



GLENSTAL ABBEY CHRONICLE

Issue 12 - Autumn 2021



GLENSTAL ABBEY MURROE, CO. LIMERICK

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Garden Cemetery

The Garden Cemetery provides for the interment of cremated remains only. Each space can accommodate one or two urns. The internal plot dimensions for both the single and double plots are 7½ inches in diameter. Each space is marked with a plaque of local grey granite for engraving individuals' names and dates.

Selecting a cemetery and purchasing your memorial space is an important decision. Arranging the details in advance gives you peace of mind and shows thoughtfulness and caring concern for your family. With pre-planning the final arrangements become less of a burden.

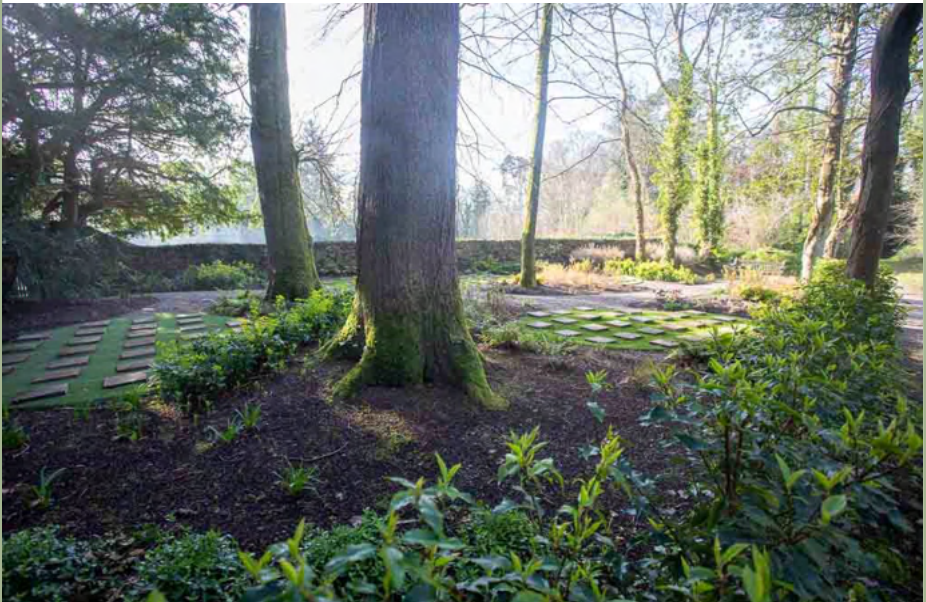
Please contact the Bursar's Office at

061 621045

or email us at

gardencemetery@glenstal.com

with questions or to arrange a personal tour.



Community Retreat

The Monastic Community had their annual retreat this summer from August 2nd to 7th. This year the retreat director was Abbess Marie Fahy OCSO, Abbess of Saint Mary's Abbey Glencairn, in County Waterford.



Glenstal Abbey Community
2nd August 2021

Seated: Br. Timothy Br. Ciaran fr. Brian Abbot Christopher fr. Senan fr. Abbot Brendan Abbess Mary fr. Alan Br. Anselm fr. Philip Br. Cyprian fr. Placid
Standing: fr. Anthony fr. Henry fr. John fr. Jintan Abbot Patrick Br. Jarek Br. Padraig Br. Cillian fr. Simon fr. Luke
Top Row: fr. Denis Br. Oscar fr. Cuthbert fr. Leno fr. Columba fr. William Br. Colman fr. Martin

A New Academic Year

The staff and the monastic community gathered outside for a cup of tea and a chat during the opening year forum on August 30th. The last occasion when we were all able to gather together was before Christmas 2019! These are very welcome signs that things are slowly returning to normal after COVID.





A Greener Glenstal

Fr Luke OSB

Glenstal Abbey Church - A Bright and Green future

Glenstal Abbey Church was built between 1951 and 1956 and was reordered in 1979 with a vibrant painted ceiling designed by architect Jeremy Williams and new lighting for the building and surrounds. The ceiling contained 32 bulbs at 400 watts, with a further 18 bulbs in the side aisles and sacristy at 65 watts and 10 further bulbs at 100 watts outside with a combined wattage of 14,970 watts.

As part of the reordering of the church in 2016 under the supervision of architect Sean O'Laoire, LED lighting was installed throughout the building. The ceiling lights have reduced from 400 to 100 watts, those in the aisles from 65 to 3 watts and those outside from 100 to 6 watts. The combined wattage is now 2,700 watts and represents a reduction of 12,270 watts. Given that the church is used for 5 hours every day, the savings come to €4,015 per annum. There are many churches and public buildings that might benefit from the installation of LED lighting resulting in savings on bills but more importantly reducing energy demands on our planet's limited resources.



Glenstal Abbey - Dipping into the Waters for Warmth and Welcome

Warm clothes were always necessary for a visit to Glenstal. The large buildings often with high ceilings were declared impossible to heat at a reasonable cost, especially the church. Initially oil was used to heat the church until the oil crisis of the 1970s, when a switch was made to gas heaters. The cost of electricity and gas were respectively €7,185 and €8,093 in the Winter of



2016, yielding a total of €15,278. The Chapel Lake located some 800 metres from the Abbey constitutes a natural heat source at about 16 degrees. The lake was drained, and collector coils were laid. The closed system allowed the heat to be conducted, powered by a circulation pump, to the Abbey, where a heat pump raised the temperature to 19 degrees for the underfloor heating system of the abbey church, library and reception areas. The heat pump produced 160,130kWh and expended 29,367kWh yielding a Heat Pump COP of 5.45. With the introduction of the geothermal system gas use was almost eliminated and the electricity cost more than halved for a total saving of €11,240 for the following winter, which has been maintained since. The reduction was helped by the installation of double-glazed windows in the upper register of the church. The public areas of the monastery and church are now warm and more welcoming. The benefits include not only savings and comfort but also reduced energy demands and the near elimination of gas for heating purposes. Protecting our planet is not only the right choice for the future but also for here and now.

Glenstal Abbey Guest House - Cosy and Bright

The Guest House was built in 2001. As was standard at the time, double walls plus cavity for the walled sections and rockwool insulation for the timber sections was used. The attic had a limited layer of insulation between the rafters. Each bedroom had two large 100watt ceiling bulbs and similar bulbs were used in the communal areas at an estimated total of 4800 watts. The guesthouse underwent a



refurbishment in 2020-2021 which involved pumping insulation into the cavity between the walled sections and the replacement of the rockwool with Kingspan. The insulation was increased in the attic and now is at a depth of 245mm. The Guest House is currently heated by an oil burner. It is hoped to switch to a renewable source, possibly linking with the



geothermal system which works in the nearby library and church. During the lockdowns in the COVID period the Guest house was not used, so it is not yet possible to compare heating costs before and after the recent insulation works.

The renovation of the Guest house involved the switching of all the light fixtures to LED. Each bedroom has gone from 200 watts to 24 watts, and the communal areas of the Guest House have also had similar reductions with a new total of 800 watts, representing a reduction of 4,000 watts for the whole Guest House complex or a saving of approximately €1,400 for an average of 6 hours of light per day.





This is our premium product. The chocolates in the de-luxe gold foil rigid box contain fondants flavoured with some of the oldest and finest liqueurs from the monasteries of Europe: Chartreuse, Benédictine, Lérins, Nocino de Valserena, and in addition there are four alcohol-free dessert chocolates. 16 hand crafted pieces totalling 260g. It can be purchased from our on-line shop.



Enquiries welcome at chocolates@glenstal.com



ONLINE SHOPPING

Simply Glenstal Range

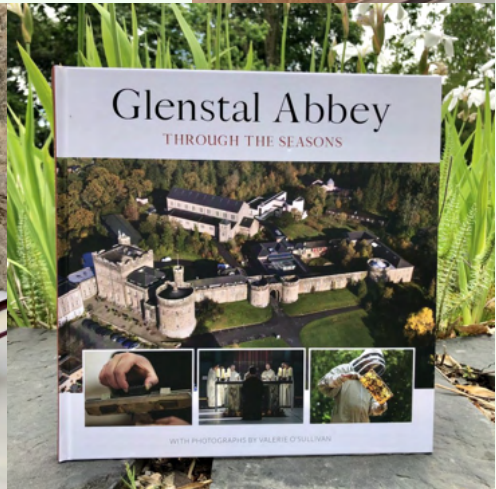
Glenstal Abbey Chocolates

Books by Glenstal Authors

Glenstal Missal

Glenstal through the Seasons

Glenstal Altar Cross



The Glenstal Abbey shop is now online, offering a range of monastic products and gifts. www.glenstal.org

Fifth Glenstal History Conference

Br Colmán OSB

Between 2-4 July the monastic community hosted the Fifth Glenstal History Conference on the theme **Brides of Christ: Women and Monasticism in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland.**



Organized by Dr

Tracy Collins (UCC), Dr Bronagh McShane (NUI Galway) and Br Colmán, this was the first occasion on which a conference on this topic has occurred and it provided an opportunity to showcase the work of fourteen leading scholars from Ireland, Scotland and America. COVID 19 restrictions meant that it had to take place virtually, but this proved an unexpected boon as almost 700 people from Alaska to New Zealand and Uppsala to Uruguay registered to participate, with an average attendance of around 250 at each session. In the month that followed the conference the uploaded videos of the lectures were accessed by a further 1,200 viewers. The conference proceedings have been accepted for publication by Four Courts Press and are slated to appear in 2022.

The conference also provided an occasion to honour the distinguished historian Dr Dagmar Ó Riain Raedel whose lifetime's work has been the

exploration of links between medieval Ireland and her native Germany, particularly through her research on the Schottenklöster, the network of Irish Benedictine monasteries in Bavaria and Austria that recruited novices in Munster between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. Dagmar has generously shared her expertise with the monastic community and the Glenstal Oblates on many occasions and it was wonderful to be able to acknowledge this.

The papers were evenly divided between the early and later Middle Ages and covered topics as diverse as the archaeology of early female monasteries to the experience of Dominican nuns in seventeenth-century Galway. Each one provided invaluable new insights indicating how lively research on this hitherto neglected topic is at present. Particularly perceptive contributions came in the opening and closing remarks by Abbess Máire Hickey of Kylemore and Bishop Anne Dyer of Aberdeen, for whom female monasticism and the exercise of spiritual authority have a personal, existential significance. The organisers were very grateful to the speakers for sharing their expertise so generously, to the sponsors, whose support made it possible for the conference to proceed as a free online event, and to all who attended the sessions.

The poster features a central illustration of several medieval nuns in grey habits, some holding prayer books. The text is arranged as follows:

- BRIDES OF CHRIST** (Large white serif font)
- WOMEN AND MONASTICISM** (Smaller gold serif font)
- IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN IRELAND** (Small white serif font)

On the right side, a grey box contains the following text:

- FIFTH
- GLENSTAL HISTORY CONFERENCE
- 2-4 JULY 2021
- ONLINE CONFERENCE
- history@glenstal.com
- eventbrite ticket

At the bottom, a grey bar lists the organisers: **ORGANISERS: Dr Tracy Collins Dr Bronagh McShane Br Colmán Ó Clabaigh OSB**

Below the bar are logos for the following organisations:

I am back from a wonderful sojourn in Ukraine. Report is laid out below

Br Timothy OSB

Ukraine? U-Cracked?

Glenstal Abbey belongs to a group of Benedictine monasteries and convents which has Belgian origins. Glenstal was established almost 100 years ago by four monks from the large monastery of Maredsous in Belgium. The other monasteries in our group, over 20 so far, are to be found on



all continents of the world save Antarctica and Australia. The newest, established only last March, is in Western Ukraine close to the border with Poland. What makes this monastery particularly interesting is that it is what we in Ireland would describe as “co-ed”. Co-ed Buddhist monasteries were established in the 60’s and 70’s in the United States, but only a few Christian monasteries undertook any such arrangements.

It’s always prudent to begin at the beginning. If we were reviewing the origins of Benedictine monasticism, we would likely go back to the time of St. Benedict in Italy in the 6th century. But in this case, we don’t have to reverse much further than last March, near L’viv in Ukraine, because that is when this most recent form of Benedictine Monasticism was conceived and brought to life – a monastery of monks and nuns,

coexisting and sharing their lives in the same compound, coequals in rank, ability, duties and dignity.

The material cause of the founding of this monastery derives from the exceptional and unanticipated generosity of a Swiss gentleman named Joseph Windeker. I know little about this person except that he has three daughters, and in thanksgiving for the grace of such a gift, he resolved to establish three monasteries – one in Asia, one in Africa and one in Europe - as it happened in Ukraine, the second largest country in Europe, after Russia.

Ukraine’s history which pre-dates the Ark of Noah has been one of extraordinary and often calamitous political and social turmoil undergoing changes of ownership, alliances, languages and ability to survive. If one were to define the health and happiness of its citizens as the very core of a successful nation or state, then it is truly remarkable that Ukraine exists at all in these days. However, following centuries of misery, misfortune and woe, the fragile growth of the Ukraine economy was apparent in the green shoots appearing in both urban and rural prosperity from 2016 to today. The seasoned traveller of Eastern Europe, former subjects of communist neo-colonialism, may detect by the observation of increased commercial traffic on the roads, cranes in the sky and double glazing in the sometimes drab, concrete houses, indications of an evolving and ripening economy.

So, how do I know all this? How come I’m “the expert” on all things Ukrainian in Murroe and her hinterland? Well, the Abbot President of our group of Benedictine monasteries is the 42 year old Maksymilian Nawara from Poland, who has three stand-out attributes in that (a) he is extraordinarily youthful for a person with such responsibility; (b) he has unfathomable stamina and enthusiasm and (c) he has a well-balanced but discerning vision of the mission of monks and nuns in the modern era. Abbot Max and I, as it happens, enjoy a type of biblical friendship as envisioned in the Book of the Prophet Joel (2:28-32) where it is said that

“young men and women will have visions while old men and women dream dreams”. Max is the visionary, I’m the dreamer; but in a magical but somewhat mystifying way, our visions and dreams blend amiably.

And where the material resources have come from Mr Windeker, the enticing energy comes from Abbot Max. And it’s within that frame of reference that Max, the visionary, encouraged me, the dreamer, to venture forth and spend some time with the community in Ukraine to share in the optics of such a novel monastic settlement. And hence the title of this report “Ukraine? U-Cracked?” which was the refrain of many of my brothers – both blood and monastic – when I announced my intentions! And now I’d like to share some of the fruits of this Ukranian or U-Cracked expedition.

Currently there are three nuns and three monks occupying a custom-built monastery to hold a community of almost 60 (yes, sixty!). Is that a vision or is it a dream – time will tell. But I can say that already there are two postulant nuns and one postulant monk who are scheduled to join the community in the near future. The buildings themselves are constructed to a very high specification. Hardwood timberwork, beautifully tiled floors throughout, with a potentially very bright and colourful enclosure when its layout and creation is complete.



Ukraine is a very Christian country with plenty of Orthodox institutions which means that they are very familiar with and attracted to monasticism in all its shapes and forms. So perhaps the provision of

sixty rooms is more vision than dream.

The lifestyle is both intensive and rewarding. The day begins at 6.00am and continues through to 9.30pm with five prayer-engagements in the choir. The Ukrainians are decidedly devotional – it caused me to reflect on my own early life in the Ireland of the 1950's, not in the grim sense of a Church dominant, but in the more intimate experience of personal piety. Having said that, the prayer activity of the community is vibrant, measured and dynamic. Having the voices of males and females singing and reciting the Psalms in unison is both inspirational and calming. It is, in my view, how it should be.

Meals are Spartan. The monks and nuns eat separately at breakfast and supper. The main meal at midday is a joint affair. One week the monks prepare the meals, the nuns the other week. Equality reigns. The



community has no source of income – as yet. It will take a good few months more before they can plan and execute activities which will provide an income. There are various plots of land surrounding the monastery which, when appropriately cultivated to create crops, will supply most of the community's daily fodder. At present, generous and sympathetic neighbours often leave baskets of food in the church or at the door of the monastery anonymously. Having described the meals as Spartan, they were nevertheless full of flavour and freshness. Both the nuns and the monks were well capable of transforming basic products into

tasty chow!

Each day, after lunch (and of course the wash-up and table setting) the community gathered for an hour or so to enjoy a common recreation and sometimes dip into boxes of sweets donated by friends and the angels of generosity, often unseen but always acknowledged. My command of Ukrainian hardly exceeded ten words or phrases, but Sister Augustina who had spent sometime in both Glenstal and Kylemore Abbey, used her commendable command of English to keep me abreast of the trend of conversation and, with some difficulty at times, the impact of the jokes. But what struck me most at these periods of recreation was the palpable harmony and agreeableness of the group. I do not know how the group was assembled. I know that the three monks came from two different Polish monasteries. The three nuns came from the same Ukrainian convent. But as a group in the here-and-now of rural Ukraine, they struck me as good-natured, sensitive and humorous.

The whole ensemble of men and women of prayerful witness living a simple but profound life in unison was not just interesting to me, or intriguing; it was also quite alluring, seductive almost. It also struck me, and I hope I don't appear to be in any way condescending, as thoroughly human and perfectly normal. Will I return to this radical and visionary monastic settlement in Ukraine? U-bet!



From the Archives

The Abbey Church

Fr Henry OSB

For the first few years after their arrival in Glenstal in 1927, the monks used the old drawing-room, now the Boardroom, and dining-room of the castle as the community chapel. The altar and the benches for the monks were placed in the dining-room which, in effect, acted as the sanctuary. The congregation was accommodated in the old drawing-room, the Blessed Sacrament being reserved on an altar on the left side of the door to the sanctuary and the foundation-cross placed on an altar to the right of this door. In the days before concelebration three altars were need to facilitate the private celebration of Mass by the priests of the community.

In 1932 the community was able to acquire one of the pre-fabricated buildings what had been used during the construction of the hydroelectric dam at nearby Ardnacrusha on the Shannon. This chapel, nowadays known as the Cinema Gym, was to serve the community and the growing school until the present church was opened in 1956. Unprepossessing on the outside, inside it was unusual in that it had three large ceiling panels painted by the Dutch painter Emanuel De Witte (1617-1692). These, along with several other art-works of quality had been acquired by the first Prior, Dom Gérard François. These panels were sold at the end of the 1970s. Dom Gérard was also instrumental in acquiring a set of ornate ‘parish council’ benches from Belgium where they were a feature of

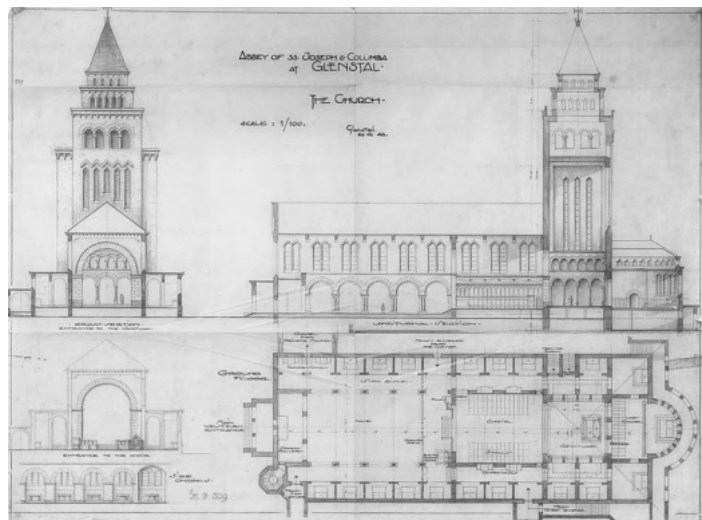


Catholic churches. These benches served a choir-stalls both in the temporary chapel and in the new church from 1956 until 1965.

From the very beginning of the foundation, the intention had been to build a ‘proper’ church for what was hoped would become an abbey. It is also true that the main benefactor, Msgr James Ryan, who had donated the property, envisaged a rapid growth in numbers and, towards the end of his life was somewhat disappointed at what appeared to be the slow progress of foundation, in particular the failure of the great flow of vocations that he had expected and had used as a selling-point when persuading the Abbot of Maredsous to make the foundation. It should be remembered, however, that the early years of the foundation were marked by great financial constraints caused first the Wall Street Crash of 1929 which severely limited Maredsous’ ability to subvent its Irish house and, throughout the 1930s, the Economic War between the new Irish Free State and the United Kingdom.

In 1946, Glenstal became independent as a conventual priory and the first Irish prior, Fr Bernard O’Dea, made the building of a new church for the monastery one of his priorities. The architect of this church was Fr Sebastian Braun of Maredsous Abbey, assisted by John Thompson of Limerick. On

28th May, 1951, the first sod was turned. The foundation-stone was laid on 14th October, 1951 by the Archbishop of Cashel, Dr Kinnane, in the presence of the President of





Ireland, Mr Seán T. O'Kelly. The church as planned was, to say the least grandiose. Its most striking feature was a large tower which it was planned to be visible from Shannon Airport. At the height of an era of Catholic confidence, the tower would, in the words of the Prior, show how landlordism had been defeated and the Church had triumphed over persecution and adversity. The foundations of the tower were laid under the present sacristy, but the tower itself was never built.

The foundation-stone being laid, a pause ensued during which the necessary funds



were collected, mainly in the United States as well in Counties Limerick and Tipperary. The church was finally opened on 24th June, 1956. In the years immediately following the opening of the church and as funds became available, furnishings such as pews were added, the pillars clad in Connemara marble and stained-glass windows by famous Irish artists such as Patrick Pye, Patrick Pollen and Margaret Becker, installed.



On 10th January, 1957, Glenstal became an Abbey, the monks electing their first Abbot, Father Joseph Dowdall on April 11th.

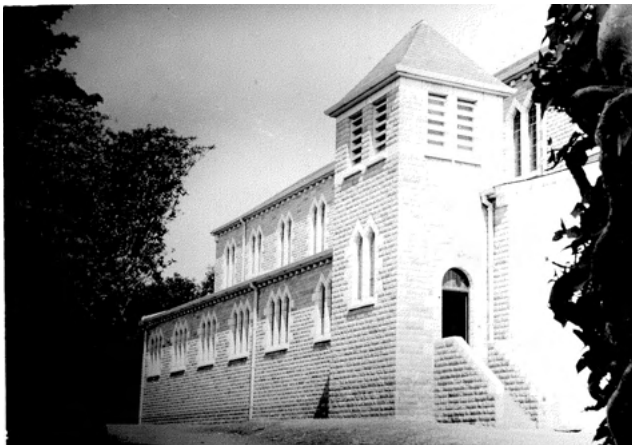
In 1965, following the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, a first re-ordering of the church was undertaken. The architect was Stephen Woulfe-Flanagan. The main changes were the removal of the original



choir-benches and the erection of a new altar and ambo further forward in the sanctuary. The hanging crucifix by Brother Benedict Tutty which still hangs over the altar was part of this re-ordering.

A second, more radical re-ordering, prompted by the re building of the organ by Kenneth Jones, was undertaken in 1979 under the second Abbot, Father Augustine O'Sullivan. The consultant architect was Hans Schädel, chief architect of the Diocese of Würzburg in Germany and the executive architect was Jeremy Williams, a former pupil of the Abbey School. Along with the insertion of new choir-stalls, a main feature of the re-ordering was Williams's vibrant painted ceiling, which has become a hall-mark of the church and the painting of the wall behind the organ.

The most recent re-ordering of the church was undertaken in 2016 under the architect Seán O'Laoire. This involved an extension of the sanctuary-area far into the first bay of the nave and - as part of the installation of underfloor heating - the re-flooring of the sanctuary with white tiling. The number of choir-stalls was reduced and the altar that had previously been in the Blessed Sacrament chapel became the main altar. The housing of the organ was simplified and the painting of the end wall was removed. All windows on the clerestory and at the west gallery end of the church were replaced with clear double-glazed windows. The effect was a general simplification and brightening of the liturgical space.



Ian Kenny



Ian Kenny (Glenstal Abbey School 2006-2012) is remembered by many for his sporting prowess and already played for the Waterford Minors while at school. Later he played hurling for UCC where he studied commerce and German with an Erasmus year in Nuremberg. Since college he has played with the Waterford Senior Hurlers at corner back with 11 Championship appearances from 2017 to 2021. Ian has made the most of the COVID restrictions by completing a Professional Masters in Education at



UCD and is currently teaching at St Benildus' College, Stillorgan Dublin, where he brings the energy of hurling to his teaching and coaching. Ian has been a forerunner for Glenstal hurling, as the school now competes in GAA competitions and won a Limerick Post-Primary Schools' trophy for the first time in 2017/2018. We congratulate Ian for his years at the top of Hurling and wish him continued success for the coming years.

Castle Restoration and Repair Project

Fr Senan OSB

Glenstal Castle was built by Sir Matthew Barrington between the mid-1830s and the early 1850s. It was designed by the English architect William Bardwell in the Norman revival style (his name is inscribed on the watch tower: *Bardwell me fecit 1839* - 'Bardwell made me'). The Barrington family left Glenstal in 1921 and the property was purchased in 1926 by Monsignor James Ryan, who in turn donated it to the Benedictines. The first monks arrived from Maredsous Abbey in Belgium in May 1927 and Glenstal Castle became a monastery. Sometime after the foundation of the school in 1932, the monks moved across the 'ring' into what were formerly the stables and outhouses, and since that time the castle has been home from home for generations of students.

A lot has been asked of this building over the years. Time and use have taken their toll on its fabric. The upkeep of an old building is demanding at the best of times but one that has to adjust every year to new requirements is particularly challenging. Perhaps even more significant has been the impact of the weather on the fabric. The locally quarried sandstone has eroded over time and is slowly crumbling. Moreover water ingress has wreaked havoc in many parts of the building. Leaking roofs, ineffective gutters, delaminating stone, dry rot, etc. eventually brought matters to a head. Something had to be done.

In January 2020 the community appointed the conservation architectural firm Consarc to carry out a detailed condition survey of the external fabric of the castle with a focus on issues causing damp and risk of falling masonry. The purpose of the survey was to identify a prioritised schedule of work to allow a phased programme of repairs to be planned and implemented. The survey findings were presented in a comprehensive

report in September 2020. The report not only identified all issues of concern but provided a roadmap to deal with this sword of Damocles that has been dangling over us for a very long time.



The gift of a generous donor has allowed us to begin the first stage of this long journey. Its scope encompasses the ‘priority one urgent works’ identified in the survey. The areas in need of immediate attention are the roofs and upper stonework of the library tower, the watchtower, the entrance archway and adjoining towers. The upper stonework of the front façade is also included in this phase of the works. This phase should hopefully be completed by the end of the year. Further funds will be needed to complete the programme of works outlined in the report.

The construction firm appointed to do these works is James Oliver Hearty & Sons Ltd. This firm has extensive experience in conservation work and has the expertise and necessary skills to meet the challenges posed by the castle project. We are fortunate to have Una Ní Mhearain of Consarc as project architect. Una is working closely with the Limerick County Council Conservation officer, Mr Tom Cassidy.

Works began at the end of June this year. An elaborate network of scaffolding rose from the ground and soon reached the top of the watch tower. In itself the scaffolding is a beautiful structure. Once in place the first task was to remove vegetation from the stonework and “Doff” clean it, a process that is a gentle form of steam cleaning. The results are spectacular. The warm light tan colour of the sandstone has resurfaced after the dulling effect of being exposed to the elements over the years. At the time of writing the library and watch tower roofs have been

stripped, and necessary repairs carried out on the timbers. In the next number of weeks these roofs should be reconstructed according to conservation requirements.

The lead on all the castle roofs has cracked and is beyond repair. This will be replaced and new perimeter gutters installed. All the capping stones will be removed (a large crane will be on site to do this) and a damp proof course laid before the stones are lifted back into place. Stonework that has deteriorated will either be descaled to make it safe or replaced if significant erosion has occurred. Once the roofs of the library and watch towers are complete work will then commence on the roofs of the archway and adjoining towers. These will be completely replaced .

The castle project is not so much a “restoration”, as a programme of repairs that aims to arrest deterioration of the external and internal fabric and to fix issues that have bedevilled the building for years.

A lot of work is being done and a lot of work remains to be done. All of this work has been made possible through the generosity of our donors. We are very grateful for your ongoing support and encouragement without which this architecturally significant landmark in east Limerick would be lost to posterity.



