

## The building of the Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, Cork

RESEARCH NOTE, NO 3

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I have listed several useful publications in the select bibliography at the end of this document. The most pertinent items are Bolster, Turpin and the Dictionary of Irish Architects.

I created these notes for the field outing at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne, held under the auspices of Cork Historical & Archaeological Society, May 25<sup>th</sup> 2016, 7pm.

### Introduction

The present building is bounded by Cathedral Street (formerly Rogerson's Lane) on the southside, Gerald Griffin Street (formerly Clarence Street and earlier Britain Street) on west, School Lane on the east (leading to Lower Barrack View, cul-de-sac) and buildings on north (that are bounded by Cathedral Walk, formerly Old Chapel Lane). The North Chapel is marked on Beauford's 1801 map of Cork city. Thomas Holt's 1832 map shows the building in a 'T' shape with the top of the 'T' facing east; on an Ordnance Survey map dating between 1924 and 1950 the shape of the building had changed considerably (all maps available on Cork Past & Present website).

The previous church was adjacent to this site, it was built in 1730 by Bishop Tadhg McCarthy Reagh, who was bishop from 1727 to 1747. The North Cathedral or as it was once known the 'North Chapel' was begun in 1799. This was during the time of the Penal Laws. Roman Catholic church buildings were called 'chapels' to distinguish them from the churches of the Established Church, that is, the Church of Ireland. This is still seen today with 'chapels' in Wales (which are often churches of the Methodist religion) that are not of the Church of England.

### The present Cathedral

Bishop Francis Moylan (born in 1735 and bishop between 1787 and 1815) had built 17 churches in the Diocese of Cork by 1802. In 1790 he purchased a plot for the new Cathedral. The foundation stone was laid in 1799 – this date can be seen inscribed on the holy water font in the porch of the south transept. The foundation stone itself displaying an ornamental cross, the date of foundation and the bishop's initials was inserted into the northern wall inside the building; this can no longer be seen as it was plastered over during the 1960s renovations. Bolster states that its position is covered by the 12<sup>th</sup> Station of the Cross.

The bishop announced in his quinquennial report of 1802 that he was embarking upon the "arduous task demanding at least £4,000 sterling for rebuilding my Cathedral Church, now ruinous ...". The body of the building is constructed using local limestone and sandstone (similar to nearby St Ann's, Shandon). The use of these stone types was also typical of the neo-Gothic Revivalist period. The building had a nave, transepts and side aisles, with galleries over the aisles, effectively providing two seating levels. According to Bolster, the main altar measured 15 ft across and was manufactured in Lisbon with an elaborate tabernacle. It should be noted that the Bishop's father John Moylan had a shipping business with bases at Cork and Lisbon. The entrance to the new cathedral was from present-day Cathedral Street – this is likely to be today's southern entrance, but perhaps without the present porch. It should be noted that in this period there was no west entrance and buildings abutted the Cathedral on this side. The church was dedicated on Monday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1808 (as

recorded in the *Cork Chronicle* on August 26<sup>th</sup>) with the solemn blessing by Thomas Bray, archbishop of Cashel; Dr Florence McCarthy, coadjutor bishop preached the sermon.

Bishop Moylan died in 1815. A monument to him was carried out by the Irish sculptor Peter Turnerelli (1774-1839), grandson of an Italian refugee, who carried out most of his work in London. This can be viewed today in the north transept.

Since 1808 there have been several changes made to the building, which are now detailed as follows.

1. The first major change to the building happened with the fire of June 1820. The *Southern Reporter* (June 5<sup>th</sup>) reported that "To save the altar was impossible; but no time was lost in exertions to preserve the building from destruction which, happily and by the indefatigable zeal of all present, succeeded. In a few moments the Parish Engine arrived and was quickly followed by that of the Royal Exchange ... those of the Atlas Company, Messrs Wise's and several others, all of which being in excellent order and judiciously directed ... the fire that had caught the Organ in consequence of the immense heat, the peculiarly ignitable materials of the instrument and from its being exactly opposite the Altar, was immediately extinguished; not, however, without its being irretrievably injured."

The altar, tabernacle, sanctuary, Lady Chapel and organ were destroyed; only the shell of the building remained. The damage was assessed at about £2,000. It was decided to raise £900 of this from public subscription. Most Rev. John Murphy (Bishop of Cork, 1815-1847) commissioned the architect George Pain (d. 1838) to reconstruct the interior; this work took place from 1828 to 1830. Because of the extent of the fire damage, extensive remodelling of interior took place. The galleries from the side aisles were removed and replaced with a larger gallery at the western end. Pain designed an elaborate ceiling in Third Pointed style (more commonly known as perpendicular or rectilinear Gothic), this has fan tracery on a vaulted ceiling supported by capitals of perpendicular Gothic.

Pain extended the Cathedral to a length of 145 ft – Bolster considers that this extension was from the chancel eastwards into an enlarged sanctuary that contained a new marble altar in a semi-circular apse. The chancel arch is less steeply arched than the other arches of the building and to the present day gives a dimension of breadth and grandeur to the Sanctuary. Pain's complete plan for renovation was not carried out.

Part of the work of this period was the sculptures produced by sculptor John Hogan in 1823. Bishop Murphy and members of his family commissioned Hogan to produce many works of art over several years (see Turpin). For the Cathedral Hogan carved 27 statues in pinewood; these formed a spectacular reredos for the altar together with a low relief altar frontal of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*. The upper outline of the reredos had an outline similar to that of the chancel arch and the marble superstructure of the tabernacle tapered to a graceful spire surmounted by a cross. Part of the altar table survives and can be seen today in the north transept. It had been thought that the Hogan statues were lost but some, if not all, of the 27 Hogan statues from the reredos can now be seen in niches high in the ceiling along the nave. Other additions made were an hexagonal pulpit, an episcopal chair and choir stalls but Bolster does not consider that these were provided during the Murphy episcopate. Research by Ann Martha Rowan in the online *Dictionary of Irish Architects* shows that these were designed in 1901 by Hynes. The Murphy-era interior, with later additions, is visible in Hugh Doran's 1952 photograph of the interior (available at IARC website).

2. Bishop Murphy's successor was William Delany, who was bishop for 39 years from 1847 to 1886. Bishop Delany took out a 300-year lease from the Corporation of Cork in 1852 for a plot that ranged from Great Britain St (on the west) to the Blackpool River (east) – 70 ft × 57 ft at rere; in depth 68 ft on north side × 66½ ft on south side.

During this time Canon Daniel Foley (d. 1875) made modifications to the building between 1862 to 1867. Apparently the foundation stone of tower had been laid on March 25 1850. He was responsible for building the great western tower in 1862. it seems that the Canon personally contributed an cost-saving measure which involved cutting and placing the stone in such a way that appeared more economical; however, as then the grain of the stone was

laid incorrectly, after a certain height of the tower had been reached, these stones burst and the work had to be discontinued. In 1867 Canon Foley departed to be parish priest of Douglas.

3. The state of the tower necessitated urgent remedial work and in 1868 Bishop Delany convened a meeting of Cork citizens at which alterations and improvements were discussed. A suggestion to relocate the Cathedral was rejected in favour of building a footbridge over the north channel of the River Lee at the Athenaeum (on the site of the present day Opera House); this did not happen.

The Sligo architect and engineer Sir John Benson (1812-74) who carried out most of his work in Cork, was employed to do the work. He had great plans to enlarge the size of the building and further embellish the interior – Bolster describes these in some detail. However, in the event the work carried out was strengthening the buttresses with parapets and minarets added. By early June 1869 the work had been completed under the supervision of Mr R. Evans, contractor of Union Quay. Instead of a proposed spire, four pinnacles to the western tower gave it its distinctive appearance and a height of 152 ft, so that it stands 10 ft higher than the tower of nearby Shandon.

In 1870, bells were added to the tower, which were cast by the Murphy foundry in Dublin.

Then in the 1870s there was further work that involved clearing away the ruins of old houses on the western side of the building – this included 4,700 loads of rubbish that were carted away to the Western Road and Brickfields (Lower Glanmire Road area). A statement of account (in Bolster) for the period from September 1874 to March 1878 shows a total expenditure of £2,928 2d on the Cathedral Restoration Project.

Up to this point the main entrance to the cathedral was from Cathedral Street. From 1877 the main entrance to the cathedral was from the west end through the doorway that has a decorative recessed and sharply pointed arch with gracefully moulded capitals. This provided the building with visibility from the top of Shandon Street and a grand entrance to the Cathedral. In tribute to the Bishop, a monument to him was erected before the great western door (this has now been moved to the northern side of the car park) – this sculpture was executed by John Lawlor.

4. In 1901 new choir stalls, pulpit and bishop's throne, designed by the Cork architect Samuel Francis Hynes (1854-1931). This work was carried out by the firm of Sharp & Emery, monumental masons and builders, of Great Brunswick Street, Dublin. These items can be seen in Hugh Doran's 1952 photo of the cathedral interior. Hynes also was the architect of Farranferris College buildings in 1883-85.
5. The Doran photo shows what was possibly a mosaic floor in the nave. An entry in the Dictionary of Irish Architects shows that possibly in about 1915 a mosaic floor was laid by Ludwig Oppenheimer Ltd, of Manchester – this no longer exists; the floor is now parquet. The firm of Oppenheimer executed the floor of the Honan Chapel, Cork, around this time.
6. The next great period of change was in the early 1960s during the bishopric of Cornelius Lucey (1952-1980). In 1964 the architect James R. E. Boyd Barrett (d. 1976) was commissioned to carry out alterations, an extension and additions; these cost about £250,000. The work, which continued until 1967 or 1968, included the demolition of and extension to the sanctuary and the construction of a sanctuary tower, 80 feet high, as well as rearranging the interior of the cathedral.

The extension of about 70 feet was added to the eastern end of the Cathedral bringing the building almost out to School Lane. Part of this work entailed removing the reredos executed by John Hogan about 140 years previously. The extra room provided space for a new raised sanctuary, a conference room, mortuary and basement rooms. Also the main gallery was re-organised to accommodate the organ and to provide greater space for the choir. Three new stained glass windows were installed in the sanctuary: one of these depicts the Crucified Christ, set in an abstract design. In line with the changes promoted following the

Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), an oak altar was placed in front of the marble altar (which was reduced in size). New mahogany seating was installed and also new Stations of the Cross.

As a result during this period of re-organisation, several historical tablets were removed, including that of a marble relief by Bishop John Murphy (executed by John Hogan in 1853) – this is now to be seen in the north transept – and that to Bishop John England (done by Henry Hill in 1842). The bones of those interred in the crypt were re-interred outside the northern wall of the building and marked by a headstone. The 1799 foundation stone of the cathedral, in the north wall, was also plastered over. Externally, a new sanctuary tower, to a height 80 feet, was visible.

7. Some three decades later a further re-organisation<sup>1</sup> took place from 1994 to 1996 during the time of Bishop Michael Murphy (1980-1996) following the discovery of wet and dry rot and woodworm in the roof. The architect Richard P. Hurley (d. 2011) drew the sanctuary into the body of the Cathedral and around three sides of the altar. The opportunity was taken to create a new altar, furniture, stained glass, metalwork. Inside the western door a new porch was made of ash wood. In addition, the old baptismal font was repositioned on the nave inside the main west door as a reminder of the first sacrament that a Roman Catholic receives. The font is set into a floor of Portuguese and Irish limestone.

On the south-east corner, the new Blessed Sacrament Chapel is on the site of the former sacristy. This is reached by steps in Portuguese limestone that lead to a maple floor. A new stained glass window in this chapel was carried out by James Scanlon of Cork. A tabernacle in solid silver and enamel and sanctuary lamp by Peter Donovan, Kilkenny, are placed on a Portland stone base; sculpted on this is the Tree of Life by Tom Glendon. The gate on the left of this chapel is from the old Baptistery.

In 1996 the old cathedra was relocated to the centre of the altar, presiding over all ceremonies. A narrow panel that apparently was once behind it (possibly incorrectly called 'the old reredos'<sup>2</sup> on a brass plaque) now hangs on the southern wall of the southern side aisle (seen in 2016). The cathedra can be seen on the northern/ left side of the sanctuary in front of the chancel arch in the Doran 1952 photograph. The Hogan statues that had been removed in 1964, were placed in niches high in the ceiling.

Other work carried out in this period was a Processional Cross, a Paschal Fire stone, and a name stone that were designed and executed by Cork sculptor and stonemason Ken Thompson. This artist also created the shrine for the relic of the Blessed Thaddeus McCarthy (Bishop of Cork and Cloyne, d. 1492) (in the north transept) and the figure of St Joseph the Worker carved from Irish elm (in the northern side aisle). In the Lady Chapel, on the north-west of the building, is a set of six paintings on copper-framed in ash depicting the life of Mary by artist Patrick Pye. A statue of the Madonna and Child possibly executed by the Irish sculptor Peter Turnerelli. The new celebrant's chair was commissioned from Eric Pearce in Kilbrittain, Co. Cork; the carpet around the altar was designed by architect Richard Hurley and manufactured by Munster Carpets. The floor of the nave was constructed to a design by Richard Hurley, in light and dark maple.

Also located in the northern aisle is a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, possibly carved by Peter Turnerelli. The Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Anne was rededicated on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1996 – this was Bishop Michael Murphy's final public function.

<sup>1</sup> See Richard Hurley, *Irish church architecture in the era of Vatican II*, 122-124.

<sup>2</sup> *Reredos* refers to a free-standing structure that is located behind the high altar and is generally wider than it.

## Outside the Cathedral

Bishop Moylan and his successor Bishop John Murphy lived in a house on Chapel Lane (later Chapel Street). Probably on this site was built the red-brick presbytery, fronting onto Cathedral Street, in 1878 (NIAH Reg No 20862082). At about this time Cathedral Street was widened by the Corporation.

Monuments in the cathedral grounds (northern side):

1. Statue of Virgin and Child on a base. Inscription "Pray for Fr Christy Harrington 1963-2013". Fr Harrington, a native of Farranree, was parish priest of St Joseph's, Mayfield.
2. Bronze sculpture – 1½ × lifesize. Bronze. Bishop William Delany, Bishop of Cork (born 15<sup>th</sup> Dec 1804, ordained January 8<sup>th</sup> 1828, bishop August 15<sup>th</sup> 1847, died November 14<sup>th</sup> 1886). The sculptor was John Lawlor (1820 Dublin-1901). This work was carried out in 1889. With inscription on limestone plinth: "In loving memory from a grateful people. His remembrance shall be sweet as honey in every mouth."

Burials:

1. Daniel Cohalan, Born Kilmichael 1858, Bishop of Cork, first as auxiliary, then for 36 years ... died August 24<sup>th</sup> 1952. Limestone.
2. Cornelius Lucey, Bishop of Cork and Ross, Pastor and Missionary. Died September 24<sup>th</sup> 1982. "Ar Dheis Dé go raibh a anam". Granite.
3. Michael Murphy 1924-1996. Bishop of Cork and Ross 1980-1996. Simple limestone.
4. Close to the north wall of the Cathedral, is an upright stone marking the resting place of those who were previously buried in the Cathedral vault/ crypt. Limestone slab, with simple limestone kerbing and gravel. The names are:
  - Rev Mother Mary P. Fitzgerald, Foundress of North P. Convent. Died 1810
  - Very Rev. Robert McCarthy VG. Died 1814
  - Rt Rev Francis Moylan, bishop of Cork. Died 1815
  - Rev. John McDonogh C.C. Died 1816
  - Rev. James Mahoney P.P. Died 1817
  - Rev. John J. Murphy. Died 1829
  - Rt Rev. John Murphy, bishop of Cork. Died 1847
  - Rt Rev. William Clancy, bishop of Ortense. Died 1847
  - Rev. Corn. O'Keeffe P.P. Died 1876
  - Rev. Daniel Canon Foley P.P. Died 1875 through whose untiring exertions this Cathedral was enlarged and the tower was built.
  - Rest in peace.

## Select bibliography

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- Dictionary of Irish Architects: entry for Cathedral of St Mary (sic) RC, Cork, at <http://www.dia.ie/works/view/352/building/CO.+CORK%2C+CORK%2C+CATHEDRAL+ROAD%2C+CATHEDRAL+OF+ST+MARY+%28RC%29> [accessed May 26 2016]

*Other information of interest:*

North Cathedral :

<http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/shandon/historicbuildingsintheshandonarea/northcathedral/> [accessed May 26 2016]

Cathedral of St Mary and St Anne Presbytery, Cathedral Street, Roman Street, Blackpool, Cork City:

<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/niah/search.jsp?type=record&county=CC&regno=20862082> [accessed May 26 2016]

Hugh Doran (1926-2004) on IARC website: <http://www.iarc.ie/exhibitions/previous-exhibitions/hugh-doran-photographer/> [accessed May 26 2016]

Maps: <http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/mapsimages/> [accessed May 26 2016]

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Most Rev. John Murphy: <http://www.corkandross.org/priests.jsp?priestID=480> [accessed May 26 2016]

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Peter Turnerelli: <http://www.dia.ie/architects/view/5409/turnerelli-peter> [accessed May 26 2016]; also entry in W.G. Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists* (1913), Vol. II, 466-470.