

Tour's former parish priest finds a new resting place

By **NORMA PRENDIVILLE**

OVER 130 years after the event, a folk memory in Tournafulla has

proved surprisingly accurate in locating the burial place of a former parish priest who died in 1859.

Now a new and more final resting place has



Liam Lenihan looks at the the new grave of parish priest, Fr Richard Shanahan. (LL)



Bobby and Sandra Mullan with some of the old church's stone they have in their garden. (LL)

been found for the priest, Fr Richard Shanahan, in the grounds of the parish church he was responsible for building.

And parishioners in Tournafulla are hopeful that publicity about the event will lead to a link-up with their former pastor's family.

The idea of erecting a memorial to Fr Shanahan took hold over a year ago, according to Fr Liam Kelly, PP, Tournafulla.

A history of the diocese written by a Canon Begley made a brief reference to the fact that a Fr Richard Shanahan, parish priest of Tournafulla from 1849-59, was buried in the old church built near the river Allaughan in 1814.

That particular church was not used after 1859 when the new one on the hill was consecrated.

And the entire site on the banks of the river - once the location for village activities such as a cooper, blacksmith and tailor - was abandoned following the Big Wind of 1839 and the accompanying floods.

But the story lived on in the parish that the man whose own last Mass was the first in the new church, was buried on the riverbank near where the ash tree grows.

And when the investigation into Fr Shanahan began in earnest, this proved accurate.

Another surprise came when those charged with exhuming the body of Fr Shanahan found his remains still intact after 135 years.

A native of Limerick, Fr Shanahan was born in 1810, entered Maynooth for the Limerick diocese in August 1828, and was ordained there in June 1835.

His brother, Timothy, was also a diocesan priest, ordained in 1833, who died as parish priest of Kildimo in 1864.

Fr Richard held five curacies in all - Rockhill, Glenroe, Ballingarry, again Rockhill, and then Abbeyfeale, before being appointed parish priest of Tour in 1849.

These were difficult times throughout the country with the effects of the potato blight and Famine still being felt.

Tour at the time was sparsely populated, with neither Mountcollins nor Tournafulla appearing on

the Ordnance Survey map of 1841.

And the church inherited by Fr Richard was a small, thatched affair on the banks of the river which also did duty as a hedgeschool.

As a tenant farmer of 43

The local landlord, the Earl of Devon, had to be petitioned for help in roofing the church, which he agreed to do, and St Patrick's Parish Church was finally completed in 1859.

The first Mass in the new church was celebrated by Fr Richard, but it was also to be his last, and he died the same year.

With no graveyard in Tour at the time, he was buried on the site of the old church, and remained there until the recent exhumation brought him to rest in his new grave in the grounds of St Patrick.

"It was the wish of the people that he be buried in consecrated ground," local man, Liam Lenihan, explained.

The old church had long since disappeared and indeed, stones from the original building have been used by locals, including Bobby and Sandra Mullan, who have incorporated it in their garden.

Mr Lenihan believes that it may still be possible to trace Fr Shanahan's family, and he has appealed to anyone with information to come forward.

In addition to having a brother a priest, Fr Shanahan also had three nephews priests.

One, Fr Gerald was a parish priest in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in England, and the other two, Fr Timothy and Fr Denis, were ordained for the Diocese of Limerick. They were born in Athlunkard Street, in Limerick, and Timothy went on to become Vicar-General, dying in Ballingarry in 1915 as Dean of Limerick.

Van driver 'bedrid'

A VAN driver pulling a trailer spent eight days in hospital after a truck hit him from the side as he was turning into the entrance of a house, Limerick Circuit Court heard.

Timothy McKenna (33) a builder, from Old Kildimo, sought general damages, loss of earnings totalling £3,500, and damage to a driver's watch valued at £200, a pair of glasses worth £200, and other losses amounting to £717.

He took his action against truck driver, Pasty Morrissey, and Barna Transport, Barnagh.

The incident happened on October 20, 1992, on the

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