Clós Reilig na Páirce Bán / Whitefield Grave Yard

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Scan QR code for Whitefield Graveyard Conservation Plan

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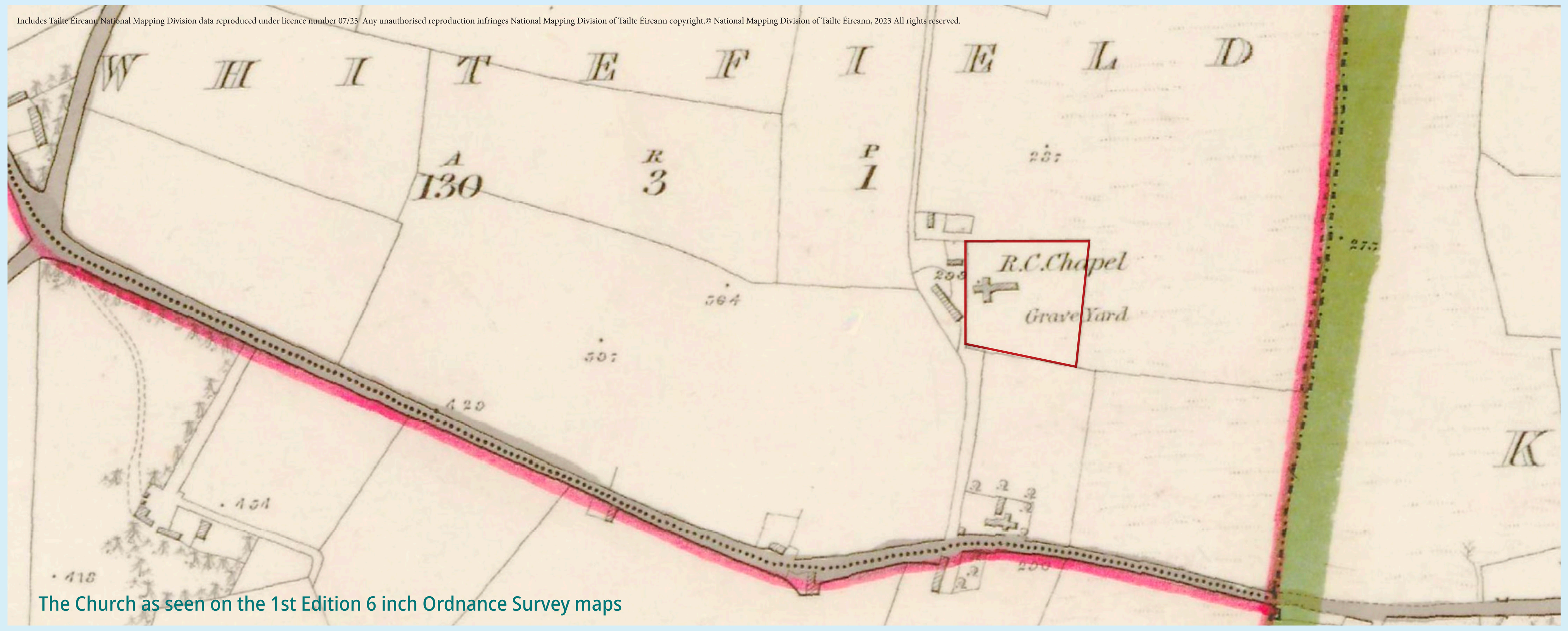


The Church as seen on the 1st Edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey maps

Tábhacht Stairiúil

Baineann tábhacht mhór stairiúil agus tábhacht mhór seandálaíochta i gContae Chill Mhantáin le Reilig an Ghoirt Bháin agus leis na séipéil a bhfuil baint acu léi. I mbaile fearainn an Ghoirt Bháin, paróiste sibhialta Chill Chomáin agus barúntacht Bhaile na Corra Theas atá an reilig, a raibh ról ríthábhachtach aici in aimsir na bPéindlíthe.

Le linn na ré sin, cuireadh na Péindlíthe i bhfeidhm chun an Caitliceachas a chur faoi chois in Éirinn, mar aon leis an easaontas i measc na bProtastúnach. Mar gheall air sin, tháinig séipéil ón ré sin, ar nós shéipéal an Ghoirt Bháin (a dtugtar Seanséipéal Choill Bhánaigh air freisin) chun cinn mar ionaid adhartha do Chaitlicigh. Ba ghnách na séipéil sin a bheith déanta as ábhair a bhí ar fáil sa cheantar, cosúil le cloch agus láib, agus díon tuí a bhíodh orthu. Is de stíleanna ailtireachta éagsúla iad, agus dearadh iothlainne atá ar chuid acu agus tá cuid eile acu t-chruthach. Ba iad na foirgnimh t-chruthacha a tháinig i réim le himeacht ama.

Eastát Fitzwilliam

In Eastát Fitzwilliam (Mhic Liam) a bhí ceantar an Ghoirt Bháin/Choill Bhánaigh. Limistéar 80,000 acra a bhí ann agus Cúil Aitinn ina lár. De bhunús Shasana a bhí teaghlach Fitzwilliam agus ba Phrotastúnaigh iad a raibh an cháil orthu gur tiarnaí talún liobrálacha iad, a bhí ag teacht le hidé-eolaíocht pholaitiúil na bhFuigeanna. Thug siad tacaíocht airgid chun scoileanna Protastúnacha, scoileanna Caitliceacha agus scoileanna measctha a bhunú ar an eastát. Chomh maith leis sin, chuidigh siad le tógáil Shéipéal Chaoimhín sna 1840í agus le teach a thógáil don Athair Hore. Le linn an Ghorta Mhóir i ndeireadh na 1840í, chuidigh siad le 6,000 tionónta dul ar imirce go Ceanada.

Atógáil tar éis an Éirí Amach

Dódh séipéal an Ghoirt Bháin le linn Éirí Amach 1798. Mar sin féin, mar gheall ar an gcion mór a bhí ag an bpobal air, rinneadh iarrachtaí an séipéal a dheisiú agus a mhéadú, nó séipéal nua a thógáil ina áit. Faoi 1838, bhí foirgneamh mór croschruthach tógtha chun freastal ar an bpobal. Chosain sé £191.6.2 séipéal an Ghoirt Bháin a atógáil, agus tháinig cuid de sin ón rialtas (£37.19.0), ó Iarla Fitzwilliam (£50) agus ó mhuintir an pharóiste (£85.15.0).

Sa bhliain 2000, cuireadh altóir agus roinnt binsí adhmaid i Reilig an Ghoirt Bháin ionas go bhféadfaí leanúint ar aghaidh ag léamh an Aifrinn amuigh faoin aer, traidisiún a bhí seanbhunaithe sa láthair sin.

Bunú Shéipéal Chaoimhín

Tháinig athrú mór ar phróifíl reiligiúin an cheantair le bunú Shéipéal Chaoimhín. In 1841, d'aithin an tAthair Thomas Hore, a bhí díreach ceaptha ina shagart paróiste, nár leor an séipéal a bhí sa Ghort Bán an tráth sin chun freastal ar an bpobal. Dá bhrí sin, tógadh Séipéal Chaoimhín 0.9km siar ó thuaidh ón reilig. Coisricadh é trí bliana ina dhiaidh sin agus tréigeadh seanséipéal an Ghoirt Bháin.

Historical Significance

Whitefield Graveyard and its associated churches hold significant historical and archaeological importance in County Wicklow. Situated in the townland of Whitefield, civil parish of Kilcommon, and barony of Ballinacor South, the site played a crucial role during the Penal Era.

During the Penal Era, the Penal Laws were enforced to suppress Catholicism and Protestant dissent in Ireland. As a result, penal churches like Whitefield, also known as "Old Kilavaney," emerged to provide a place of worship for Catholics. These churches were typically constructed with locally available materials such as stone and mud, featuring thatched roofs. The architectural styles varied, with "Barn Church" and "T-Shaped" designs being common, with the latter becoming more popular over time.

Fitzwilliam Estate

The Whitefield/Killavaney area was part of the Fitzwilliam estate, encompassing 80,000 acres centred around Coolattin. The Fitzwilliam family, considered "liberal" landlords, were of English origin, Protestant in religion, and aligned with the "Whig" political ideology. They financially supported the establishment of Protestant, Catholic, and mixed schools on their estate. Additionally, they contributed to the construction of St. Kevin's Church in the 1840s and the building of a house for Fr. Hore. During the devastating famine of the late 1840s, they facilitated the "assisted emigration" of 6,000 tenants to Canada.

Post-Rebellion Reconstruction

The turbulent period of the 1798 Rebellion resulted in the burning of the church at Whitefield. However, due to the strong local attachment to the site, efforts were made to repair and enlarge the church or build a replacement. By 1838, a substantial cruciform building had been erected, catering to the needs of the community. The reconstruction of Whitefield church cost £191.6.2, with contributions from the government (£37.19.0), Earl Fitzwilliam (£50), and the parishioners (£85.15.0).

In the year 2000, an altar and several wooden benches were installed at Whitefield Graveyard, facilitating the continuation of open-air masses, a practice deeply rooted in the site's history.

Establishment of St. Kevin's Church

The establishment of St. Kevin's Church marked a significant shift in the religious landscape of the area. In 1841, Fr. Thomas Hore, the newly appointed parish priest, recognized the inadequacy of the existing church at Whitefield. Consequently, St. Kevin's Church was constructed 0.9km northwest of the graveyard. It was consecrated three years later, leading to the abandonment of the old church at Whitefield.

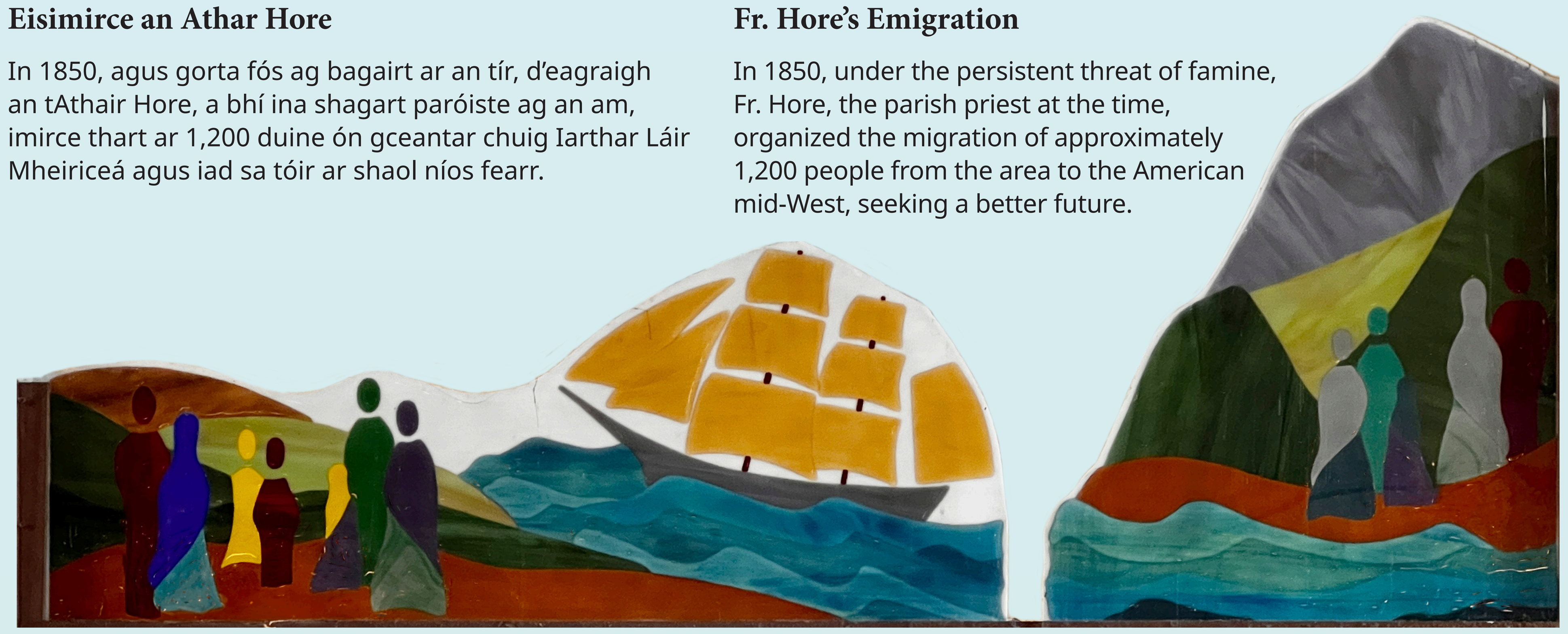
Conjectural reconstruction of Whitefield church burning during the 1798 Rebellion

Eisimirce an Athar Hore

In 1850, agus gorta fós ag bagairt ar an tír, d'eagraigh an tAthair Hore, a bhí ina shagart paróiste ag an am, imirce thart ar 1,200 duine ón gceantar chuig Iarthar Láir Mheiriceá agus iad sa tóir ar shaol níos fearr.

Fr. Hore's Emigration

In 1850, under the persistent threat of famine, Fr. Hore, the parish priest at the time, organized the migration of approximately 1,200 people from the area to the American mid-West, seeking a better future.



Killavaney church stained glass mirror detail commemorating the Irish emigration

Plaque listing parish priests for Whitefield and subsequently Killavaney church

An Roinn Tithíochta, Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

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The Heritage Council

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