

Athevallie / Athevalla House

Athevalla as the seat of the Rev. Sir F. Lynch Blossie, Bart. was a mansion that adjoined the town. Ballagh Lodge, the seat of H. Waldron, Esq., the Logation of W.M. Fitzmorris, Esq., were also in the area. There was neither church, glebe-house nor a glebe. Divine service was occasionally performed in the Court-House. A school-room had been erected at an expense of two hundred pounds with two hundred boys & one hundred girls in attendance. Two hedge schools approximately catered for sixty-eight boys plus twenty-two girls. St. Mochuo or Cronan founded a monastery in Balla. Remains of an ancient unroofed round tower are approximately fifty feet in height. Nearby were ruins of a small church with two chapels erected over the river. A holy well dedicated to the Blessed Virgin also a small chapel was attached: where from 15th of August to 8th of September annually a Pattern was held. [\[iv\]](#)

Athevallie House was one of the principal Aristocratic Houses within the Balla Area. Sir Robert Blossie-Lynch owned seventeen thousand, six hundred acres around Balla at one time. Other large houses in the area were located at Clogher, Castlecarra also Murneen which were occupied by several members of the extended family that included the Blake's, the Browne's, the Ffrenche's also the Lynche's of Partry. A brother of Sir Robert Lynch Blossie, Peter Lynch died in Balla during 1810. He had been a wealthy landlord with twelve children. The 7th Baronet Sir Henry Lynch had families both with his lawful wife & his mistress Sib Cottle. A dispute arose following his demise during 1788, whilst a play *'The Spancel'* recorded events over his will. Lady Harriot's generosity has been recorded in that she distributed alms to the old or needy on Fridays also during the Christmas season she distributed food & blankets. Sir Robert returned from America: he was involved in local politics, acted as high sheriff for a year, was justice of the peace also presided at petty sessions. Sir Henry borrowed heavily with the result that the property eventually was sold to the Congested District Board. Sir Henry emigrated to Canada then later to Worthing in Britain. With his demise the remainder of the estate was awarded to his brother Sir Robert who also possessed properties in Ballina. House was used as a military hospital for a year during the First World War. During 1919 it was sold to the Order of St. Louis who established a convent also a secondary school in the premises. Robert emigrated to England; his demise occurred during 1942 thus ended the Blossie-Lynch family connection with Athevallie. (*Brian Hoban*) [\[v\]](#)

Lynch's were one of the Tribes of Galway: Henry Lynch married Mary Moore from Brize in Claremorris. Their son Robert resided at Athaville, also called Moate in Balla town (*the original building is where the Convent now stands*) The Lynch's records were preserved: they may be viewed in the National Library of Ireland. Several old maps of the estate may be viewed online. Athavallie House became a military hospital during WW1 prior to a sale to the St Louis Congregation of nuns during 1919 for their convent. It is still extant as a secondary school for girls & boys. (*Dympna Joyce*) [\[vi\]](#)

Monastery

St. Mochua or St. Cronan of Balla established a church during the seventh century & a holy well also a small church surrounded by a wall. A medieval altar marks the site of a monastery also the remains of a round tower. According to *The Annals of The Four Masters* St. Mochua died around 637AD. [\[vii\]](#)

This link states that St. Cronan or St. Mochua established a monastery at Balla / Balla Áilainn that survived the plague, attacks by Vikings also Normans until the reformation. Remains of a round tower also an altar are visible at the monastic site:

https://communityballa.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/ccf30072013_0002.jpg [\[viii\]](#)

Saint Cronan's Catholic Church

This church was constructed during 1906 to designs by Rudolph Maximilian Butler (1872-1943) of Dawson Street, Dublin (*Irish Builder 20th October 1906, 848*) The structure represented an important component of the early twentieth-century built heritage of County Mayo with the architectural value of the composition that evoked favourable comparisons with the Butler-designed Saint Patrick's catholic church (1914-8) in Newport (*see 31208021*) confirmed by such attributes as the rectilinear 'hall' plan form that was aligned along a liturgically-correct axis. St. Cronan's catholic church was set in its own landscaped grounds with drag edged tooled limestone ashlar chamfered piers to perimeter, drag edged dragged cut-limestone 'slated' pyramidal capping that supported reclaimed wrought iron double gates. The high pitched roof included a needle spire. A pointed barrel vault pinpointed the engineering or technical dexterity of the church. The robust rock faced surface finish was offset by sheer limestone dressings with not only a ponderous two-tone palette but slender profile of the coupled openings that underpinned a 'medieval' Gothic theme with the chancel defined by a cusped jewel-like 'east window' (1914) attributed to Franz Mayer & Company (*established 1847*) of Munich & London (*Bowe 1989, 38*) Constructed to a detached nine-bay double-height on a rectangular plan that comprised of a nine-bay double-height nave opening into eight-bay double-height flat-roofed side aisles. A pitched *delabole* slate roof abutted flat roofs behind parapets on side aisles with clay ridge tiles. Also included dragged cut-limestone coping to gables with cross finials to apexes with concealed rainwater goods that retained rosette-embossed cast-iron hoppers & downpipes. Tuck pointed snecked rock faced limestone battered walls were included on dragged cut-limestone chamfered cushion course on plinth with Irish battlemented parapets of dragged cut-limestone coping. Also constructed were paired cusped lancet window openings with drag edged rock faced hammered limestone block & start surrounds by framed storm glazed over fixed-pane fittings with lattice glazed bars on the west or stained glass margins centred on leaded east stained glass panels. The east pointed-arch window opening had dragged cut-limestone interlocking Y-mullions. Drag edged dragged cut-limestone block & start surrounds had chamfered reveals with hood moulding that framed storm glazed over fixed-pane fittings with leaded stained glass panels. A pointed-arch door opening to the front west entrance had dragged cut-limestone step threshold. Also constructed were drag edged dragged hammered limestone block & start surrounds that had splayed reveals with hood moulding that framed timber boarded double doors. Paired lancet or pointed-arch window openings at gable had dragged cut-limestone Y-mullions. Drag edged dragged cut-limestone block & start surrounds had chamfered reveals with hood mouldings to frame-storm glazed over fixed-pane fittings with stained glass margins centred on lattice glazed bars. West pointed-arch opposing door openings drag edged dragged hammered limestone block & start surrounds had splayed reveals with hood mouldings that framed timber boarded double doors. The west interior included vestibule with glazed terracotta tiled floor also pointed segmental-headed arcade centred on glazed timber panelled double doors. The full-height interior had choir gallery on the west side. Carpeted central aisles between cruciform-detailed timber pews had pointed-arch arcades on granite ashlar octagonal pillars. The timber boarded pointed barrel vaulted ceiling was constructed with carved timber ribs on box cornice on corbels. On the east side was a stepped dais to a sanctuary with gothic-style reredos (1919) centred on quatrefoil-detailed gothic-style memorial also a polychromatic high altar (1918) below the stained glass 'east window.' Stepped Daises to side altars with gothic-style altars below stained glass memorial windows (1915) also gothic-style timber stations between stained glass memorial windows (1915 / 16) Improvements occurred during the 1900's: with vibrant stained glass signed by George Daniels (1854-1940) of Daniels & Fricker (*fl. 1920-7*) of London & Joshua Clarke & Sons (*established 1892*) of Dublin. (1918), a reredos (1919) by Albert George Power (1881-1945) of Dublin (*Irish Builder 3rd May 1919, 205*) Several images feature on this site. Registered number is 31309022. Coordinates are 125644, 284115. (*Date Recorded 23rd November 2010*) [\[ix\]](#)

The present Roman Catholic Church was established during 1910. Parish Priest Fr. John Mc Dermott appealed in America for funds to erect a church in Balla. This following report from *The Pittsburgh Chronicle* appeared in *The Connaught Telegraph* on Saturday 13th August 1910 as 'Fr John Mc Dermott is making a tour of this country to raise funds for the erection of a new church to take the place of the old one, built 156 years ago, and which is now falling to ruins.' Balla church is of a Gothic design by R. M. Butler. (*similar to Newport Church*) The central aisles are tunnel-vaulted with the side aisles flat ceilinged: the Balla aisles are concealed by impressive Irish battlements. Lady

chapel's altar is a copy of the altar at Holy Cross Abbey. The southern porch resembles the medieval Cong Abbey doorway. The high altar constructed during 1918 is of multi-polychromatic marble. Harry Clarke & The Clarke Studios-stained glass windows have an Irish inscription: 'Ros Dairbhreach is ainm don Ait seo fe lathair-Ball Aluinn is feasta is go brath.' [x]

This link states that the first stone church of St. Cronan's was established in 1913 following Fr. John Mc Dermott's securing of funds in England also America. It was completed by Fr. T. J. Ready: https://communityballa.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/ccf30072013_0002.jpg [xi]

The first church in Balla was the monastery built by St. Cronan beside the round tower in market square. Following Viking & subsequent attacks other churches were built on this site: the last one was used as a town hall for a number of years. It is now the site of the Balla resource centre. During 1913 the present St. Cronan's Church was constructed on the road to Mayo Abbey also an important monastic settlement that provides the county name. St. Cronin's church was designed by R.M. Butler who also designed the church at Newport constructed at the same time. It is gothic styled also has some Harry Clarke stained glass windows. (*Dympna Joyce*) [xii]

Church Bell

The church bell of St. Cronan's has an interesting history in that it was originally cast for Dublin's G. P. O. by William Dobson of Dounham in Norfolk, England during 1817. It remained there for approximately sixty years until transferred to Balla Church. This bell weighs two tons & twelve cwt. [xiii]

Inside Balla church entrance porch is a bell produced during 1817 as part of a dial for a clock within the GPO. In 1884 it was dismantled then sent to the Royal University. During 1917 when there was an re-construction of the building: one of the bells were sent to Balla with the other to Spiddal Co. Galway. The bell's weight is two tons. (*Dympna Joyce*) [xiv]

St. Cronan's Holy Well

This link states that Balla was the major pilgrimage site of County Mayo. St. Cronan or St. Mochua founded the holy well of 'Tobar Mhuire' at the monastic site: https://communityballa.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/ccf30072013_0002.jpg [xv]

St. Cronan's Pilgrimage Well & Rest House

According to local tradition a spring appeared when St. Cronan visited the area. It is situated behind the round tower. A ruin of a seventeenth century rest house for pilgrims is visible. Originally the well was celebrated as St. Cronán's but it became associated with Our Lady then was called Tobair Mhuire (*Lady's Well*) The Feast day of the 15th of August heralded a pilgrimage, a festival with pattern in the Balla area. (*Dympna Joyce*) [xvi]

Balla Holy Well by author may be viewed at this link:

<https://www.ouririshheritage.org/content/archive/place/miscellaneous-place/balla-holy-well>

Round Tower

The Round Tower in Balla is partially extant, it stands at approximately ten metres in height. Evidence of several etchings on the door of construction is visible from the twelfth century. A church was constructed nearby during the 1830's. In the *Irish Tourist Association Survey* published in 1945 it reported that St. Cronan built an abbey on this site. It was a place of

learning until attacked by Richard De Burgo during 1236. Two doors in the tower suggest two stones inserted are bullaun stones. There is one existing window. (*Dympna Joyce*) [xvii]

Balla Round Tower by author may be viewed at this link:

<https://www.ouririshheritage.org/content/archive/topics/miscellaneous/mayos-round-towers>

Church of Ireland Holy Trinity Church / Graveyard

The Church was constructed of cut stone granite with Achill stone in 1825 by the Lynch Blossie family for their family also the protestant population in Balla. Due to the decline of the protestant parishioners it closed in 1963 then was demolished during 1965. The tower is still extant. Headstones are legible within the Graveyard: possibly these were the only burials there as it was a family graveyard. In the Balla parish registry it stated that there were twenty burials within this graveyard from 1881-1928: among them were the following: Thomas & Amelia Pakenham with their son Thomas, Sir Robert Lynch Blossie & Lady Harriet also William Coynyngham Blossie. There are two interesting stones: Ann Waters who departed this life January 1871, aged twenty-six with her infant child who died 5th February 1871 aged three weeks also John B Kerr Private No 375539, Royal Scots died 30th November 1918, aged twenty-six. John Kerr received treatment within the military hospital at Balla: he was too ill to travel when the troops withdrew at the end of WW1. His demise occurred during 1918 nineteen days following the war's end. Several years later locals laid a wreath on a new grave erected for him by the Commonwealth Graves Commission. (*Dympna Joyce*) [xviii]

Footnotes

[iv] Balla Civil Parish (<http://www.irelandgenweb.com/irlmay/CivilParishes/BallaCP.htm>) [Assessed 23rd June 2021]

[v] Athevallie House (<https://www.mayo-ireland.ie/en/towns-villages/balla/balla-history-athavallie-house.html>) [Assessed 23rd June 2021]

[vi] *Dympna Joyce* [Assessed 12th May 2021]

[vii] St. Mochua (<https://www.mayo-ireland.ie/en/towns-villages/balla/balla-history.html>) [Assessed 23rd June 2021]

[viii] History (<https://communityballa.wordpress.com/parish-of-balla-and-belcarra/history-of-our-churches/>) [Assessed 23rd June 2021]

[ix] Saint Cronan's <https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/31309022/saint-cronans-catholic-church-balla-balla-co-mayo>) [Assessed 23rd June 2021]

[x] St. Cronan's Church, Balla (<https://www.mayo-ireland.ie/en/towns-villages/balla/balla-history-saint-cronan-church.html>) [Assessed 23rd June 2021]

[xi] History (<https://communityballa.wordpress.com/parish-of-balla-and-belcarra/history-of-our-churches/>) [Assessed 23rd June 2021]

[xii] *Dympna Joyce* [Assessed 12th May 2021]

[xiii] St. Cronan's Church, Balla (<https://www.mayo-ireland.ie/en/towns-villages/balla/balla-history-saint-cronan-church.html>) [Assessed 23rd June 2021]

[xiv] *Dympna Joyce* [Assessed 12th May 2021]

[xv] History (<https://communityballa.wordpress.com/parish-of-balla-and-belcarra/history-of-our-churches/>) [Assessed 23rd June 2021]

[xvi] Dympna Joyce [Assessed 12th May 2021]

[xvii] Ibid

[xviii] Dympna Joyce [Assessed 12th May 2021]