters of Tom O'Brien of Rockbarton.

“In memory of Charles Wilmot Smith. Who died Jan 29th, 1900. Georgina Anne Smith. Died March 25th, 1865. Emma Georgina Smith. Died March 10th 1900. I am the resurrection and the life. John VIII-25”

“In memory of Sarah wife of James Forbes, who died 3rd Sept 1884.”