

The National Shrine of St. Anne

Home to the Polish Chaplaincy in Ireland, St. Audoen's Catholic Church in High Street Dublin 8 stands loftily on a steeply sloping site, side by side with the original medieval Norman Church of St. Audoen's, itself formerly Catholic.

Architecturally joined at the east wall of the Norman building, they share a common heritage of devotion to St. Anne.

Gift of the Normans

It was the Normans who brought devotion to St. Anne to Ireland and established a shrine in her honour in a chapel dedicated to their sainted Bishop of Rouen, St. Audoen. Devotion to St. Anne on this site dates from 1169/1170 centred on the Norman gifted relic (a finger bone) of St. Anne to their new home. Such was the level of devotion that by 1352 the festival of St. Anne on 26th July was declared a holiday of obligation and in 1431, King Henry VI granted letters patent establishing the Guild of St. Anne – *"to the praise of God and of the Blessed Virgin Mary and in honour of St. Anne"*. Six priests were necessary to tend to the needs of pilgrims from within Ireland, from Britain and from the Continent. The Church contained a chapel to St. Mary (the Lady Chapel) and St. Anne, with altars to St. Catherine, St. Nicholas, St. Thomas and St. Clare. Excavation yields in 1967 to 1972 at the thirteenth century layer, included a pewter pilgrim-badge and a small bronze pilgrim's flask/ampulla.

The Change in Religion

During the protestant reformation, the Norman Church was taken over and so lost to its Catholic congregation and to the Guild of St. Anne. The Guild itself continued, despite the dissolution of Abbeys, Pories and other religious houses, remaining unquestioned until the early seventeenth century. Devotion to St. Anne was revived again in Dublin 1912 in the new Catholic St. Audoen's. The beautiful Statue of the shrine made by *Deghini's* of Fishamble Street, Dublin, was gifted by a Mrs. Kelly in 1919.

A New Vision

The vision of the then parish priest Canon James Monks, the building of St. Audoen's Catholic Church is, in itself, a testimony to faith, perseverance, generosity and heroic love of God. By the date of his death in 1855 the structure had been completed, debt free, at a cost of over £10,000.

The foundation stone was laid in July, 1841, just twelve years after the Catholic Emancipation Act, 1829, but, it would be some forty years later before the full completion of this triumphal monument to faith.

Canon Monks collected £4,436 by penny collections alone from the impoverished city population between 1833 and 1841. These monies allowed him to acquire the land. Public fundraising meetings were held to fund the build, a founding member donor being Daniel O'Connell.

The Canon in his address to a meeting of Easter Monday 1841 said *"And now, for the completion of our grand object, I am*

compelled to test the generosity and kindly feelings of the parishioners, and to solicit in favour of their new church the means, at least in such proportions as becomes this wealthy and respectable parish, by which I shall be enabled and encouraged to proceed with the work which the poor people of this city have so generously begun. Small as my own means are, I will give what I can afford as a test of my sincerity. I have accordingly requested our secretary to put my name down for £100." At that meeting, amongst others, Daniel O'Connell subscribed £25 at that time, Sir John Power £50 and Richard O'Gorman £100.

Nineteenth Century Catholic Revival

There was a heavy call on funds from the Catholic population of the time, as following the Catholic Relief Act of 1793 and the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, great building projects were underway throughout the country.

From the beginning of the 19th century until 1868, it was estimated that a total of about **£5m** throughout Ireland was spent on religious buildings and schools by the Catholic population. In yet another bid for funds, a sermon of August 1841 delivered by Very Reverend Dr Miley in the Bridge Street parish church of Saint Audoen's (RC) was published. His sermon gives some context to the times - *"If a stranger were to ask me where the trophies of the glorious sacrifices of the Irish people for their religion are to be found, I would conduct him round the city, and show him the "back yard chapels" - the Catacombs of Dublin. And then I would bring him to St. Andrew's, to SS. Michael and John's, to the church of St. Francis of Assisium, to both the Carmelite churches, to St. Nicholas's, ... to that*

beautiful Ionic temple of St. Paul's, to St. Michan's, to the Dominican church, to St. Francis Xavier, and to the Metropolitan, surpassing all the churches, not only in this island, but of the Empire, in Doric majesty. The metropolitan is the Pro-Cathedral and here she stands in Doric majesty"

The Building of the new St. Audoen's

The new St. Audoen's, designed by the noted architect Patrick Byrne, was built in neo-classical style - nothing was too good for this new House for the Lord.

Brendan Grimes in his delivery of the thirteenth Sir John T. Gilbert Commemorative Lecture **"Commodious temples: Catholic Church building in nineteenth-century Dublin"**, states: *"The important churches were intended to be built on prominent sites, and here I have for you some examples. The Pro-Cathedral looks as if it was designed for an open site that might have been the principal street in Dublin, Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) on the site of what is now the G.P.O. but I've never found anything written down to assert that so we can't say for sure. It was built nearby in a smaller street, Marlborough Street. Saint Paul's achieves a magnificent prominence on Arran Quay on the Western approach to the city. Saint Audoen's occupies a prominent site on High Street overlooking the heart of the medieval city. Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Andrew's both form part of the street façade....."*

The Location of the New Church

Sited in the heartland of the Established Church of Ireland, the Anglican-Norman St.

Audoen's to its left (*the new building was physically joined to the Norman building at the east end of Lord Portlester's Chapel*) and Christ-Church Cathedral to its right, it is imposing and proudly took its place in the Dublin Cityscape. St. Audoen's Catholic Church is described by Maurice Craig in his **Definitive History of Dublin, 1660 to 1860** as follows "*By far the finest (Church) is St. Audoen's that immense black mass which towers over the squalid little dwellings of Cook Street. It looks like some impregnable fortress of the faith, its rugged calp masonry, battered like that of a medieval castle to its base...It is superbly dramatic in the advantage it takes of the falling ground and dramatic too in relationship to that other great mass the domed block of the Four Courts which it faces across the river... Below it is the straggling fragment of the medieval city wall and the roofless aisle and chancel of the ancient St. Audoen's whose battlemented tower completes the scene*".

Historic Links

The location of the new Church retains links with the original St. Audoen and St. Anne's Guild. Not only is there the physical building linkage referred to above, but the site on which it is built formerly housed a college to accommodate the chaplains to the Guild, originally known as Blakeney Inns and later St. Anne's Inns and which, it is believed, at one time was a Mass house competing with the local Protestantised parish churches.

In addition, St. Audoen's from 1912 continued the historical devotion to St. Anne so renowned in the medieval ages. The relic to St. Anne survived the destruction of religious images and relics during the Reformation zeal of Dr. George Browne, Henry VIII's appointed Archbishop

to Ireland. Dr. Browne collected all the relics of 'his Cathedrals' in Dublin which included, as stated in **The Book of Obits and Martyrology of the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, commonly called Christchurch**, a crucifix which spoke (*que bis verba sonasse legitur*), the Baculus Jhesu (*quem angelus beatus Patricio conferebat*) and other relics. The Baculus Jhesu, the "Staff of Jesus" also known as "St. Patrick's Staff" was destroyed.. "*a great fire was kindled in High Street*".

This event is recorded by Sir James Ware in his **Annals of the Reign of King Henry VIII**. p-99:

" Also, about the same time, among the famous images whereunto pilgrimages were designed, the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary was burned, then kept at Trim., in the Abbey of the Canons Regular, and the gifts of the pilgrims were taken away from thence. The image of Christ crucified, in the Abbey of Bali bogan, and St. Patrick's Staff, in the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, at Dublin, which William, the son of Aldeline, brought from Ardmagh, and gave it as a gift to that church in the year 11 80, underwent the like fate."

Ronan in his **St. Patrick's Staff and Christ Church** says "*All the Lives of St. Patrick speak of this celebrated staff which he received on an island of the Tyrrhene Sea (Mediterranean).*" The island is St. Honorat, off Cannes and a plaque marks the visit. The community were given the staff by Christ to hold '*for my servant Patrick on his mission to my people in Eirinn*'

In the Ireland bag in Westminster the following reference is made that the 1529 trial for treason of Sir Gerald Mackshayne was held "*upon the Holie Massbooke and*

the great relike of Erlonde (Ireland), callid Baculum Christi, in the presence of the Kynges Deputie, Chancelour, Treaseror, and Justice”.

One of the most intriguing features of the siting of the new St. Audoen's is that it is, quite possibly, built near to, if not actually on, the place where the esteemed and celebrated religious relics and images of Dublin were destroyed and burned. The irony and historical significance of the siting of the new building does not seem to have been lost on the journalists of the day. The **Freeman's Journal** of May 1899, in reporting yet another public meeting to raise funds (a popular practice of the time), links the Reformation past to the new Church, stating, *“The spot where these holy relics are said to have been burned by George Browne was on a sward at the eastern end of St. Audoen's Church and is the site on which the present new Church of St. Audoen, in High Street now stands”*

Along with the heart of St. Laurence O'Toole (now in Christ Church in the Chapel of St. Laud), the relic of St. Anne survived and was authenticated in 1928 and approved for public veneration by the Holy See.

The Devotion to St. Anne continues...

The novena to St. Anne (who after all is mother to the Blessed Virgin Mary and grandmother to Jesus), in this the National Shrine to St. Anne, continues under the direction of Fr. Jarek and the relic of St. Anne brought by the Normans is venerated every Tuesday after the 1:15pm Holy Mass (in English) and on the last Sunday of the month after the 12:30pm Holy Mass. All are welcome

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The Shrine of St. Anne brings the past and present together in this historic part of Dublin and when you walk through the portico you walk, surely, on Holy ground.

Fr. Jarek with the Polish Chaplaincy is working to restore Ireland's National Shrine and the beautiful and imposing St. Audoen's to its former glory. This is a challenging and costly task. You can contribute to this great work by joining the **FAMILY OF ST. ANNE** and share the heritage of the heroic parishioners of 1841 and the people of 1538 who suffered greatly at the loss of the link to St. Patrick and to Christ.

Simply complete the enrolment form below. The intentions of the Family of St. Anne will be prayed for at the weekly Novena Mass and at the **Annual Tridium to St. Anne which takes place on the 24th, 25th and 26th July each year**, with Holy Mass, Benediction, Novena to St. Anne, veneration of the true relic of St. Anne and blessing with the relic. St. Anne's Blessed Oils and Holy Water are available.

Join us July (2011, at 8pm) each evening of the Tridium, but if you cannot attend, do send in your petitions and join us in spirit.

Historical

Timeline.....

1793 Catholic Relief Act – allowed freedom of building for Catholics –foundation stone, St. Teresa's Clarendon Street laid	1853 <i>Bonanni</i> , Madonna and Child exhibited at the Dublin Exhibition, winning a gold medal. Catholic Directory reports interior finished with the most perfect stucco work ever executed
1829 Catholic Emancipation Act	1855 Canon Monks dies
1833 Penny collections for building fund started by Canon Monks	1861 2,300 pipe organ installed, deemed finest in Ireland
1841 Foundation Stone laid, public meetings to raise funds for the building.	1869 High Altar installed
1846 Dedication of St. Audoen's on 13 September, by Archbishop, Dr. Murray, with the interiors unfinished	1894 Portico completed – BV Mary, St.Audoen and St. Patrick
1847 Death of Daniel O'Connell, 5th May, the bell dedicated on All Saints Day named: " The Liberator " in his honour.	1903 Diocetian style Stained Glass Lunette window by William Early, design exhibited in RHA
1848 Arrival from Leghorn on 14 August of sculpture of Madonna and Child by <i>Pietro Bonanni</i> , commissioned by Paul Cardinal Cullen, then Rector of the Irish College in Rome on behalf of Canon Monks, dedicated on 20 August Fr. Luigi Gentili I.C. mission in Dublin started in St. Audoen's 30 April to 4 June, following on in Rathmines where the first outdoor procession of the Blessed Sacrament took place and then in the Augustinians in St. Johns Lane where he took ill. On 26 September, the celebrated Rosminian, Fr. Luigi Gentili dies and was laid in St. Audoen's, the largest church in Dublin (and where he had preached his first Irish mission), to facilitate the vast numbers paying respects day and night. His funeral was reminiscent of that of Daniel O'Connell next to whom he was laid in Glasnevin.	1912 Devotions to St. Anne revive in the National Shrine <hr/> 1917 Giant Pacific Ocean Clam shell holy water stoops donated by a mariner, brother of then parish priest and installed <hr/> 1919 Donation of Statue of St. Anne <hr/> 1928 Authentication of Relic of St. Anne and approval for public veneration by the Holy See