

Rossory Church and Graveyard Fact Sheet



Background

Located on the Sligo Road in Enniskillen, the site is adjacent to the confluence of the Sillees and Erne Rivers.

The early history of the site is unknown but is associated with St. Fanchea. The Annals of Ulster for 1084/1085 recorded that: “the church of Saint Fuinche at Rosoirrther was founded.”



Fanchea

One account states that St. Fanchea was from Rathmore, near Clogher, her father, Conall Dearn, was the local king. Other accounts suggest a different lineage, but all agree she was of royal descent.

Fanchea a beautiful young woman, attracted many suitors, all of whom she turned down. She vowed not to marry and set up her convent at Rossory. The convent soon became a place of sanctity.

Her greatest convert was her brother, Edna. As Rogers states, “Fanchea is said to have converted her brother by telling him to gaze on the face of his dead love, one of her nuns, who had chosen to be Christ’s bride rather than his.” Legend has it that as his penance he built a rath around St. Fanchea’s convent. He later established a monastery at Killanny in Co. Monaghan and another on the Arran Islands. St. Fanchea also founded a convent at Killanny, and it is here that she is buried.



History

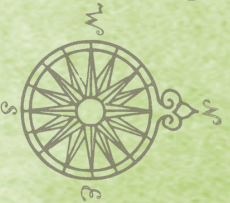
In 1420 the Annals recorded the death of a member of the community and the presence of a guesthouse is noted.

In 1430, Guillbert de Lamoy, a pilgrim to Lough Derg, referred to Enniskillen as “Rousseauxmoustier” as suggested by Mary Rogers, his version of Rossory.

Today, a visit to the site on Rossole Road shows no evidence of the former church that was clearly marked in the 1834 OS map. Instead, the site is that of a graveyard, clearly marked with Yew trees. The site was used for burial well into the 20th century.

The church was damaged in a storm of 1839 and a new parish church was built at Mullinacaw, opening in 1841. The stone from the church was used for building the stables at the new site.





Lough Erne is home to many religious sites, places of gathering, learning, worship, and burial. Today, we can trace these places along the lough as they quietly sit as timely reminders of a once thriving early Christian community.