

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

ATHY MUSEUM SOCIETY

REV. THOMAS KELLY

Thomas Kelly was the son of Judge Kelly of Ballintubbert, Athy. Ordained for the Church of England he was a popular preacher in Dublin Churches in the last decade of the 18th century. However, his tendency towards 'Methodism' prompted Archbishop Fowler of Dublin to prohibit him from preaching anywhere in the Dublin diocese. Thomas Kelly left the Church of England, as did his friend and close associate John Walker who went on to found the Walkerites, while Thomas Kelly gathered about him followers who became known as the Kellyites.

A man of independent means, Thomas Kelly opened churches in Athy, Portarlington, Waterford and Dublin which operated outside the Established Church. A noted hymn writer he wrote more than seven hundred hymns which were published in five editions during his lifetime. Some of the Kelly hymns still used in church hymnals today include '*We Sing the Praise of Him who Died*' and '*The Head that once was crowned with Thorns*,' He died in 1856 and is buried in the Churchyard of Ballintubbert Church just a few miles outside Athy.