

Hidden gems and Forgotten People

GLENS OF ANTRIM HISTORICAL SOCIETY & CARRICKFERGUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



ARDCLINIS CHURCH IN RUINS

Situated on the A2 on the north coast of the Garron Peninsula in County Antrim approximately two and a half miles from Waterfoot on the Carnlough side of St. Patrick's Church. The ruins are surrounded by a small graveyard bounded by walls in the shape of an oval. There is a signpost to the Church in a small car park beside the road. The origins of the Church are unclear but it may date back to a few years after the death of Saint Patrick in 461 AD. It is recorded in the Papal taxation records of Pope Nicholas in 1304 when it was valued at 20 shillings. It is thought the Church founded by Saint Mac Nissi whom legend suggests was buried in the graveyard. The Church has been in disrepair since the 16th century, a casualty of the Reformation. A few years ago the ruins were almost completely covered in a thick canopy of ivy but the DOE Built Heritage Service stripped off the ivy and pointed up the walls with mortar to prevent them crumbling further. Standing amongst these ruins can give one can imagine the efforts made by the local folk to make a living on the land and sea in these harsh environments and their dependence on the Church for succour and relief.

A Bishop's Crozier, made from a piece of crooked stick covered with brass, believed to date from the 12th century was found in a ruined window of the Church and removed sometime in the 18th century. Known as "Bachil McKenna" local tradition states one of its uses was to swear upon it to exhort the truth from someone as a last resort. It was exhibited at the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in 1932. In 1961 the crook was sold to the National Museum in Dublin and the proceeds were given towards the renovation of Feystown Church in Glenarm. A replica of the head of the Crozier can be seen in St. Patrick's and St Brigid's Church in Glenariff. It was crafted by Sister Enda McMullan who was born in the parish in 1945.

Frank Rogers and Bobby McMullan (both GOAHS) and John Hulme (CDHS)

Photo: Cameron Kane (CDHS)