



KILLYDONNELL FRIARY, PARISH OF AUGHNISH, CO. DONEGAL

Founded in the early 16th century by the O'Donnells as a Franciscan Friary, there is archaeological evidence indicating that there was once a much older Viking settlement on this site.

In 1559 Calvagh O'Donnell and his wife were seized here and carried off into captivity by Shane O'Neill. Records show that the Bishop of Raphoe, Neal O'Boyle, held a Chapter at the Friary. At the time of the Plantation the buildings and lands were given to Captain Basil Brooke who closed the Friary. For well nigh 400 years this tranquil ruin has been the burial ground for the local inhabitants and in the graveyard there can be found the graves of the Stewart families who lived at Fort Stewart and who were the local landlords.

Legend tells us that the bell of Killydonnell was carried off by raiders from Tyrone who put to sea with it in a small boat. When a storm came up all occupants drowned and the bell was lost. According to myth, it still tolls at midnight once every seven years!

The ruins of Killydonnell are well worth a visit and afford stunning views of Lough Swilly and the surrounding countryside. The gravestone of John Murray jnr. fully describes this 'hidden gem'.

'I know some day that I will return there
Just to see again the beauty of it all
I will buy myself a plot by the Swilly
And rest in peace in lovely Donegal.'

Directions – Take the Milford Road from Letterkenny. Continue for 4 miles and at the Silver Tassie Hotel take a right turn at the sign for Killydonnell. Continue along the road for 2 miles and look out for a small sign on the right to the Friary. The road is narrow.

Maud Hamill