

# ROSCREA

*Extracted from "The Diocese of Killaloe – An Illustrated History" by Ciarán Ó Murchadha*

Modern Roscrea includes the medieval parish of the same name, most of Corbally and a small part of medieval Bournea. In 1704, a single registered priest, Fr. Laughlin Cunnane, had pastoral responsibility for the full three parishes. For most of the eighteenth century a small building in Chapel Lane in Roscrea itself served for public worship for the combined parish, and this was replaced about 1812 by another modest-sized chapel beside the old friary, in the grounds of the present church. In 1850, however, this was described as 'old and decayed,' too small for a congregation that tended to spill out into the street at mass-times.

However, as early as 1843 parish priest, Fr. Blake, had begun build a replacement church, the present St. Cronan's, which was designed by the well-known. William Deane Butler: In 1846 the onset of famine caused the project to be shelved and it was resumed only in the early 1850s when building fund was replenished by a hugely successful fundraising Church of St. Cronan, Roscrea tour undertaken in the United States by the Borrisokane curate, Fr. Bugler. The church was dedicated in 1855, and its interior decoration was completed by Earley and Powell in 1869 to a design by J.J. McCarthy. McCarthy's plans included the sanctuary furniture, the three altars and the reredos. The stained glass windows in the church are by Mayer of Munich and Earley of Dublin. In 1975 the sanctuary was re-ordered in line with the requirements of the Second Vatican Council, in a sensitive arrangement by Percy Leclerc that preserved the harmony of this beautiful church.

The baptismal font now in the grounds of St. Cronan's Church is from the old monastic site of Monaincha, near Roscrea. In medieval times, the pattern at Monaincha was one of the most important in Ireland, rivalling those of Glendalough, Lough Derg and Croagh Patrick. According to Rev. John Gleeson, in the summer of 1826 workmen engaged in digging foundations at Roscrea, discovered the covering stone for St. Cronan's grave, which bore only the single word Cronan.

The Church of St. John the Baptist at Camblin was built either in the last years of the eighteenth century or the very early years of the nineteenth, the exact date being impossible to establish. A major reconstruction by parish priest, Fr. Timothy Bannon in 1830 saw the walls raised and transepts added, each with its separate entrance. At that time Camblin was in the Corbally part of Corbally and Bournea parish, before the major boundary change "1846 which saw it transferred to Roscrea. A small sacristy was added at a later, uncertain date. In the early 1970s major renovations transformed the interior of this plain cruciform church the design of architects Thompson and Moloney involving the insertion of new windows, a fireproof ceiling, heating and lighting systems and an inside porch. The sanctuary was re-ordered and the galleries removed. The exterior was secured structurally and the side entrances to the transepts removed. In 1994 the installation of Bishop Willie Walsh, a native of Glebeha, Camblin, was marked by the presentation by local people of a marble baptismal font to the church.

The 'island' portion of Seir Kieran parish, known as Fancroft, adjacent to Roscrea parish, but part of Ossory diocese, was formally incorporated into Killaloe with the agreement of the people in 1959, having been administered on a trial basis there since 1936. The church at Fancroft, built in 1830, was closed in 1936.