



2014

# St. Joseph's Well, Dulick

Parish Doora-Barefield



€3

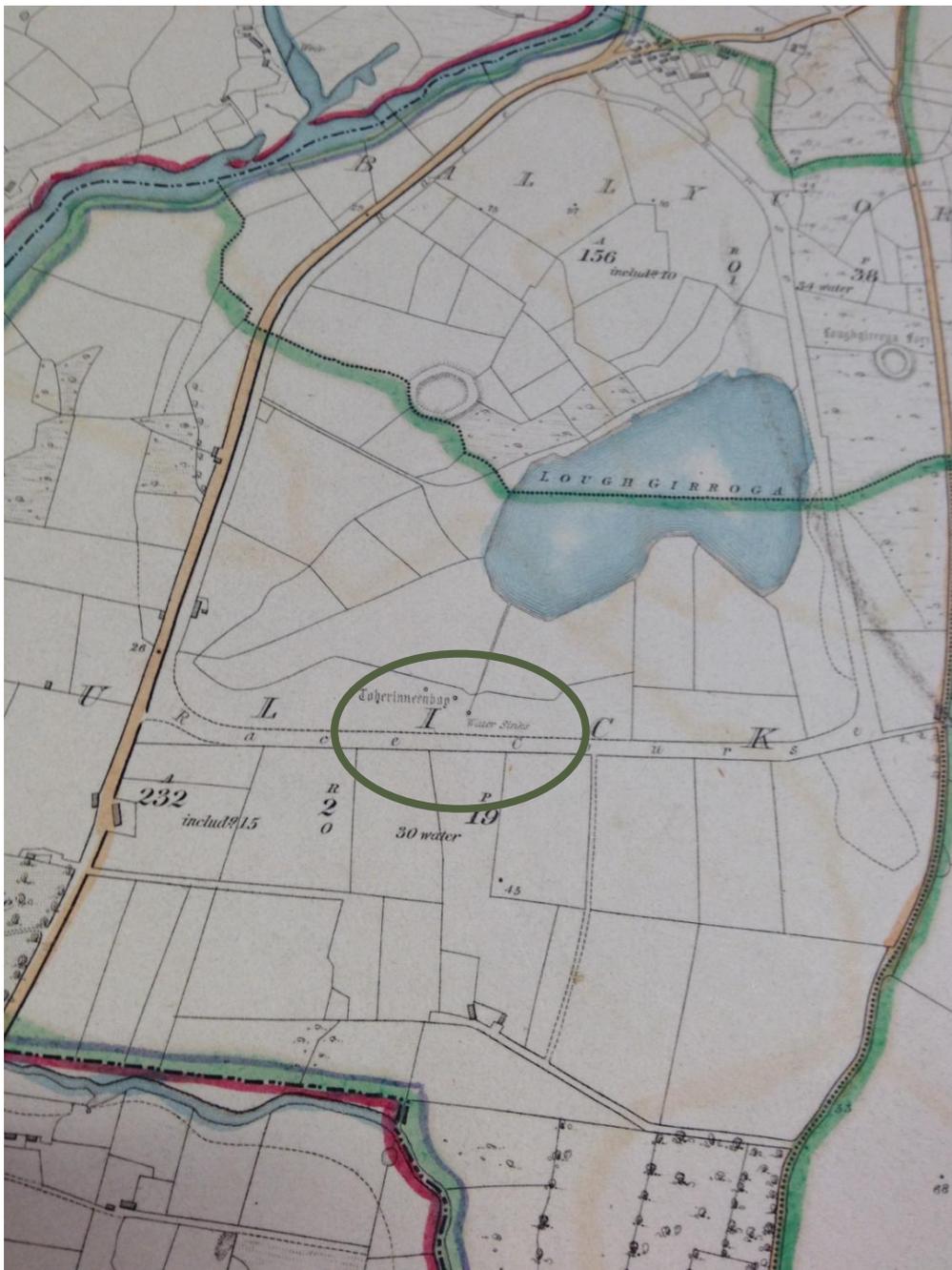
*In Memory of the late Fr. Michael McNamara, P.P. Doora-Barefield who put forward the idea of getting historical information on the site.*

## St. Joseph's Well by Mary Kearns

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Edel Greene, for editing and providing relevant information in the preparation of the booklet. I would also like to thank the following for their assistance, Canon Caimin O'Carroll, Peter Beirne and Brian Doyle, Clare Local Studies and Eddie Lough. The National Folklore Collection for scanning and photocopying images of Schools Folklore 1937/38 used in booklet. Jimmy Kearns for taking photographs of well site and Fiona Kearns for the booklet design.

**Papers-** Clare Champion, 1931/1987



**Fig 2: Ordnance Survey Map**



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**St. Joseph's Well** is located in the townland of Dulick, in the parish of Templemaley in the barony of Bunratty Upper. The well is located in an enclosure bounded on the south-west by Lough Girroga and on the north by the former Our Lady's Psychiatric Hospital. Access is off the old Ennis/Galway road where a partially complete new stretch of road runs parallel to the boundary wall of the hospital. In the distance you will see a grove of trees on the left and on approaching the grove keep a look out for the style which leads into the well enclosure.

The townland name Dulick has been translated as the "Black Flag", possibly deriving from the geology of the area.<sup>1</sup> Another possible translation for this place-name may be "Damliac" the Old-Irish word for a stone church (similar to the translation of the ancient church site recalled in the place-name Duleek in Co. Meath).<sup>2</sup>

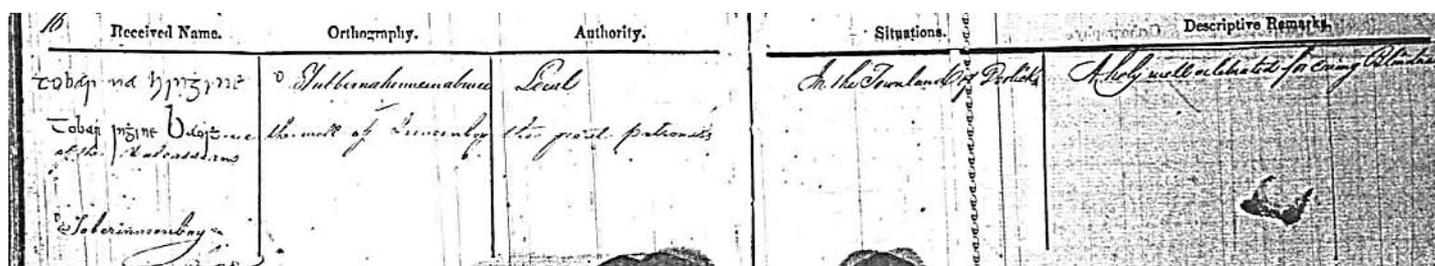
St. Joseph's Well lies within a large enclosure, roughly quadrangular in shape, measuring about 24 meters on the northern side, with eastern and western sides of about the same length which taper to the south side which is about 6 meters

shorter.<sup>3</sup>

The well was formerly known as Tobar Inghine Baoith, the great patroness of the Dalcassians. It is recorded as such in the Ordnance Survey Name Books for Templemaley (*Fig. 1 below*) and on the first edition 1840 Ordnance Survey Map (*Fig. 2 page 1*). On close examination of the map there is another well marked beside it, but not named; the O.S. Name Books refer to well(s) in their explanatory notes and this may explain the later local reference to two wells which will be discussed later in the text.

Inghean Bhaoith is best known as the ancient patron saint of the parish of Killinaboy (Ceall Inghine Baoith) and devotion to her is evident in the many wells named after her in this area and where her cult was widespread. There are at least seventeen holy wells dedicated to Inghean Bhaoith located mainly in the central parts of Clare, including two in the parish of Doora/Barefield, at Dulick and Doora.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the widespread devotion to this saint she remains an obscure figure and even the etymological derivation of the name Inghean Bhaoith is far from certain.<sup>5</sup> The name is usually translated as



**Fig. 1 - Ordnance Survey Name Book for Parish of Templemaley**

<sup>1</sup> Ordnance Survey Name Books, Parish of Templemaley (surveyed 1840).

<sup>2</sup> Edwards, Nancy, *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*, (1990), 124

<sup>3</sup> Flynn, Pat, *Archaeology Project* (1994), (St. Joseph's Well measured as part of project), Local Studies Clare Collection Special

<sup>4</sup> MacMahon, Michael, *The Cult of Inghin Bhaoith and the Church of Killinaboy*, *The Other Clare*, Vol. 24, (2000), 12,13

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

“Daughter of Baoith”. It may also have been a word referring to her vocation as groups of holy women or nuns were designated “Ingena” and figured prominently in the early centuries of the church in Ireland.<sup>6</sup>

When Eugene O’Curry visited Killinaboy in 1839, the vigour of the saint’s cult was waning, but Innerwee (Inghean Bhaoith) had been a ‘favourite name’ for females in the parish shortly before.<sup>7</sup> There is also the possibility that her name may have been anglicised as Winifrid, alias Winnie, a very common name among females in the parish of Killinaboy.<sup>8</sup>



### The other well associated with Saint Lachtin?

According to local lore a second well in the vicinity dedicated to St. Lachtin was situated on the opposite (western) side of the road (now the Industrial Estate). The volume of people attending it was a cause for concern in regard to health and safety and so the parish authorities decided to transfer devotion to the present day St.

Joseph’s Well. I visited the supposed site which was pointed out to me by a resident close by who had a recollection of the lore and of the whitethorn tree which grew beside it.<sup>9</sup>

Although no trace of the well now exists and historical evidence for it is sketchy it is not likely to be without some foundation, particularly as wells dedicated to St. Inghean Bhaoith and St. Lachtin existing in close proximity is not without precedent. They exist in Kilnamona where both saints were jointly venerated, and in the parish of Kilfarboy in the far west of the county which appears to have been a distant outpost of both these saints’ cults. There was also joint veneration near Newcastlewest, in Limerick, where two churches named Killachtin and Teampulinnaboy existed. This may show the course of tribal migration from Limerick of the tribe of the Cineal Baoith into Clare<sup>10</sup>. It has been suggested that these saints’ cults in Clare were centralised in the parish of Kilnamona, which was the ancient patrimonial lands of the Cineal Baith or the “people of Baoith”.<sup>11</sup> The reliquary of St. Lachtin’s arm was preserved in the church in Kilnamona, until the seventeenth century when it fell into Protestant hands and it was later moved to Lislaughtin Friary (near Ballylongford) Co Kerry.<sup>12</sup> It is now preserved in the Royal Irish Academy.<sup>13</sup> Shrines and wells dedicated to the two saints amounts to

<sup>9</sup> In conversation with Patsy Cunningham, who resides beside the supposed site of St. Lachtin’s Well (2014)

<sup>10</sup> Gaynor, Very Rev. P., Kilnamona, Called Kinelbuith, A.D. 500-1725, Molua, (1941), 11

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Gaynor, Very Rev. P., Kilnamona, Called Kinelbuith, A.D. 500-1725, Molua, (1941), 15

<sup>7</sup> O Riain, Pádraig, A Dictionary of Irish Saints (2011)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

signature occupancy by the Cineal Baith, or a branch of the tribe, at some period.<sup>14</sup>

### Re-dedication of Wells

Many holy wells were re-dedicated to saints of the universal church by the local clergy from around the 1850s onwards.<sup>15</sup> A re-dedication to St. Joseph was common.<sup>16</sup> Luckily the Ordnance Survey had recorded and mapped the wells prior to these name changes. Devotion to St. Joseph, which developed in the course of the middle ages, gained momentum in the nineteenth century, and culminated in the proclamation by Pius IX of St. Joseph as patron of the Universal church on 8 December 1870.<sup>17</sup> In the case of the well at Dulick the re-dedication of the well to St. Joseph is possibly linked to the concurrence of both St. Lachtin's and St. Joseph's feast days on the 19 March.<sup>18</sup> The possibility of two wells close by dedicated to Inghean Baoith and St. Lachtin raises the possibility that devotions were transferred to Inghean Baoith's well at the same time as the re-dedication and that local devotion to both saints was from then on perhaps focused on a saint of the universal church at the site we now know as St. Joseph's Well. The later O.S maps have now recorded the site as St. Joseph's Well and the names of Inghean Baoith and Lachtin are now all but forgotten.

Religious festivals known as "patterns" (probably deriving from the word "Patron"

to celebrate the patron's feast-day) were a major feature of religious and social life in 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland. The patterns involved visits to holy wells and ancient monastic sites where rounds were performed with the recitation of prescribed prayers.<sup>19</sup> Usually the pattern took place on the feast of the saint to whom the well or shrine was dedicated.<sup>20</sup> The curative powers of holy wells for sore eyes and other ailments lead to visitation at any time as well as the pattern day.<sup>21</sup> Worship at holy wells had its roots in an older pre-Christian tradition of pilgrimage, giving it a peculiarly Celtic dimension.<sup>22</sup> Following the religious observations after severe penitential exercises at the larger sites, celebrations became like a carnival event with excess drinking and other unruly behaviour. This behaviour showed that Christianity had not tamed the spirit of paganism after thirteen hundred years which led to the church authorities making a determined effort to stop this behaviour in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup>

### The Schools Folklore 1937/38

The schools folklore records for Barefield and Ennis National Schools<sup>24</sup> contain references to holy wells including St. Joseph's Well. I have included a selection of these memories which deal with the customs, cures and rounds:

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 11

<sup>15</sup> Westropp, T.J., *Folklore of Clare*, (Clasp Press, 2003) 50

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Lysaght, Patricia, *St. Joseph's Well, Dough/Annagh, Parish of Kilmurray Ibrickane, County Clare: A Photographic and Oral Documentation*, Béaloideas (2001), 85, Note 8,

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>19</sup> Murphy, Ignatius, *The Diocese of Killaloe In The Eighteenth Century*, (1991), 88-89

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> *The Schools Folklore 1937/38* (National Folklore Collection) - Ennis schools collection on microfilm at Clare Local Studies and Barefield collection available at National Folklore Collection, U.C.D.

Scoil: Clochar na Trócaire, Inis. Teacher, Máire Ní Dhomhnalláin.

Transcribed by Mary O'Riordan, Abbey Street, Ennis and told by Pako Malone and Tom Donoghue, The Causeway.

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## Local Happenings.

Many are the local happenings that happened in Ennis and the surrounding district and I will now relate some of them.

About a hundred years ago there lived a man named Thomas O'Donoghue who was usually called Holy Tom. He had been blind for years. He had great devotion to St Joseph who appeared to him in a dream and directed him to bathe his eyes in the well in Ballycoree, and that his sight should be restored to him. The holy man did as he was told and the saint's words were fulfilled. In thanksgiving Tom erected a statue in honour of St Joseph and spent the rests of his days outside the Franciscan church mending Beads and other things. The well is now known as

Scoil: Inis (b) (boys). Teacher, P. O Fionnmhachain

1.

## Blessed Wells.

There are three Blessed Wells in the neighbourhood of Ennis. These are St. Joseph's well situated in Ballycoree, St. John's well situated in New Hall, and St. Michael's well in Doora.

People visit these wells to be cured of sickness and disease. Visits to St. Joseph's well will cure all kinds of sickness while St. John's well is visited for curing sore eyes. People visit St. Joseph's well on Mondays and Thursdays of every week. The time for visiting St. John's well is between June 24<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Many people have been cured of sickness at St. Joseph's well.

About forty years ago a wonderful cure took place at St. Joseph's well. John Gilligan of old Mill Street was born blind. When he was nine years old his mother took him to the well. She rubbed mud from the side of the well to his eyes. Then she did the round seven times bringing John on her back. When she had done this the little boy was able to see perfectly.

At St. John's Well there is a statue of St. John placed over the well. On flags on top of the well there is a little altar on which people place flowers, holy pictures and small statues. The well is in a small square field. When doing the rounds

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the people go around the field on their bare knee  
saying the rosary. They do the round seven times  
and then stop at the well to ask their request.

Any person visiting any of the blessed  
wells should leave some offering on the altar.

St. Joseph's well is flooded by the river  
in winter but in summer it is quite dry. The  
well is in a little field in which there are  
many shrines.

Written by:

Michael Heffernan  
Old Military Barracks.  
Ennis.

Told by:

Patrick Heffernan, age 50 years  
Old Military Barracks.  
Ennis.

Mrs. Tuttle, age 80 years  
Old Military Barracks.  
Ennis.

Eileen O'Brien age 80 years  
Bloughleigh,  
Ennis.

Scoil: Barefield National School

Teacher: Mí Ó Riordáin

4.

## "Holy Wells"

There is a holy well in the parish of Barefield and it is called St Joseph's Well. People often pay a visit to this well. Mondays and Thursdays were the two days they used go. I do not know exactly how they used make their rounds. They say one round of their beads, five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, and five glory be to the fathers. I do not know any story about the well. Nobody knows how this well started at first. Headaches were cured at this well. There are mugs left at the well and when the people come they dip the mug into the water, and then they drink it. They used bring a bottle of water home with them. I do not know what they left at the well. They used leave them in a kind of a little house by the side of the well. There are no fish in this well. Nobody ever soiled it. There is a white-thorn bush at the well also.

Peg Mc Donnell.

Told by. Pádraic Mc Donnell. age 65 yrs - Louisa Ennis.

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Béaloidéas.

31: 1: 1938.

"Blessed Wells."

I know of a great many Blessed wells in the place. The first Blessed well I will mention is St. Joseph's well. It is about one mil from the Town of Ennis. This well is a cure for many things but especially for eyes. There are three days specially set apart for anyone who wishes to visit this well, namely Monday, Thursday and Monday. When you go three days you have a round made. At each visit you have to say certain prayers. I cannot now think what they are.

When people visit this well they usually leave something after them. At this well there is a little money box stuck into the wall that surrounds the well. Nearly everyone that visits the well leaves a penny or two. People take a drink out of the well, some also bring some of the water home in a bottle for their eyes or for other diseases. But they never use the water for household purposes as it is not right to. This well is called after St. Joseph. It is a rather small well and people could not bathe in it. There is a tree just above it. I have not heard anyone saying they ever saw a fish in

the well.

I know of another well in Cappafear, beyond crusheen, this well is also a cure for eyes. On one occasion there was a man blind. He heard of this well and he went to it three days and he regained his sight. This was a wonderful thing. There is also another well in this Parish in the land of Mr. John Baker and it is a cure for warts.

There are nine stones in the well. anyone who wishes to get rid of warts must go to this well three days, Monday, Thursday and Monday again. They must rub each of the nine stones to the warts and while doing so they must make the sign of the Cross three times. It is not a very big well. There is a bush near the well also. When people go to it as a rule they leave flowers on the stones at the well. So ends my Bestoides about "Blessed Wells."

Pupil's name: Nanny Carmody.

Storyteller's name: Mrs. Carmody.

Townland: Carhudotia.

Visitation to the well seemed to decline and as a result the site became overgrown and neglected. A report in the Clare Champion, Saturday, October 24, 1931:

### **Shrines of Catholic Fervour**

*"This beautiful Shrine situated on the shores of the little lake in historic old Ballycoree, about two miles from Ennis, is now visited by throngs of people almost every day of the week, but particularly on Mondays and Thursdays, which are the traditional days of visitation.*

*No more edifying spectacle can be witnessed than that afforded by the sight of men and women, boys and girls, making the rounds. One after the other they go, each telling the Rosary, praying to Jesus, Mary and Joseph. There in the quiet and solitude of that beautiful retreat, away from the world and its distractions, silent, sincere prayers are offered in supplication to God that He may grant to each one his or her request, and to Mary, Joseph and St. Anne for their most powerful intercession.*

*There was a time when this Holy Shrine was not visited or patronised to the same extent as it is to-day. At one period in its history it was almost unfrequented and in a very neglected state. Thanks however, to the fervour and foresight of a holy and*

*pious man, Thomas O'Donoghue, who, unaided and alone, took charge of the place and improved it as best he could, the traditional devotion to St. Joseph and visits to his Shrine were perpetuated. This fervent man spent most of his time at the Shrine. He cared for it every way in which his meagre resources permitted. By his acts of devotion to St. Joseph, he prepared the way for and made possible the present great display of confidence in the saint. This man sought no earthly reward. Silently and unobtrusively he performed his labour of love of God and his devotion to the Carpenter of Nazareth. Thomas O'Donoghue has long since gone to his eternal reward, but it has pleased God that his work should fructify; and to-day the Shrine is the scene of edification and sanctity, of simple faith and earnest devotion.*

*Within the past two years the work of improvement and renovation has been taken up by a committee resident in Ennis. Through their efforts and the generous financial response of the people of Ennis, together with the voluntary and extensive assistance rendered by staff of the Clare Mental Hospital, the place has been transformed into a beauty spot. The efforts of all who have aided in the noble work are*



*amply rewarded by the edification of the throngs who now flock there to engage in prayer.*

*St. Joseph's Well is now a link with the past. Its very existence bespeaks the traditional devotion of our people to St. Joseph, and we are confident that, as time goes on, countless sons and daughters of the Dalcassians will find immense spiritual consolation by a visit to this devotional shrine."*

Over fifty years later the well required another overhaul; The Clare Champion, August 21 1987:

**New Development Phase at St. Joseph's Well, by Jerry Slevin:**

*"St. Joseph's Well, nestled snugly adjacent to Our Lady's Hospital, Ennis, in the parish of Barefield, was once a great centre of pilgrimage and in the days prior to the motorised age, people in their hundreds travelled there at great personal inconvenience to carry out the spiritual exercises.*

*Recent years saw the practice discontinued, resulting in the entrance from the Gort Road, the pathway leading to the shrine and the total area around the shrine, becoming so overgrown as to make access nigh impossible.*

*A new phase is about to unfold in the history of this famed shrine and with Mass being celebrated there on (this) Thursday evening, 6.30 p.m. the stage could well be set for a renewal of devotion to St. Joseph in Ennis.*

*The area around the well comprises enshrined statues of Our Lady, St. Anne, the Sacred Heart and St. Joseph. There's also an engraving which asks visitors to*

*"pray for the soul of Thomas O'Donoghue, the humble and pious man who during his life cared for and improved this place".*

*According to an Ennis lady who can recall the days when the well was visited regularly by pilgrims, Thomas O'Donoghue was responsible for the provision of the statues there, having made collections towards that end. In later years the late Joe Casserley and his wife, Bridget, were prominent in their attention to the wellbeing of the shrine but recently, the area was so overgrown and strewn with litter as to make it almost unrecognisable.*

*Frank Kenny, a retired Roscommon native who had spent many years in London and now lives in nearby Ashfield Park, visited the well shortly after he arrived in the area a couple of years ago and was so shocked at the condition of the area that he immediately set about the difficult task of making it accessible. With the help of some neighbours and members of the Legion of Mary, the hard work was undertaken. It took many painstaking hours over a long period and in addition to the removal of the litter, the cutting down of the overgrowth, the clipping of the hedges, the statues and their surrounds were repainted. It was a labour of love carried out with a marvellous dedication and when the crowds assemble to night for Mass, they may well be beginning a revival in the devotion to the Shrine that for many years was the Lourdes of Ennis".*

Canon Caimin O'Carroll, P.P. Doora-Barefield celebrated the Mass at St. Joseph's Well on that Thursday night (See Photo.) thus commencing a tradition that continues to-day.



Canon Caimin O'Carroll, PP Doora-Barefield celebrating Mass at St. Joseph's Well. Photograph by Eamon Ward.

1987- Photo courtesy of Canon Caimin O'Carroll, (Photo taken by Eamon Ward of the Clare Champion).

### The Well To-day

As you climb over the stile you will notice an ivy clad rusted money box encased on top of the wall to your right which is a throw back to a time when offerings were made for the upkeep of the well. Many mature trees surround the exterior and interior of the site and immediately to the right is a wooden cross. As you walk down the defined path on the left there are four enclosed or hooded shrines housing statues venerating The Sacred Heart, Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph, St. Anne and the Holy Family. The first shrine has a selection of religious objects, but at the base of the shrine a carving in relief of the Coronation of Our Lady is attached and is in excellent condition. Veering to the right the shrine over the well displays the same characteristics as the other shrines and once housed a statue as evidenced by a

protruding iron rod. A plaque has been placed at the base requesting prayers for the soul of Thomas O'Donoghue, former caretaker of this place. The well is surrounded on three sides by a wall and four steps lead down into the well and on either side there are flagstones, to perhaps enable those venerating at the well to rest their hands. The level of the well fluctuates over the seasons due to the proximity of Lough Girroga which in heavy rainfall floods the entire site in winter and causes much of the deterioration to the shrines and the site in general.

Although now not as popular, St. Joseph's Well continues to be a place of veneration with the annual Mass which is celebrated on the 15 August. Efforts are made every year to clean-up the site but as stated above flooding is impacting badly on the site and visitation has declined due in some respects to the closure of Our Lady's Psychiatric Hospital and changes in religious practices. I hope this booklet will be a small incentive to keep an awareness of the site and its customs, cures and rounds as remembered and recorded by our ancestors.





Annual Mass at Well 15 August 2013 celebrated by Fr. Jerry Carey, P.P. Doora-Barefield

