

# Knockatemple church event honours babies buried long ago

## Keelogues Heritage Group called for the community to come together to honour the children

**Thomas Seán Purdy**

OVER 100 people gathered at the medieval church ruins of Carrowleckeen Church, Knockatemple, to pay their respects to children buried there long ago.

The church is the location of a sacred burial ground or cillín of unbaptised babies.

The Keelogues Heritage Group called for the community to come together to honour the children and their families in what became a healing event.

Also known as the Church of St. Ciarán or locally as Knock-

atemple Church, the church ruins are 3.5 kilometres east of Ballyvary along the N5 going toward Bohola. Construction of the church is estimated to have occurred between the 13th to 15th centuries.

Teresa Filan, chairperson, served as master of ceremonies.

The event began with an emotional address by Fr. Stephen O'Mahony, parish priest for Bohola. He contrasted the practices of early Christianity with today's church.

During medieval times unbaptised babies could not be buried in church cemeteries. Because baptism had not



Fr. Stephen O'Mahony addressing the attendance at the Knockatemple event near Keelogues, Ballyvary, with Teresa Filan and Thomas Seán Purdy looking on. PHOTO: DYMUNA JOYCE

removed original sin from the babies, church leaders believed their spirits would corrupt the souls of baptised children.

Fr. O'Mahony said: "Thank God we live in more enlightened times. As we remember

these little ones we remember their families as well. They will be so happy that the people of this area say you and your children are not forgotten."

Thomas Seán Purdy, whose grandmother grew up in a stone cottage nearby, then

spoke of the need to honour the children as family members.

### SIGNIFICANCE

"Let us be like this church, that yet stands as a monument to the tiny miracles of innocence, of faith, of joy, and yes

of pain that are buried here," he stated.

Clodagh Doyle, keeper, Irish Folklife Division at the National Museum of Ireland - Country Life, talked about the historical significance of the church and the burial practices of people from long ago under difficult circumstances.

"It's really important that we recognise our past and those who are buried here. We have to realise the hardship that existed for the people who buried their babies here and the trauma of their households."

Knockatemple Church is protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930 - 2004. In 2021 the Keelogues Heritage Group commissioned a conservation management plan to assess the condition of the structure and to make recommendations for conservation works to safeguard the structure into the future.