

St Columba's, the Old Church in Straid

“The parish took its name from a small three-cornered piece of ground out beside the Old Church in Straid. That was the likely place where the monastery was built long ago. It must have dated from the time of Columcille...Near that piece of ground there is a height called Drom na Scolb, and the old people said that was the place where the monks used to dry the briars when they were thatching the monastery...The monastery well was in one of the three corners, the one next to the church wall. There is not a trace of the monastery left now, although at one time three hundred and fifty monks lived there.”ⁱ

Charles McGlinchey, *The Last of the Name.*

Charlie McGlinchey passes on to us the rich heritage of the parish through that great oral tradition so respectfully safeguarded by our ancestors. The parish of Clonmany, Cluain Maine, the Meadow of Maine, took its name, he tells us, from a small three-cornered piece of ground out beside the Old Church in Straid. It is interesting to note that the church of Maine would have been diocesan in organization before becoming monastic in the middle of the 6th century.

The ancient sites were chosen with care. Writing of the land around the old church, now known as Dresden, *the likely place where the monastery was built long ago,*ⁱⁱ Maghtochair had this to say, “Of the many lovely spots with which Inishowen abounds, Dresden is the loveliest of them all. The scenery is more than lovely: it is sublime. In fact there is everything that constitutes sublimity; rich pasture lands, well cultivated fields, venerable old trees, that have seen decades of years; and in the distance, lofty overhanging mountains, a glen and waterfall inferior to nothing in the north of Ireland; besides the broad blue waves of the Atlantic roll in at the beach at a distance of about half a mile.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The monastery, believed to have been founded by Columcille or one of his disciples, was no doubt a hub of activity, with skills in rural husbandry, thatching, bee-keeping, craft work, alongside an appreciation of art, learning and spirituality, passed on to the people of the parish. The monasteries owned great stretches of land, known as Church lands, which they cultivated as their means of support. Particular families, known as Erenagh families, inherited the management of the monastic lands.

The fact that the most influential Erenagh family in Inishowen, the O'Morrison of Clonmany, lived in Straid, on the doorstep of the Old Church, lends support to the importance of the area in the life of the church. In earlier times, up perhaps until the Danish invasion in the 10th century, the O'Morrison would have looked after the temporal affairs of the monastery, and after the reforms in the 12th century, collected the Bishops dues from the Church lands for all of Inishowen. They were rewarded for their work by having a portion of the Church lands as payment.

The Old Church passes to the Established Church, 1608

In the State papers 1601, listing the names of the chief places of strength in O'Dogherty's country called Ennisowen, as well as castles and forts, we read," *From Boncranogh to seawards is another castle and church, Clonmany, by the seaside. Here dwells a priest called Amerson* "

(Eoghan O'Muireasain, born in Clonmany, ordained 1590, Priest in Clonmany 1601-1631).

The death of Sir Cahir O'Doherty, 5th July 1608, provided an opportunity for Church and Crown to lay claim to the lands of Inishowen. Less than one month after Sir Cahir's death, the Church Lands of Clonmany were passed to the Established Church.^{iv} Letters patent James 1st, dated 3rd August 1608, transfer "the three quarters of Termon or Erenagh land of Clonemany and **the Church thereunto belonging** "to the Protestant Bishop of Derry. A second Letter patent, 25th May 1613, withdrew the Church and the quarter land of Dunally, but the church was regranted in a Letter patent, 12th February 1614. (Appendix 1,1a) The Erenagh lands, dating back to the old monastery, were to have new masters. So was the Old Church. (Appendix 2, 2a)

The first recorded rector of Clonmany, John Sterne, a graduate of St.John's College, Cambridge, arrived as early as 1622 and spent five years in the parish. His appointment was the result, no doubt, of measures proposed earlier by Chichester to establish 'a learned ministry'.

Sir Arthur Chichester Lord Deputy of Ireland, 1605-1616

Sir Arthur Chichester, had a particular association with Inishowen. A resolute soldier and shrewd formulator of policy, Chichester considered himself a crusader, motivated by strong religious zeal to anglicise Ireland. Protestantism was to be the means to that end. He exercised a severe religious policy which many would argue led to the Flight of the Earls. He was ordered by the Court of King James to tone this policy down so as not to alienate the native Irish. Paradoxically, London was in favour of a 'blanket' plantation which Chichester did not agree with.^v In this case he emerged as the champion of Gaelic Irish interests. He believed an over ambitious plantation would put the lives of the settlers at risk. In his view, English Servitors should be the main beneficiaries, with the retention of some native Irish to produce a smooth transition. He was not in favour of Scottish planters:

If the nobility and subjects of Scotland, having part of the escheated lands passed to them, be permitted to bring over the islanders or their neighbours of those northern parts, I think more trouble and less profit will arise from thence than if the Irish themselves held it as they do now.^{vi}

Sir Arthur Chichester acquires Inishowen Apart from the Church Lands, the remainder of the lands of Inishowen, some 15,146 acres, fell to Sir Arthur Chichester, leased from the Crown for £23-6s-0d. Chichester was now free to put his personal plantation policy into practice. First to be rewarded were officers who served in the Nine Years War and in the Rebellion of Cahir O’Doherty; Capt. Hart, Governor of Culmore Fort; Capt. Vaughan, Constable of Derry Fort. Gradually new names appeared on the Inishowen scene: Cary of Redcastle, Young of Culdaff, Harvey of Malin Hall, Davenport of New Carthage, Benson of Birdstown, Butler of Bunagee and Ball of Grouse Hall.^{vii} James 1st had passed a law forbidding intermarriage of British settlers with the native Irish. Undertakers and Servitors were bound by their contracts to import and provide accommodation for entire families.

In keeping with his plantation philosophy, Chichester subleased some land to the native Irish. The Census of 1659 shows some Dohertys and McLaughlins holding land in Inishowen, ‘in deference to their previous social standing.: Donell O Dogherty, gent and Conn O’Dogherty, gent, leased land in Clonmany, Brian Og McGlaughlin, gent, held land in the Claar, Carrowtreasna, Shroove and Glenagiveny areas.

The Civil Survey of 1654

The immediate circumstances leading to the taking of the Civil Survey (1554-56) was the desire by the Commonwealth government to discover the true nature and extent of land ownership in Ireland and to ascertain how this might be used to repay those who had advanced money to the government and those soldiers and officers whose pay was in arrears. It extended far beyond the discovery of forfeited lands, crown lands, and church lands, however; it revealed and preserved the memory of the ancient bounds, place names and antiquities.^{viii}

The Civil Survey shows all the civil land of Clonmany in the ownership of Arthur, Lord Chichester, Lord Viscount Carrickfergus, English Protestant, (of the family of Sir Arthur, Lord Deputy) apart from one ‘free houlde called Rasheny, ‘in the ownership of Arthur Leyning, English Protestant. The Bishop’s lands in Straid and Annaugh were leased by Mr James Downham, English Protestant and sixty acres of Glebe land in Rooskey were in the hands of the Commonwealth.

Maps drawn at the time clearly define the Churchlands.

The Census of 1659

The 1659 Census^{ix} produces some interesting statistics as to the population of Donegal and to the progress of the Plantation.

	Irish	Eng & Scots	Total
County of Donegal	8589	3412	12001
Barony of Enishowen	2678	453	3131
Parish of Clonmany	270	1 (Mr Arthur Leyning)	271

While the Reformation and Plantation had come to Clonmany, the parish remained the most Catholic and Irish in Inishowen. A Parochial Visitation to Clonmany in 1661 lists John Linsham as Parish Clerk and Donagh O'Doyley and Arthur O'Doherty as Church Wardens.^x The Hearth Money Roll for Clonmany Parish 1665 lists just four non-Irish names, Arthur Lening, David Ritchey of Carrickabracky, Henry Duff and John Demston. .

The Old Church does not appear to have had many parishioners. (Appendix 4)

Rev. Daniel McLaughlin (Domhnall Gorm) Rector of Clonmany 1672, d.1711

The first minister I heard of was Donal McLoughlin who died in 1711. He had a brother, Peadar, who was parish priest here at the same time. The old people had a lot of stories about these two brothers. **Charles McGlinchey, *The Last of the Name***

Three rectors were to follow before the arrival as rector in 1672 of the Rev Daniel McLaughlin, Domhnall Gorm, a descendant of Brian Og MacLaughlin, one of Chichester's leasees in Carrowtreasna, themselves Erenaghs of Cooley. The story of his shipwreck while travelling to the continent to study for the priesthood with his brother Peadar, and subsequent ordination to the Established Church, is well known. About the same time, Peadar returned as a mendicant Franciscan Friar to Donegal.

Domhnall Gorm quickly adapted to the new order. He married Elizabeth Skipton whose mother, Charity was a daughter of the wealthy servitor, Sir Thomas Staples, who built the model village and castle of Moneymore, Co Derry.^{xi} Perhaps the most outstanding contribution of Domhnall Gorm to the parish of Clonmany was the building of the magnificent Minister's House at Dresden, one of the finest mansions in Inishowen. (Appendix 5) Domhnall Gorm would, no doubt, have received a generous settlement on his marriage to Elizabeth Skipton. While the Established Church had few parishioners, the entire parish paid tithes towards its upkeep.

Domhnall Gorm had 2 sons and 4 daughters:

1. George followed his father into the Church. He left Clonmany for Trinity College, Dublin, 25th June 1700, aged 17. He attained his B.A. in 1704, in which year he returned to Clonmany as a Curate and his M.A. in 1707. He was subsequently Rector of Errigal, outside Garvagh.

2. Owen married his cousin, Elizabeth Staples, sister of Sir Alexander Staples

3. Elizabeth married George Young of Culdaff. From them descended the main line of the Young family.

4. Ann married R. Keys and had a son, George

5. Mary married, before 1714, John Doherty and had a son, John

6. Charity married, after 1713, Michael Doherty and had 2 sons, Daniel and George.

A letter from Rev George McLaughlin to his mother's cousin, Sir Alexander Staples, gives us a rare insight into the lifestyle of the family at the time. (Appendix 6)

We get a clear picture of the Old Church in the time of Domhnall Gorm from notes made by Bishop King on his visitation to Clonmany, 28th June, 1693.

John Deniston was Parish Clerk and Schoolmaster; John Baldrige and Richard Adams were Church Wardens. "The minister resideth, there are few parishioners, but generally conformable; some are Highlanders, and the Minister reads prayers and preaches to them in Irish at certain times.....the Church suffered much in the troubles

but the roof is repaired. The Glebe called Roosky, 34ac. 1r. 8per. The old Glebe, Tyrofan, contains 7ac. 2rds. The Earl of Donegall is patron. The Bishop requested the parishioners to provide a chalice for the church.

Fr Peadar McLaughlin, a Franciscan Friar ordained on the Continent 1670, d. 1711

Meanwhile, Peadar, a Catholic priest in Penal times, is said to have lived in a bothog, a sod hut, in Crossconnell, not far from Dresden, and cared for his flock at the various Massrocks in the parish and at the Scallan, near Andy Porter's in Gaddyduff. In these Penal Times, there was a price on his head.

Letters from High Sherrifs give us a glimpse of life at the time.^{xii}

Peter Benson writes from Birdstown, 4th March, 1711-12
I received yours of the 26 February and will observe the government's commands in apprehending the popish priests in our County to the utmost of my power.

And from George Cary 5th November, 1714
There has been due care taken in this County to apprehend popish priests that do officiate, not having qualified themselves according to the statute. But as yet none of them have been taken being not to be found. (Appendix 7)

Many stories are told of the wit and repartee of the two brothers.

Meeting on the road one morning, one says, " *Duine ag gul siar, agus duine eile ag teacht aniar: **one going over and the other coming back;***

The other replied, "Duine ag dul suas agus duine eile ag dul síos: ***one going up and the other going down***"

Perhaps more poignant is the grief of a mother, expressed with all the eloquence of her native tongue but just as touching in translation:

*"Can it e'er be spoken,
How my heart is broken,
For thy fall, O Domhnall, from the ancient faith.
With less of sorrow,
Could I view to-morrow,
My lost one herding on the mountain brown,
Than strange doctrines teaching,
And new tenets preaching,
At yon lordly window in his silken gown."*

Domhnall Gorm is buried in an unmarked grave in the Old Church at Straid while his brother Peadar lie at rest in Cill Oráin, Bun a'Cnoic

Protestant population grows.

The gradual plantation of the area continued. New names mixed with the old. Bishop William Reynell, noted that, in 1718, Neal O'Donnell was Clerk and Eugene O'Doherty and Robert Richie were Schoolmasters. John McLucas and John Lopee

were Churchwardens in 1718, Michael Doherty and William Baldrich Churchwardens in 1719. The Protestant Householders List for the parish of 1740 shows a marked increase in the number of protestant families in the parish. (Appendix 8)

Rev Arthur Chichester, Rector of Clonmany, 1754-1768, and his wife, Mary O'Neill of Shane's Castle.

Rev. Arthur Chichester, grandnephew of Arthur Charles Chichester, Lord Donegall, arrived in Clonmany in 1754. He had previously been Rector in Randalstown where he married Mary O'Neill, daughter of Sir Henry O'Neill of Shane's Castle. The castle of Mary O'Neill's day was magnificent in the extreme. "On the other side of the house, a pretty and large theatre and magnificent ballroom 60 x 30, all of wood and canvas painted, and so sent ready made from London."^{xiii} As a rector with powerful family connections, the Rev Arthur had more than one parish. He died in 1768, while Rector of Skerry and Racavan, in the diocese of Connor. His wife Mary O'Neill, is buried in the Old Church as is his daughter, Catherine Ball and son the Rev. Dr. William Chichester.

Rev. Dr. William Chichester, b. 1743, Rector of Clonmany, 1768, d.Clonmany, 1815.

Dr William Chichester, son of the Rev Arthur Chichester and Mary O'Neill, entered Trinity College, Dublin, from Clonmany in 1760. He took his BA in 1764, MA in 1768, LLB and LLD in 1791. On the death of his father in 1768, he returned to Clonmany as Rector, was appointed to Cloncha in 1791 and to Culdaff in 1800. He married

- (1) Mary Anne Harvey of Malin Hall and had a son, Sir Arthur Chichester of Greencastle, M.P. for Co. and Town of Carrickfergus, 1812, and, on her death
- (2) Mary Anne Hart of Kilderry, by whom he had a son, Rev. Edward Chichester.

*In his (Fr Shiels') time the Protestant minister was the Rev. Chichester, and in his last illness, Fr Shiels visited him every day. He attended the funeral, too, and when the coffin was passing through the church door Fr Shiels reached out and cut the sign of the cross on the side of it. People said that the Rev Chichester died a Catholic. He died in 1815. The Chichesters left Dresden in 1826. **Charlie McGlinchey***

Dr. William Chichester lived in Dresden and was Rector of Clonmany when the present church was built in 1772. The Marquis of Donegall, a family relation, was said to have visited the parish often and sometimes spent the summer in Dresden.

Rev. Edward Chichester, b. Clonmany, c.1776, marries Catherine Young of Culdaff.

Rev. Edward Chichester, born in Clonmany c.1776, entered Trinity College, Dublin, 1790, attaining a B.A. and M.A. He married, in 1812, Catherine Young of Culdaff, great, great, granddaughter of George Young and his wife Elizabeth McLaughlin, daughter of Domhnall Gorm. (Appendix 10)

The ancient O'Neill line of Shane's Castle, the families of Sir Arthur Chichester, Viceroy of Ireland and of Domhnall Gorm, all of whose lives were interwoven in the rich tapestry of the Old Church, were united in marriage.

Rev. Edward Chichester and Catherine Young had a son, Rev. William Chichester, b. 1813.

O'Neill estates pass to Rev. William Chichester, 1855, through Mary O'Neill.

In 1855, the male line of O'Neill of Shane's Castle died out with the death, without issue, of John Bruce R, Lord O'Neill. The O'Neill estates passed to the Rev. William Chichester, son of Rev Edward Chichester and Catherine Young, through his great-grandmother, Mary O'Neill. He assumed, in 1855, under Royal License, the name of Chichester-O'Neill. A further Royal License of 1858 permitted him to use the name O'Neill only, and, in 1868, he was created Baron O'Neill.

His descendents continued to play their part in the life and times of Ulster, the present generation represented by, among others, Lord O'Neill of Shane's Castle, Lord Rathcavan and Lord O'Neill Of the Maine, the former Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, the late Captain Terence O'Neill^{xiv}, all of whom, like him, are descended, not only from the Chichester/ O'Neill line but also, through Catherine Young, from **Domhnall Gorm.**

The Earl Bishop: the building of the present church, 1772.

Dr. William Chichester became Rector of Clonmany in 1768. The old church, passed to the Protestant Bishop of Derry in the Letters patent James 1st, 1608, had been used by the Established Church for some 164 years. Its roof had been repaired in 'the troubles' around the time of the siege of Derry.

Frederick Hervey, 4th Earl of Bristol, b.1730, was Bishop of Derry. He was one of the great personalities, ecumenists, and builders, of his age. Soon after coming to Derry, he contributed £1000 towards the building of a bridge across the river Foyle in place of the ferry which was the only means of crossing the river near the city. He set about building a spire on the Cathedral in Derry. He contributed £210 towards the Long Tower chapel in the city, the total cost of which was said to be £2,800.^{xv} It is believed that the Corinthian capitals in the altar there, were brought from Naples by the Bishop, intended for his mansion in Ballyscullion. And mansions he had, not just Ballyscullion but Downhill, which, with its Mussenden Temple, has been looking across the Foyle to Inishowen since 1783.

His buildings ranged from the sublime to the simple old English style of church. He embarked on two distinct church building periods, one in the 1770s the other in the 1790s when he became fascinated with the building of spires. He included Clonmany in his early church building period.

This period saw the erection of churches at Desertoghill outside Garvagh, Banagher and Tyane. These were simple, dignified country churches. Clonmany was built in 1772, 'a neat structure with a low square tower.' The architect was undoubtedly Michael Shanahan, whom Bishop Hervey had brought from his previous diocese in Cork to manage his many and varied building projects. The church cost £526 3s. 1d of which £276 18s. 5p was supplied by the parish, the rest supplied by the Marquis of Donegall, the Earl Bishop, and Dr William Chichester.

Because of marked graves in the old graveyard preceding the erection of the present church, [Col McNeill, 1709, Martha McNeill, 1728], it can reasonably be assumed that the church of 1772 replaced the older one on the same site which was passed to the Established Church in 1608. (Appendix 11)

The old church, built to accommodate 70, is an architectural gem in the ancient style of English architecture. It is a two-bay rectangular building measuring 15.5 metres in length by 7.5 metres in width. As was the custom, the altar is on the east wall, behind which a gothic window draws the eye to rising ground ablaze with colour. The sanctuary, a raised area, projected 4 metres from the east wall. A fireplace opened to the church on the north wall near the doorway which led to the vestry. Perhaps here, more than anywhere in the church, we see the hand of one of the finest architects of his day. The vestry fireplace is cleverly set into the corner and the smoke is drawn from the church fireplace by way of a flue following the line of a redbrick archway. Two windows, with clear glazing, adorned both north and south walls. A low tower, with interesting detail in the coping, is set on the west side. The church door faces west. The porch measures 2.25 metres in length, 2.1 metres in width, 2.25 metres in height. The walls are 0.8 metres thick. On either side of the tower are narrow pointed-headed openings now rendered on the outside, and at the top of the tower three large louvered pointed-arched openings. There was no bell in the tower. Fine red sandstone is used in the detail of the building, in the main doorway, the windows and in the drip moulds.

Parochial Visitation, early 1800s

On a Parochial Visitation, when Mr Hamilton was rector (Appendix 12) (1801-15), the Bishop recorded in his own hand, some fascinating details.^{xvi}

He produced an inventory, 1-21, against which he assessed the parishes in the diocese. He also devised a system for rating them, ‘Nothing, Bad, Tolerable, Well.’ (Appendix 13, 13a) Here are the findings for Clonmany set out in table form.

	Nothing	Tolerable	Well
1. Church’s Fabric		X	
2. Roof		X	
3. Plastered Walls		X	
4. Glazed windows		X	
5. Paved Floor	X		
6. Seats		X	
7. Pulpit			x
8. Reading-Desk			x
9. Font	X		
10. Altar		X	
11. Chest	X		
12. Register		X	
13. Bells	X		
14. Bible		x [Eng&Irish]	
15. Common-Prayer		x [Eng&Irish]	
16. Surplice	X		

17. Carpet & Linen			X
18. Chalice			X
19. Churchyard		X	
20. Mansion House	X		
21. Glebe lands			X

He noted, too, something special in Clonmany, something which fell well outside a normal inventory; *the Miosach, in a Brief Case, with a thin silver coating wheron a crucifix and twelve apostles and a chain of brass, an ancient insignia of battle still in Clonmany reputedly from its creation.* After a chequered history and many years in private ownership, the Miosach was finally bought for the Irish nation in 2001 and is on display in the National Museum.

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners granted £368 for the repair of the church in 1837.^{xvii} (Appendix 14). Part of this may have been used to install a heating system as it was in Desertoghill, Garvagh, a church of the same style and period. There part of the centre aisle was lowered and a cast iron fuel-burning stove set in. The central pews were cut back to accommodate it, some removed to provide a wider box-type pew for the comfort of the gentry of the parish.

The Old Graveyard

*The church is said to be built on the site of a monastery founded by the saint (St. Columcille). The Roman Catholics continue to bury their dead in the churchyard and the tradition is borne out by an old tomb in the east of the building made of greenstone and of the precise appearance of those of St. Columb's era in Iona. Note: The people of Iona informed me that the greenstone slabs of which the tombs are made in that island were brought from Inishowen, and from what I have seen of the greenstone rock of Clonmany...I think their tradition is founded on truth and there is no such greenstone in Iona^{xviii}. **Lieutenant Lancey, Ordnance Survey Memoirs of the parish of Clonmany, 1834***

While St Columba's has few marked graves, it has been the graveyard for the parish since earliest times. When we consider how small the congregation of the Established Church was, the fact that the Catholic Church did not have a graveyard until 1829 and the high population of the parish, we can more fully understand the central role played by St. Columba's graveyard in the lives of all the people of the parish.

Charlie McGlinchey tells us that his grandfather was buried there in 1840, more than 10 years after the opening of the graveyard in St Mary's, Clonmany.

Many graves, within the walls of St Columba's, predate the present Church built in 1772.

Among those is the grave of Simon Lenning, in the early 1600s, a small stone headstone with a style of writing from an earlier time.

Col. Daniel McNeill, Landlord, Binnion. His death followed an ambush at Gallagher, in the Annagh hills on his return from a fair in Pollan. His evil ways brought about his early death.

His tombstone reads:

“Here lyeth the body of Col. Daniel McNeill, who departed this life on 11th day of September 1709 aged 59 years”

He is joined in this grave by another member of the family *“Here lyeth the body of Martha, wife of Mr Henry McNeill, daughter of Col. Edward Cary, who died in the year 1725*

A medieval gravestone has been removed to Letterkenny for protection.

Along the north wall of the new Church built 1772, lie the bodies of Mary O’Neill, her son Rev. Dr. William Chichester and her daughter, Catherine Ball.

“Underneath this stone lyeth the remains of Mrs Mary Chichester, wife of Rev Arthur Chichester, and only daughter daughter of Henry O’Neill of Shane’s Castle, who died on the 12th day of May 1786. Also those of her son, Doctor William Chichester, who was for many years Rector of the Parish of Clonmany, and, who, to the great grief of his friends, relations and parishioners departed this life on the 31st August 1815, aged 72 years.

“Underneath this stone are the remains of Catherine Ball, relict of Samuel Ball. Esq. of Grouse Hall, and daughter of Rev. Arthur Chichester, who departed this life on 11th day of April 1799 in the 49th year of her life.”

Along the roadside wall lie the remains of George Charleton and of his wife, Frances Hart. George Charleton leased land in Dunaff and Leenan in 1769.

St. Columba’s, in just a few named graves, bears witness to that intermarriage of the landed classes so much a feature of life in Inishowen from the days of the Plantation.

Here too, are members of the Doherty family of the Glen House whose rise in status resulted from their association with the Charletons. Initially managing the estate on their behalf and on behalf of their daughter, Mrs Merrick, they subsequently became Landlords in their own right and tithe proctors for the Old Church.

The body of Domhnall Gorm^{xix} lies in an unmarked grave: as does that of his brother, Fr. Peadar McLaughlin^{xx}

Even in penal times, priests were buried there (Appendix 15)

Fr. Peadar McLaughlin	Mendicant Franciscan Friar	d. Clonmany c.1711
Dean O’Donnell	PP Donagh Clonmany, 1790-8	d. Clonmany 1798
Fr Nathaniel O’Donnell	PP Clonmany 1780	d. Clonmany
Fr Corr	PP Clonmany 1790	d. Clonmany 1794

The only priest to have a marked grave is

Fr Patrick McFaul, who died 1805, aged 32 years.^{xxi}

The McFauls, one of the oldest families recorded in the parish, were Lords of Carrickabraghy over 1000 years ago.

Among the tombstones is one *“To the memory of Dennis O’Donnell, gentleman, who departed this life on the 9th of April 1778, aged 78 years. Also Anne his wife departed this life on 13th of May 1769 aged 45 years. Their issue 5 sons and one daughter.”*

The old people of the parish had a song about Pollan Fair called “Plearaca na bPollan [Pollan Revels]’ It was made by a brother of Dean O’Donnell. He was Dennis O’Donnell and died in 1778. Dean O’Donnell was parish priest here about two hundred years ago, before the Brathair na Dumhcha” **Charlie McGlinchey**.

The priests continued to go to the old graveyard to officiate at funerals until a row between the Waterloo priest, Fr O’Donnell and Michael Doherty, Glen House, in the 1830s. From then on, the priest blessed clay at the chapel and someone at the funeral would throw the clay over the coffin. The last Catholic to be buried in the old graveyard was an old woman from the local area. She had been evicted and died in the workhouse in 1880^{xxii}

Statistical Account of the Parish of Clonmany 1814 by Rev F. L. Molloy

Rev. Francis Lucas Molloy, Curate in Clonmany, 1810-1832, wrote an interesting Statistical account of the parish in 1814.

Pondering on the origins of Cluain Maine, he refers to the tradition of the place which held Managh Morrison in high regard. While he chose to proceed no further into ancient history, ‘having no records to guide him’, he throws some interesting light on the rebuilding of the church. Managh Morrison, he wrote, being the ‘most wealthy man in this place’, had his ‘castle’ near where the church now stands, *the ruins of which were erased about twenty-five years ago for that edifice and the wall around it.*

‘There are, on the priests books, 931 Roman Catholic families, 17 Church of Ireland, 8 Protestant Dissenters,’ a population, estimated by Rev. Molloy, at five per family, to be in the region of 4680.

There is a Protestant schoolmaster and 45-50 boys attend the parish (Protestant) school; there are three Sunday schools attended by 50 to 60 scholars.’

‘The tithes here are set for a term of years, at a very moderate rate. The notes are drawn in favour of the rector, "for and in consideration of the great and small tithes," which comprehends, I understand, the tithes of all grain, flax, potatoes, and other small dues, too numerous to insert here, but which are mentioned in the notes in order to retain the primeval right: this is stated, because not more than half the intrinsic value of the great tithes are demanded’

Rev. John Dobbs builds Glebe House in 1819

Rev. John Dobbs was rector of Clonmany in the period 1815-37. His curate was Rev F L Molloy. The glebe house, Dunally, was built on a glebe of five acres, in 1819, by aid of a gift of £100, and a loan of £675, from the Board of First Fruits.

Referring to the Protestant school in a letter to the Bishop of Derry, Sept. 19th, 1822, Rev Dobbs wrote:^{xxiii}

The school is in tolerable good repair and was built by the Parish on ground given by a former Rector, Rev. Doct. William Chichester. It is kept in repair by the Parish.

There is no permanent fund for the support of the above school.

The current Rector contributes the sum of £2 per annum to the schoolmaster.

The number of scholars attending for the past year has averaged forty. They are instructed in arithmetic and spelling.

In the same month he wrote:

I hereby nominate and appoint James Sharkey to be my schoolmaster in the Parish of Clonmany

Rev. Dobbs was rector when Fr O'Donnell, the Waterloo Priest, came to Clonmany as Parish Priest in 1829. The period was a troubled one in the history of the parish. Michael Doherty was landlord in the Glenhouse and tithe proctor. Following a difference of opinion with Fr O'Donnell, Michael Doherty left the Catholic Church, taking his sons with him, to join the congregation of the Rev Dobbs at the Old Church.

The tithe war was raging and Fr O'Donnell spent time in Lifford jail for refusing to pay his tithe contribution to Michael Doherty, tithe proctor.

The tithe composition of the parish was £410 in 1831^{xxiv}; the glebe, Cherbury, with 365 acres, 300 of which were uncultivated, £94. The gross income of the parish was £410 10s 7d. The curate, Rev Molloy had a stipend of £90. The Rev Dobbs also held the benefice of Glynne in the diocese of Connor where his father was Dean.

The parish church had an attendance 12 to 20. The Roman Catholic chapel had an attendance of 2500. A Roman Catholic Sunday school held in summer had an attendance of 400 children; and 5 daily schools had on their books 206 boys and 45 girls. One of these schools was aided with £2.2s a year from Mrs Merrick. In 1840, two National schools at Beltra and Rasheny had on their books 115 boys and 118 girls, and were salaried each with £12. A dispensary in the parish, within the Carndonagh Poor-law union, administered to 2,077 patients in 1839 and expended £71 8s.

The population of Clonmany went into decline in the 1840s. (Appendix 16) Famine and emigration took their toll. Listed below are the top three townlands in 1841. It is interesting to note the still dominant position of Straid. Clonmany Town had yet to be born.

Census Returns	1841		1851		1861	
	Pop.	Houses	Pop.	Houses	Pop.	Houses
Clonmany Parish	6489	1183	5780	1129	5668	1101
Straid	499	90	388	81	352	65
Dunaff	484	86	473	88	468	88
Roskey	475	87	269	53	292	55
Clonmany Town	0	0	0	0	112	21
Ballyliffin Town	193	36	154	31	135	26

Rev. George Henry Young, 1838-1860.

Rev. Young was the Rector in Clonmany during the famine years and was very well thought of in the parish. Son of a banker in Dublin, he entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1818, aged 14. He married, in 1843, Lucella, eldest daughter of Michael Doherty of the Glen House, on which occasion he was to receive a marriage portion of £800.^{xxv}

While it is generally held that the famine of the 1840s was less severe in Clonmany than an earlier one, brachan, made from Indian meal, was distributed from the Glebe House in Dunally as part of the relief scheme. According to Charlie McGlinchey, the relief wasn't a free grant from the government; it came off the cuts later on.

The House of Commons, 21st June 1853, ordered the listing of all the Lands and Houses belonging to the Established Church in Ireland as well as annual rent charge, date and amount of composition, description and average price of corn. Rev Young completed these for the parish of Clonmany.^{xxvi} He listed 464ac 1rd 7per in Church land. The amount of composition was £410 ‘from which 74 knocked off’ present amount £307 10s. He was rather dismissive of the requirement for ‘average price of corn from Dublin Gazette, years ending 29 Nov. in each year.’ His reply ‘I have no means of answering this’ and on ‘The number of Glebe Lands’ he answered, I do not understand the question.

Congregation of the Old Church goes into decline

Just as the population of Clonmany began to decline, so, too, did the congregation of the Old Church.

1836	Church of Ireland 65	Presbyterian Dissenters 17	Catholics 6670
1854	Church of Ireland 31		
1858	Church of Ireland 50	1 child in Day and Sunday School	
1861	Church of Ireland 59	Presbyterian Dissenters 11	
1867	Church of Ireland 35		
1899	Church of Ireland 4	Presbyterian Dissenters 5	

Rev. Mungo Thompson, 1860, last rector of Clonmany.

Rev. Thompson was the last rector appointed to the parish in 1860. His letter of nomination was signed by the Marquis of Donegall,^{xxvii} his letter of declaration witnessed by, among others, Francis Little, Postmaster, Clonmany, who is buried in the Old Church. (Appendix 17) The gross income of the parish in 1861 was £415 18s 0d including 221ac. Glebe.

The 1870s was a tumultuous period for the Established Church in Ireland. In 1869, the Irish Church Act received Royal Assent. By this Act, the Church of Ireland was disestablished. All church lands and rectories were made available for purchase. The Annuity declared in Clonmany at Disestablishment was £407 11s. 10d^{xxviii}. The Marquis of Donegall received £1,846 11s 10d in compensation for the loss of the advowson.

In 1876 Clonmany and Donagh were united. The Glebe House, built in 1819, was sold with the glebe lands in 1877. While there was no longer a resident rector, services continued in the Old Church until the death, in 1925, of James Walker Doherty, the last of the Doherty family of the Glen House, patrons of the Old Church. The roof was removed in 1927. The Vestry Minute Books and Chalice were taken to the Church in Donagh where they still remain. The Chalice is currently used in the Sunday Services there.

Services were held in Leenan Fort for Church of England troops of the Leenan detachment, Royal Artillery, stationed at the entrance to Lough Swilly.

Conclusion

St. Columba's, the Old Church in Straid has a powerful story to tell. It stands on what oral tradition identifies as the original Meadow of Maine. The old monastery was believed to have been within its bounds. It overlooked the home of the O'Morrison, the most important Erenagh family in Inishowen. It witnessed the ravages of the Danes, landed at Carrickabracky Castle. It experienced the introduction of the parish system in the 12th century. It welcomed the local families serving as priests until the Reformation. It experienced the transition from Catholic Church to Established Church in 1608.

It had as rector, Rev. Arthur Chichester who united, in his marriage with Mary O'Neill, two of the most powerful families in Ulster, one Planter, one Gael.

It had as rector, Rev. Daniel McLaughlin, Domhnall Gorm, whose Catholic brother, Peadar was a Mendicant Franciscan Friar with a price on his head.

It witnessed the union of the ancient O'Neill line of Shane's Castle, the families of Sir Arthur Chichester, Viceroy of Ireland and of Domhnall Gorm in the marriage of the Rev. Edward Chichester and Catherine Young.

But more than any of this, the history of the Old Church is the history of the people of the parish of Clonmany, the history of all our ancestors, Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. There they lie side by side in quiet dignity in the hallowed fields of Straid.

As we embark on our project to help protect St Columba's, let us ensure that they are not forgotten, that their last resting place is cared for and their memory respected.

ⁱ McGlinchey, Charles (1986) *The Last of the Name, with an Introduction by Brian Friel*, the Blackstaff Press, Belfast, p.67

ⁱⁱ McGlinchey (1986) op.cit., p.67

ⁱⁱⁱ Maghtochair (1867) *Inishowen, Its History, Traitions and Antiquities*, republished by Mrs Peggy Simpson, (1985) Three Candles Printers Ltd., Dublin, p. 83

^{iv} PRONI (Public Records Office of Northern Ireland) *The Bishop of Derry's case against the Society of the Governor and Assistants London, T/ 966/1 p. 77(66)*

^v McCavitt, (1998) *Sir Arthur Chichester, Lord Deputy of Ireland 1605-16*, Institute of Irish Studies, QUB, p. 149

^{vi} Ibid., p. 153

^{vii} Young, Amy Isabel, (1929) *Three Hundred Years in Inishowen*, McCaw, Stevenson, Orr Ltd., Linenhall Press, Belfast

^{viii} Irish Manuscripts Commission, (1937) *The Civil Survey 1654-55*, pub. The Stationery Office, Dublin, with an introduction by R S Simmington

^{ix} Irish Manuscripts Commission (1939) *A Census of Ireland c. 1659*, p. 63 Clonmany

^x Leslie, (1937) *Derry Clergy and Parishes*, Printed for the author by R H Ritchie at the Fermanagh Times Office, Townhall St, Enniskillen. P. 162

^{xi} Young, A. I (1929)

^{xii} *Irish Priests in Penal Days*

^{xiii} *Burke's Guide to Country Houses, Vol. 1 Ireland(1978) p.257*

^{xiv} *Burke's Peerage*

^{xv} Rankin, (1972) *The Building Ventures of the Earl Bishop of Derry*, Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, p. 11

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- ^{xvi} PRONI *Church of Ireland Records, Diocese of Derry*, Clonmany Box, original document.
- ^{xvii} Lewis (1846) *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland Vol. 1*, Clonmany
- ^{xviii} *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Parishes of County Donegal, 1833-5.* (1997) Ed. By A. Day and P. McWilliams, Institute of Irish Studies, QUB, p. 14
- ^{xix} Leslie, (1937) *Derry Clergy and Parishes*, Clonmany
- ^{xx} Daly and Devlin, (1997) *The Clergy of the Diocese of Derry, An Index*, Four Courts Press, p. 115
- ^{xxi} *Ibid.*, p. 98
- ^{xxii} McGlinchey, (1998) p. 99
- ^{xxiii} PRONI *Church of Ireland Records, Diocese of Derry*, Clonmany Box, original document.
- ^{xxiv} PRONI *Gazateer of Ireland 1841*,
- ^{xxv} O'Donnell, Martina, (1999) *Proceedings from the McGlinchey Summer School 1998*
- ^{xxvi} PRONI *Church of Ireland Records, Diocese of Derry*, Clonmany Box, original document
- ^{xxvii} PRONI *Church of Ireland Records, Diocese of Derry*, Clonmany Box, original document.
- ^{xxviii} Leslie, (1937) *Derry Clergy and Parishes*, Clonmany