

St. Mary's Church of Ireland, Clare Castle



St. Mary's Church (courtesy of Paddy Murphy)

St. Mary's Church was built in 1813 to serve the local Protestant families in the area as well as soldiers and their families in Clare Castle Barracks. Following the Great War and the war of Independence, services at the Church were intermittent. The Church was destroyed in a malicious fire on 17 April 1920. It was deliberately set on fire with paraffin oil. A meeting of the Roman Catholic parishioners, at which the parish priest Canon Bourke presided, was held in the National School on the day after the burning and a resolution was passed "to place on record our deep sense of horror at the dastardly deed which resulted in the destruction by fire of the Protestant Church in the village". *Irish Times* – 27 April 1920

The Church Baptismal records, Communion plate dating from the 17th century, furniture and wall memorials were lost in the blaze. The marriage records survived for the period 1845 to 1901 and are available.

£1,000 was paid to the Church Commissioners in compensation but it was decided not to rebuild the Church. The walls and tower stood until the early 1960s when they were demolished by order of Clare County Council. This was an unfortunate act as the building could have been restored and put to an alternative use. The only parts that still exist are the gate-piers which form the entrance to the Rectory of St. Columba's Church in Ennis.



*Clare Abbey Communion Cup by permission
of Canon Bob Hanna*

This fine Communion Cup is held in St. Columba's Church of Ireland in Ennis. The words "Clare Abbey" are engraved on the Cup and there appears to be no hallmark to date it. Silver experts regard it as of the 19th Century. The engraving indicates that it was in use in St. Mary's Church, which was located in the Parish of Clare Abbey. The Cup probably survived the fire of 1920 by being held in a bank safe. It is an important artefact of historical significance.



the white oblong on upper left

shows the site of St. Mary's Church

to St. Mary's



one of the gate-piers

original entrance

original entrance to St. Mary's-

(courtesy of John Enright)