

Swift's Table



Item: Table

Date: c. 1700 AD

Find Location: Laracor, Trim.

Current Location: St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

Description:

A table used by Dean Jonathan Swift to celebrate the Eucharist in his church at Laracor, near Trim. In February 1699-1700 Swift was made vicar of Laracor, near Trim. With this appointment was united the adjacent rectory of Agher, and afterwards the living of Rathbeggan, all in the diocese of Meath. Swift ministered to a congregation of about fifteen and had abundant leisure for cultivating his garden, making a canal (after the Dutch fashion of Moor Park), planting willows, and rebuilding the vicarage.

Swift was the incumbent from 1700 until his death in 1745, and Laracor would have provided his principal income and Irish residence until he became Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in 1713, after which he employed a curate at Laracor. His lifelong friend Esther Johnson, known as Stella, had a house at Knightsbrook, 1.2km from Laracor church, after she first came to Ireland in 1701. The present church building dates to 1856 and was closed c. 1970.

Further Information:

James Reynolds, 'Jonathan Swift – Vicar of Laracor' *Riocht na Midhe* (1967) pp 41-54

Alabaster head of St John the Baptist



Item: The alabaster head of the decapitated St John the Baptist, his brow gashed.

Date: Medieval Period

Find Location: Associated with Kells

Current Location: Clongowes Wood College

Description:

At Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare, is an English alabaster head of St John the Baptist. Still with some paint and gilding, this relief panel has been scratched with the name of one Fr Betagh. This must be Thomas Betagh (1738–1811), a Jesuit priest, scholar and teacher, born in Kells, Co. Meath. Betagh, whose family had lost their lands in the time of Cromwell, for a time ran a school for clergy; among the school's pupils was Peter Kenney SJ, founder of Clongowes Wood College. At the centre of the Clongowes panel, which presumably had once belonged to Betagh, is the severed head of St John, flanked by St Peter (with his customary keys) and a mitred bishop—almost certainly St Thomas Becket. Below them is the Lamb of God and, at top, are the remains of an angel with painted peacock-feather wings.

Possibly a speciality of the Nottingham workshops, alabaster heads of St John, like that at Clongowes, would often be fitted into wooden altarpieces and were much used in private devotional settings, such as in the home or private chapel. Four similar alabaster St John heads survive in Ireland. Were they perhaps a popular type of alabaster in Ireland? They certainly seem to have been a fairly affordable devotional art form in England.

Further Information:

F. Cheetham, *English medieval alabasters: with a catalogue of the collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 1984; Woodbridge, 2005).

J. Hunt & P. Harbison, 'Medieval English alabasters in Ireland', *Studies* (Winter 1976), 310–21.

P. Williamson, F. Cannan, E. Duffy & S. Perkinson, *Object of devotion: medieval English alabaster sculpture from the Victoria and Albert Museum* (Alexandria, VA, 2010).

<http://www.historyireland.com/volume-22/holy-images-england-medieval-english-alabaster-sculpture-ireland/>

Trim Town Maces



Item: Trim Town Maces

Date: 1728

Find Location: Trim

Current Location: In care of Meath County Council

Description:

The set of two silver maces were made in Dublin in 1728 by Master Goldsmith William Williamson and were presented to Trim Corporation by Garret Wesley from Dangan Castle.

William Williamson was located in Cole Alley and Castle Street. He was apprenticed to William Skinner in 1707 and then turned over to Alexander Sinclair. He became a Freeman in 1726 and was elected Warden from 1732 till 1735. He became Master of the Guild in 1737. Williamson became a freeman in 1740. He was churchwarden at St Werburgh's in 1750. He was elected to the Common Council City of Dublin in 1752 and was Assay Master 1754-1770.

The maces survived the burning of Trim Town Hall in 1920 as they were stored in a fireproof safe. The Trim corporation had two serjeants at mace as two of their officers. The two serjeants at mace were appointed by the Portreeve (Mayor) for the period of one year but their terms were usually renewed each year. They executed the process of the Borough Court and were paid a salary of £5 per annum as well as other fees.

Further Information:

Coconut Chalice



Item: Coconut Chalice

Date: 1733

Find Location: Galtrim

Current Location: Church of Ireland

Description:

This chalice was used for the celebration of the Eucharist. Bishop Ellis recorded in “The State of the Diocese of Meath” that at “Galtrim they had no utensils for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper except a chalice of cocoa nut tipped with silver”. This record dates from about 1733 as Ellis was Bishop of Meath from 1732 to January 1734. The chalice disappeared from the church and came into the hands of Dr. Minchin of Kells who restored it to the parish of Galtrim. The stem of the chalice is made of ebony.

Further Information:

John Healy *History of the Diocese of Meath* (Dublin, 1908)

Crucifixion Stone



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Item: Crucifixion Stone Tablet

Date: 1740

Find Location: Summerhill

Current Location: National Museum of Ireland – Decorative Arts & History, Collins Barracks,

Description:

This stone was discovered in O'Neill's house (now Fields) around 1938 in a walled up small room. It depicts the crucifixion scene and a collection of the symbols of the death of Jesus Christ. The symbols carved on the stone include the sun and the moon, the ladder, the cock and the pot, the cord, the spear, the three nails, the hammer, the pincers and the temple. The stone was clearly used for secret Catholic worship.

Further Information:

Dean Anthony Cogan, *The History of the Diocese of Meath Ancient and Modern* (Dublin, 1862) 3 Volumes

Beggar's Badge



Item: Beggar's Badge

Date: 1742

Find Location: Kells

Current Location: Kells

Description:

Beggars' badges were badges worn by beggars beginning in the early fifteenth century in Ireland and Britain. They served two purposes; to identify individual beggars, and to allow beggars to move freely from place to place. In medieval and early modern times, beggars were generally valued and respected for the news they carried and for their craftsmanship or their medical or musical skills.

Jonathan Swift wrote a satirical pamphlet in 1737 supporting the control of beggars. In it he writes: "I have for some years past applied myself to several Lord Mayors, and to the late Archbishop of Dublin for a remedy to this evil of foreign beggars; and they all appeared ready to receive a very plain proposal, I mean, that of badging the original poor of every parish, who begged in the streets; that the said beggars should be confined to their own parishes; that, they should wear their badges well sewn upon one of their shoulders, always visible, on pain of being whipped and turned out of town; or whatever legal punishment may be thought proper and effectual."

The local parish vestry had charge of the local government and as such controlled begging. Thank you to Rev. William Seale for this item.

Further Information:

Shelf for Ludlow Loaves



Item: Shelves

Date: c.1760-1907

Find Location: St. Mary's Church of Ireland , Navan

Current Location: St. Mary's Church of Ireland , Navan

Description:

There was a shelf under the gallery to the right of the entrance door for Lord Ludlow's Loaves. Lord Ludlow and the Ardsallagh Estate provided 5s. worth of bread each week for the poor. The Duke of Bedford continued this practice up to about 1907. In 1867 ten sixpenny loaves, were provided for the poor of the parish by the Duke of Bedford. The original donor, however, was Lord Ludlow, who directed that five shillings' worth of bread should be provided weekly for the poor of this church.

John Preston was confirmed as owner of Ardsallagh in 1666. His grandson, also John, died leaving a daughter, Mary, as heiress. Mary married Peter Ludlow around 1727. Peter was grand nephew of a famous General Edmund Ludlow who fought alongside Cromwell against King Charles I. Peter Ludlow was M.P. for Meath in 1719 and 1727. Peter Ludlow died in Bath on the 19th of June 1750 and was succeeded by his son, also called Peter. Peter Ludlow was created Baron Ludlow of Ardsallagh in 1735 and Viscount Preston of Ardsallagh and first Earl of Ludlow in 1760. The second Peter married Lady Frances Saunderson and was succeeded by his eldest son, August, became the second Earl Ludlow and his second son George James the third Earl. George James left his estates to the Duke of Bedford who gave them to his brother Lord John Russell who was succeeded by his grandson. Lord John Russell was created Earl Russell in 1861.

Further Information:

Meath in the 18th century - Meath Virtual Museum – Noel French

The Christening Robes of the Earl of Darnley



Item: The Christening Robes of the Earl of Darnley

Date: 1767

Find Location: Associated with Athboy

Current Location: Sold by Adams Auctioneers

Description:

The Christening Robes of John Bligh 4th Earl of Darnley (born June 30 1767) A very rare and complete satin and silk embroidered suite, comprising a robe with lace trim and foliage borders; a pillow with tasselled corners; a quilt with similar borders; a cover; a canopy with ties; a lace bonnet with lining and a pair of other bonnets in Brussels lace John Bligh, b.1767 was one of the 'miraculous' children of the 3rd Earl of Darnley, who was M.P. for Athboy and a confirmed bachelor nearing 50. He surprised Dublin society by marrying Mary Stoyte, an heiress from Streete, Co. Westmeath. The 3rd Earl took seriously his conviction that he was in reality a teapot. In spite of his concerns that his spout could break-off in the night he fathered seven children. The 4th Earl, for whom these robes were made, had milder illusions, in that he claimed to be The Duke of Lennox. He married Elizabeth Brownlow of Lurgan.

Further Information:

Flintlock Holster Pistols



Item: A Pair Of Irish 22-Bore Rifled Brass-Mounted Flintlock Holster Pistols

Date: c. 1770

Find Location: Associated with Kells

Current Location: Sold by Auction by Bonhams

Description:

Made by F. Lord of Dublin, Circa 1770

The crest is that of Sir Thomas Taylor (20 October 1724 - 14 February 1795) who was MP for Kells, Co. Meath from 1747 to 1760, as was his father before him. He was created an Irish peer as Baron Headfort of Headfort in 1760, and Viscount Headfort in 1762. He was raised to an earldom as Earl Bective of Bective Castle in 1766. In 1783 he was installed Knight of St. Patrick and made a Privy Councillor in Ireland

With two-stage swamped sighted barrels each turned at the girdle and rifled with seven grooves, octagonal breeches each stamped with Co. Meath registration mark 'ME 56/7' on the top flat. Both engraved with owner's crest, an earl's coronet above, border engraved spurred pommels each with oval cap with a martial trophy against a stippled ground, trigger-guards with first pattern acorn finial and each engraved with a flower-head on the bow, turned brass ramrod-pipes, and original ramrods with brass-capped wooden tips, one with iron worm.

Further Information:

<http://www.historyireland.com/18th-19th-century-history/the-duel-in-irish-history-by-james-kelly/>

<https://mylesdungan.com/2013/06/04/affairs-of-honour-the-irish-code-duello/>

<https://brendano7.com/2010/07/20/duelling-in-eighteenth-century-ireland/>

Bishop's Seal



Item: Seal of the Diocese of Meath

Date: c. 1778

Find Location:

Current Location: British Museum

Description:

Gold Oval silver seal-matrix of the See of Meath, Roman Catholic. It has a gadrooned back; open handle with grooved scrolls; shaped loop at end. A shaped shield of arms the See of Meath and Plunket, sable, three mitres argent (Meath) and sable, a bend argent, in sinister chief a castle of the same (Plunket); above, a cardinal's hat. No legend. Pearled border. Patrick Joseph Plunket, Bishop of Meath, 1778-1837.

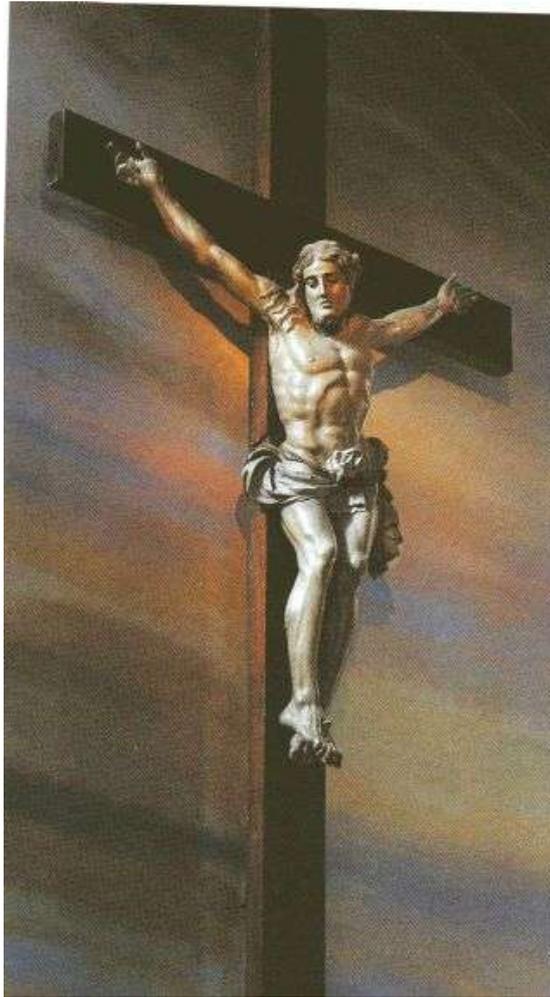
Patrick Joseph Plunkett was born in 1738 in Kells. Academically able, he was ordained in September 1764. He was appointed Bishop of Meath, a position he was somewhat reluctant to take up. His consecration took place in February 1779. En route to Ireland, the ship carrying his possessions was attacked and robbed by the famous American privateer John Paul Jones. On arrival in Meath, he set up his episcopal residence in Navan where he was inducted as parish priest in 1781. As bishop he had two main aims. First to revitalise the Church, demoralised through the effects of the Penal Laws and second to establish a system of education by which his people would free themselves from a position of ignorance and servitude and which would develop the practice of their religion. Bishop Plunkett restored the Catholic Church in Meath as a vigorous element in the lives of the people and made it a respected force in society. He is buried under St. Mary's Church.

Further Information:

Text from 'Catalogue of British Seal-Dies in the British Museum', A.B. Tonnochy, London 1952, cat. no. 946.

<http://www.navanhistory.ie/index.php?page=p-j-plunkett>

Crucifix



Item: Crucifix

Date: 1792

Find Location: Navan

Current Location: St. Mary's Church, Navan.

Description: This limewood crucifix is the sole surviving religious work by Edward Smyth and his sole surviving piece in wood. The figure was removed from the wall in 1949 and the following inscription was on the back "EWD SMYTH-DUBLIN-sculp-1792". In 1973 the crucifix, was restored by the National Gallery's Department of Conversation. Edward Smyth is thought to have been born in or near Navan in 1749. He and his parents moved to Dublin where Edward became a well-known sculptor. He is best known for his emblems of Irish rivers and the Royal Coat of Arms on the Customs House in Dublin. An architect, James Gandon, described him as "an artist capable of the highest works of art, either as a modeller or a sculptor."

Further Information:

<http://www.navanhistory.ie/index.php?page=h-g-leask-article>

H.G. Leask, 'The Edward Smyth Crucifix or The Navan Crucifix' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 1950.

Meath in the 18th century - Meath Virtual Museum – Noel French

Token



Item: Token (Photo of similar token)

Date: 1792

Find Location: Market Square, Navan.

Current Location: Unknown.

Description:

Discovered in a wall at the stationary shop of the Meath Chronicle at Market Square in 1977 the coin was struck by the Hibernian Mining Company which was incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1792. The company struck the coins as there was a shortage of small denomination coinage throughout the British Isles. The tokens circulated widely and formed the basis of Ireland's currency in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The token bears the company's cipher "HMC". Around the edge are listed the surnames of the company chairman; Turner Camac, his brother; James Camac and the company's founder John Howard Kyan. The Hibernian Mining Company operated a mine at Ballymurtagh (the name appeared on the token found in Navan) on the western bank of the Avoca river, Co. Wicklow.

Further Information:

<http://www.mining-memorabilia.co.uk/aimc.htm>

http://www.countywicklowheritage.org/page/mining_in_west_avoca

Militia Button



Item: Militia Button

Date: 1794

Find Location: Blackfriary, Trim.

Current Location: Irish Archaeology Field School (IAFS)

Description:

'Longford Militia' button was found during excavations of 18-19th century rubble layers covering the eastern range of buildings on the site. The button, presumably from the coat of one of the militia men, has a loop on the back to fasten through a button hole. The Longford Militia, as with all the militias, was founded in 1793 amid concerns for the security of the Irish colony (both internally and externally), when many of the regular Crown forces were engaged in the war with France. Historical sources can also trace the movements of the Longford Militia who, prior to 1857, were dispatched to regional headquarters nationwide (as well as occasionally to England) before being based permanently in County Longford.

The button is 2.1cm in diameter, made of copper, and is stamped with the Prince of Wales' crest – consisting of three feathers rising through a gold coronet positioned – atop the motto 'Ich Dien' (I serve), with the words 'Longford' and 'Militia' written above and below this crest respectively. The button is identifiable as part of the first series issued by the Longford Militia that dates from 1793, when the militia was originally raised, to 1829. The Longford Militia were almost certainly in Trim in 1794.

Further Information:

<http://iafs.ie/>

<http://iafs.ie/index.php/research-resources/>

1798 Sword



Item: Cavalry Sword (similar to that owned by Lord Fngal)

Date: 1798

Find Location: Killeen Castle

Current Location: Was in local hands 1998

Description:

Irish Officer's Sword with curved fullered blade double-edged towards the tip, etched and gilt with foliage, the crowned Royal Cypher, the Royal Arms and trophies on a blued panel over the lower half, gilt-brass stirrup hilt incorporating backstrap and pommel formed as a maned lionshead, and finely chequered ivory grip, in its original leather scabbard with signed gilt-brass locket.

A similar sword formed part of the auction at Killen Castle in the early 1950s and was purchased by a local person. Lord Fingal was one of the leaders of the government forces at the Battle of the Hill of Tara during the 1798 rebellion. The Battle of Tara Hill was fought on the evening of 26 May 1798 between British forces and Irish rebels rebels involved in the 1798 rebellion, resulting in a heavy defeat for the rebels and the end of the rebellion in Meath. Lord Fingal was the Captain of the Skreen Yeoman Cavalry. During the battle one part of the cavalry, commanded by Lord Fingal, preserved the right flank of the government forces.

Further Information:

L.J. Steen, *The Battle of the Hill of Tara 26th May 1798*, (Trim, 1991)

Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* (Dublin, 1802)