

# Tullaherin

By Miss May Sparks

**D**UBHAIRT an leigheachtaidhe go raibh fíor-athas uirthi a bheith ar an lathair sin, ait chlumhail, lan de stair agus d'adbhar seandailidheachta.

Ba chuis rimeid di a bheith ann b'fhonn onoir a thabhairt do Naomh Ciaran agus a chuidheachta bhean-  
nuighthe. Bhi suil aici go mbronnfadh na Naomhtha uilig a mhair 'sa taobh sin tire beannachtai ar an lucht eisteachta agus ar lucht comhnaidhthe na h-aite sin.

Like many of our early ecclesiastical establishments, very little is known of the history of this once important institution. According to the ecclesiastical arrangement in pre-Reformation days, the Rectory of Tullaherin belonged to the Precentor of Ossory and the Vicarage of Tullaherin to the Archdeacon. From this it follows that the Precentors of Ossory were the Parish Priests of Tullaherin and the Archdeacons were its Vicars and Curates.

## SEE LANDS

Bishopslough, Tullaherin, Carhan and Ballinaboolia were See lands so, from the existence of See lands here, together with the fact that Tullaherin was a Prebendal Parish, its Parish Priest being the Precentor of the Diocese, it may be assumed that Tullaherin was at one time an Episcopal See and that its extinction as such was effected by the Synod of Rathbreasail in 1118.

Authorities differ as to the correct name of this holy and historic locality, some hold that the name is Tulach Tirim (Tullaherim) meaning 'dry elevated land.' Others are of the opinion that the real name is Tulach Chiarain (Tullaherin) the tumulus of Ciaran.

### OGHAM STONE

About the year 1853 an Ogham Stone was discovered at Tullaherin—it now stands some yards away from the Round Tower and close to the ruins of the old church. The late Mr. Williams of Dungarvan (a great authority on ogham) stated that the writing on the stone was “Faca h-og Thigherin,” that is the plain or field of Ciaran.

Some fifty years ago portion of the inscription on the ogham stone was defaced (by accident) when workmen were repairing the Round Tower.

The Church of Tullaherin consists of nave and chancel, both in ruins. The nave is 65 ft. long and 24 ft. 4 ins. wide. Its north side wall and about 20 ft. of the east end of the opposite wall are built of very large, rough limestone blocks, belonging to the class of masonry described as cyclopean and must be assigned to a period at least two centuries before the Norman invasion. The west gable and about 40 ft. of the west end of the south side wall are built of stones of the ordinary size and are less ancient than the cyclopean masonry of the parts already mentioned. A parapet ran along the top of each side wall.

In the south side wall in the more ancient portion of the building there is a tall round arched lancet window, now built up. The original side windows were undoubtedly Celtic. The small ones that were substituted for them belong to about the 13th century :

*“A house of prayer—once consecrate  
To God’s high service—desolate!  
A ruin where once stood a Shrine  
Bright with the Presence All Divine.”*

In reviewing the book, *Screens and Galleries in English Churches*, by F. Bond, the reviewer states : “At the ruined Church of Tullaherin, County Kilkenny, the Stone Screen which divided the nave and chancel remained until a few years ago. It consisted of an arcade of three arches in masonry, which has recently been allowed to collapse and

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only the foundations of the piers of the arches now remain.” (I.R.S.A.I. 1910 p.409).

### CLOIGHTHEACH TULAIGH

The Round Tower of Tullow stands within a few yards of the church at its south-east end. It is 73 ft. high and is out of plumb, being inclined to the south as much as 2 ft., this is probably due to the grave digging. It is built of granite laid in horizontal courses. It consists of six storeys above the doorway. The upper storey is many centuries more modern than the rest of the tower. O'Donovan said that the lower windows of the tower were at least seven centuries older than those at the top.

The tower shares with Clonmacnoise the peculiarity of having eight windows at the ringing loft instead of the usual four. These eight windows were placed immediately under the Bencober but four of them, as well as all the Bencober (conical cap), are now destroyed.

When the round tower was being repaired in 1892 by the Board of Works, two sticks (of about the size of walking sticks) were found on the top and their position there was accounted for by the fact that many years ago the young men of the neighbourhood used to try their athletic powers in the following manner: With stick in hand, a man stood by the wall of the tower, pressing both knees against the wall, and then tried to throw the stick over the tower.

The tower is 73 ft. high and 50 ft. 6 ins. in circumference at the base.

The field at the north side of the church is covered to the extent of several acres with little mounds and remains of foundations as of a town or large village.

The Patron of St. Ciaran had been annually observed here on the Sunday following the 5th March, but was discontinued sometime about 1800.