

LISBURN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



THE MIDDLE CHURCH, BALLINDERRY

One of the few surviving seventeenth century churches, this simple ‘barn church’ stands on the roadside between Upper and Lower Ballinderry, Co Antrim. Built in the 1668 by Bishop Jeremy Taylor, it replaced the old church of Laloo at Portmore. Bishop Taylor, a learned English divine and one time chaplin to Charles 1, was deprived of his living by Cromwell. In 1658 he came to Portmore at the invitation of Viscount Conway who became his patron and within a couple of years he was nominated bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore.

In 1827 a new parish Church was built at Ballinderry Upper, and the Middle Church was allowed to fall into gentle decay. The well known antiquarian F.J.Bigger prompted a major restoration, and the church, as we see it today, was reopened in 1902 The interior is possibly of greater interest than the exterior. Many of its original fittings have survived including the three-tier oak pulpit, the communion table and chairs (said to have been made from the timbers of the ruined Laloo church), the box pews, the long handled collecting pans and many other items of interest. A copy of the funeral hatchment of Jeremy Taylor hangs on a wall in the nave. He died in August 1667 and although he wished to be buried at Ballinderry, that church was not yet consecrated. His remains lie in his cathedral at Dromore.

Still without electricity, services are only held during the summer months and a candlelight carol service at Christmas.