

DONEGAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY



THE ABBEY

Rathmullan's landmark historical building is known locally as the "Abbey".

Ruaidhrí Mac Suibhne was Gaelic chieftain of Fanad in north Donegal, from 1472 until 1518. His wife was Máire Ó Máille from Mayo. They had the "Abbey" or friary built in memory of their eldest son who died in 1508. It was the last preReformation Carmelite friary in the country.

At the end of the 16th century the friary was deserted by the Carmelite monks after an attack by George Bingham of Mayo. During the Nine Years' War it served as a garrison for English troops under Ralph Bingley. Afterwards Bingley was granted the friary and its lands. The property passed to Bishop Andrew Knox in 1618. The Bishop fortified the friary and lived there. From 1706 until 1814, the friary chapel served as the parish church of Killygarvan.

The records state that Ruaidhrí Óg Mac Suibhne was the first to be buried in the monastery. From the rebellion of 1641 until 1988 the grounds were used for the burial of generations of Rathmullan people together with many victims of naval warfare and shipwreck.

Today the chequered history of this iconic building, as revealed in its high stone walls, is hidden beneath a cloak of ivy.