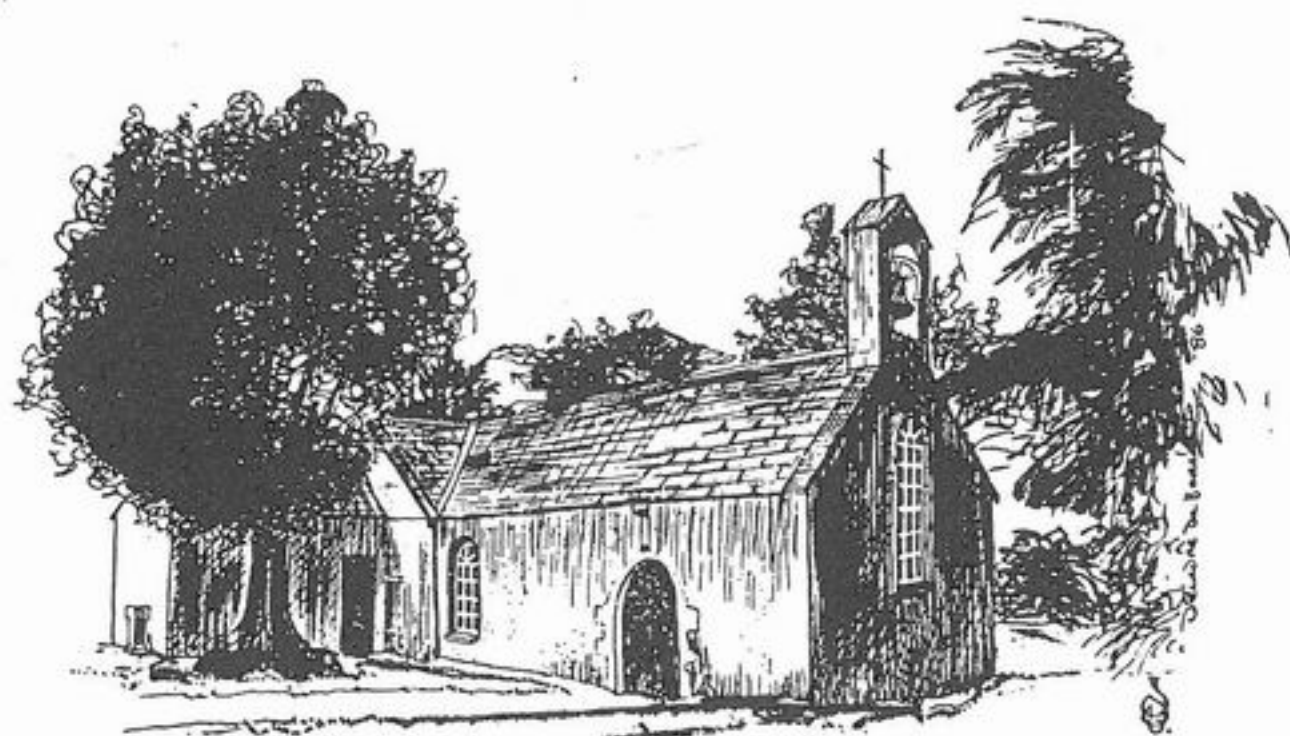


A

Appeal

For help in the restoration of
Ireland's finest Barn Style Church.



St. John's Catholic Church
Cratloe, Co. Clare.

Ireland's Finest Barn Style Church

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CRATLOE, CO. CLARE

A SHORT HISTORY OF ITS FAMOUS BARN CHURCH

In a quiet secluded area on the edge of the Garrannon Oak Woods, Cratloe, is to be found Ireland's finest barn style Church which will celebrate its bi-centenary in 1991. It is one of the last of three Barn Churches left in the whole country.

It was commenced in 1791 by Rev. James Ward (1790-1802) who built the Nave and continued by his successor Rev. Jeremiah (Darby) Cronin (1802-1807) who added the transepts in 1806. He also incorporated a medieval doorway in one of the transepts, which could have been taken from the ruined Church of Cruachan or the original Parish Church of Kilfintinan, now totally demolished.

St. John's Church has been described in a special report by An Foras Forbartha of "Areas and Sites in Co. Clare of Historic and Artistic Interest" as follows:

It is "a small, low T-Shaped Barn Church with a date stone WMPC 1791" and another, date stone 1806. The exterior is limewashed with good fenestration; round headed clear-glass windows and original slates on the roof. The interior has a fine early 19th century reredos with marbleised columns, also a small side chapel on the south side similarly treated, and also three bow-shaped galleries. The Church is lovingly well kept by the Parish Priest and is hidden away on the west side of Cratloe Wood. This is an exceptionally fine example of an early barn Church. To our knowledge one of the finest in the country".

This report was written in 1975 by the well known architect Maurice Craig and the architectural historian William Garner who is now Director/Secretary of the Irish Architectural Archive.

In the mid eighteenth century due to the shortage of clergy the pastors of Kilfintinan took over part of the neighbouring Parish of Cill Fhaoile/Killeely and their ministrations took them on horseback to places as far away as Coonagh.

On Tuesday, the 7th of June, 1791 we read in the Limerick Journal that "the Parish Priest of Cratloe, the Rev. Mr. Ward" was offering a reward for his horse stolen whilst on Parish Visitation. His horse was described as "a dun coloured mare with a star, three white legs, the tail and mane black, a list along her back".

A solid silver chalice still in use, commemorating the building of the first section of the Church in 1791, has the following inscription - "This Chalice was procd by the Rev. Js Ward for the Parish of Kilfintinan October 1792". The Rev. James Ward was called to his maker in 1802.

The original Parish name of Cratloe/Creatalach was Kilfintinan, but some problems exist regarding the derivation of this name as no "Fintinan" is listed as an Irish Saint. It would seem that the Parish name was derived from Cill Fionn t Seanain Church of the fair Senan.

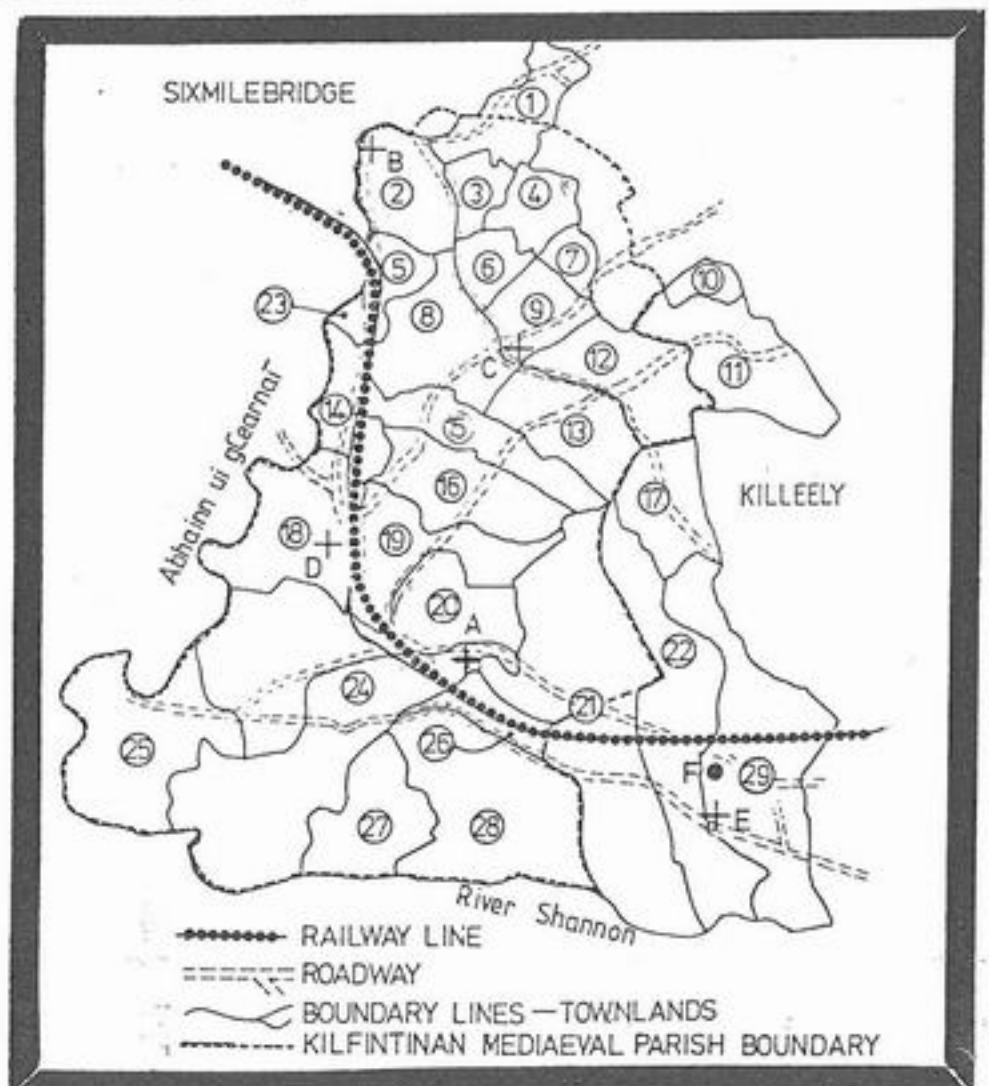
Cratloe is fortunate in having an early set of Parish Registers. The Baptismal Registers started by the Rev. Darby Cronin date from 1802 and these registers, together with the marriage registers have been indexed up to 1902. In time all the Indexed Registers of the Limerick Diocese will be computerised.

The Cratloe Marriage Registers only start in 1822 and this can be explained by the fact that in some areas in Ireland prior to Catholic Emancipation, marriage was still of a Civil rather than a Religious nature, being celebrated in private houses, taverns, or in picnic style in the open air and thus many weddings were not solemnised in Catholic Churches until the first or second decade of the 19th century. Close to St. John's Church is the Lourdes Grotto with its panoramic views of the locality. It was commenced in 1928 by the Rev. John Wallace with the help of his loyal parishioners who toiled for four years without remuneration until the project was completed in time for the 1932 Eucharistic Congress. It was solemnly dedicated in 1948 and has been recently renovated by the present Parish Priest, the Rev. Ronald Costello.

In conclusion, it should be remembered that Barn Churches are a valuable record of a formative period in Irish history and a most moving testimony to the determination and self reliance of the communities who built them in times much harsher than today.

CRATLOE MODERN PARISH AND TOWNLANDS

1. Fortwilliam
2. Ballyliddan West
3. Ballyliddan East
4. Knockroe
5. Carrownerribul
6. Gortnanool
7. Island
8. Carrowmore
9. Ballybroughan
10. Bunnabinna North
11. Bunnabinna South
12. Gallowshill
13. Heathmount
14. Calluragh
15. Castlequarter
16. Ballintlea South
17. Ballyvoughallan
18. Ballinphunta
19. Brickhill East
20. Brickhill West
21. Cratloe Mor
22. Cratloe Keel
23. Ballintlea North
24. Ballymorris
25. Moyhill
26. Laghile
27. Garrynacurra
28. Portdrine
29. Cratloe Moyle



CRATLOE AND IT'S CHURCHES

- A. Cratloe Barn Church
- B. "Little Church" Ballyliddan West
- C. Original Medieval Parish Church Kilfintinan
- D. Later Medieval Church Cruachan
- E. Private Medieval Chapel Cratloe Moyle
- F. Tobar Eoin - St. John's Holy Well