



# GARDEN OF CELTIC SAINTS

IRVINESTOWN,  
CO. FERMANAGH

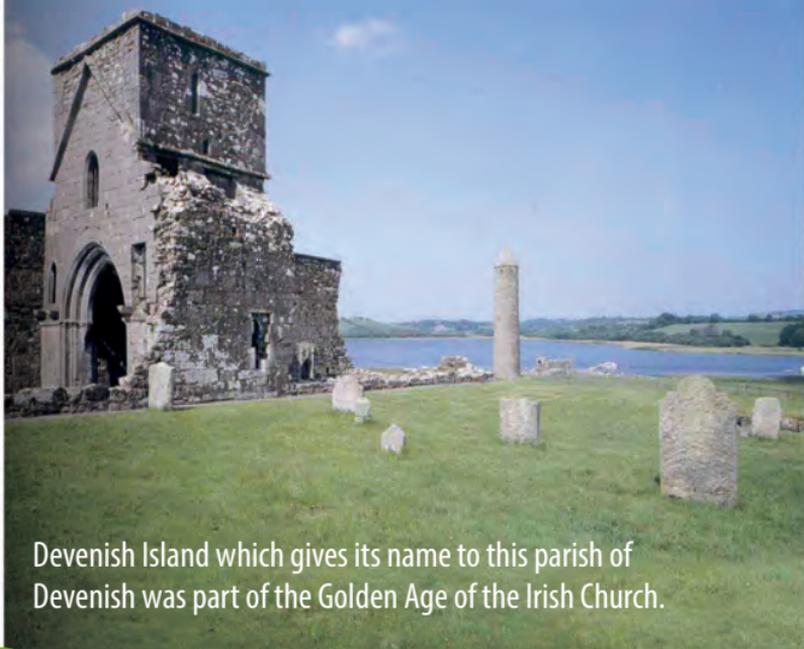
## WELCOME

Welcome to the Garden of Celtic Saints. This is a place of prayer and reflection, a place of beauty and hope. It is filled with memories of the Saints of the Golden Age of the Irish Church. The names of Patrick, Brigid, Columcille, Columbanus, Gall, Kilian and Molaise will bring to mind the riches and glories that existed in the Irish Church from the time of Saint Patrick. As you walk through this garden and reflect on the lives of the Saints represented in the sculptures, we hope you will be refreshed by :

- their reverence for the Holy Scriptures;
- their deep sense of community in the Body of Christ at prayer;
- their sense of tradition and continuity with past heroes of faith and
- their love of Creation.

We trust that you will find this booklet informative and that you will be spiritually renewed by your visit to the Garden of Celtic Saints.

*Fr. Michael McGourty Parish Priest,  
Devenish Parish  
YEAR OF FAITH 2013*



Devenish Island which gives its name to this parish of Devenish was part of the Golden Age of the Irish Church.



## JONAS RAISKAS, THE SCULPTOR

Jonas Raiskas was the artist who carved all the sculptures in the garden. He is a native of Lithuania and came to Irvinestown to work in 2007. Devenish Parish commissioned him to carve, from native Irish oak, the sculptures of Celtic Saints. He worked from 2007-2011 carving all the beautiful figures in the garden.



## SAINT PATRICK MEETS THE LEGENDS AND MYSTERY OF IRELAND



This map illuminates the places where, before Christianity came to Ireland, the Celtic people met on mountain and hill top, by lakeside and river bank.



They met on the last Sunday of July or the first Sunday of August to thank the pagan god, Lugh, for new crops and food for the winter. According to a survey by the Irish Folklore Commission in 1942 older people remembered the tradition of meeting at these places up to recent times. As you walk around this garden let all your senses be engaged. Look at the wild flowers, ferns and trees. Listen to the sound of the breeze in the branches and the song of the birds. In winter be aware of the same silence of the sleeping earth that our ancestors knew. Smell the fragrance of the flowers and shrubs. Touch the bark of the trees and the texture of the rocks.

### SUMMER HAS COME

Summer has come, healthy and free, whence the  
brown wood is bent to the ground.

The cuckoo sings gentle music to me, whence there is smooth, peaceful calm,  
Gentle birds skip upon the hill and swift grey stags,  
Green bursts out on every herb, the top of every green oakwood is bushy,  
Summer has come, winter has gone, the sun smiles over every land,  
A parting for me from the brood of cares, summer has come.

*Irish Poem from the 10th Century, translated by Kuno Meyer*

### THE LEGEND OF THE CHILDREN OF LÍR

This is a sculpture representing “The Children of Lír”, one of the best known legends of Ireland. They were turned into swans by their jealous step-mother, Aoife, and had to travel over the waters of Ireland for 900 years until they heard the sound of the Christian bell. Then they would become human again and receive the Christian Faith. Tradition says that no one in Ireland would ever harm a swan or any song bird.



## THE LEGEND OF TÍR NA nÓG, OISÍN AND NIAMH

(Carved from an oak from Necarne Castle)



Oisín



Niamh



Old Oisín

The Celtic people in Ireland believed in a mystical land in the western sea called Tír na nÓg or Hy-Brasil, Isle of the Blest, where no one ever grew old. These are the sculptures of Oisín and Niamh. Oisín was a young Celtic hero who was loved by Niamh of the Golden Hair and invited to come with her to Tír na nÓg. They lived happily for 300 years. Then Oisín wanted to see Ireland again. Niamh reluctantly agreed on condition that his foot did not touch the ground of Ireland. Oisín travelled to Ireland but as he was helping a group of men to lift a boulder, the strap of his saddle broke and he fell to the ground. Instantly he became old and feeble.

Then he saw a Christian procession with Saint Patrick. Saint Patrick taught Oisín the Gospel and he received the gift of Faith. What he lost was more than gained when he received Christ, the Light of the World. Note the happy family atmosphere and the love for children, the musical instruments, the love for music and the love for nature in song birds.



Sun rising over Crannog lake dwelling

### THE MYSTERY

I am the wind that breathes upon the sea, I am the wave of the ocean.  
I am the murmur of the billows, I am the ox of the seven combats.  
I am the vulture upon the rocks, I am the beam of the sun,  
I am the salmon in the water, I am the lake in the plain.  
Who announces the ages of the moon?  
Who teaches the place where couches the sun? IF NOT I.

*Pre-Christian poem written by Amergin translated by Douglas Hyde*



## SAINT PATRICK

(Carved from an oak found in west Fermanagh)



Saint Patrick came as a slave to Ireland. During those six years herding flocks on a hillside, he learned the native language and the pagan religious customs of the Irish. This was to prove invaluable when he returned as a missionary. He gave places of pagan worship a new Christian meaning. Healing wells became places of Baptism. The mountain of the pagan god, Crom Cruaich, became the Christian mountain of Croagh Patrick. Lough Derg became a centre of prayer and penance.

Saint Patrick once heard the voice of the Irish asking him to come to Ireland once again. He had only one driving force which was his love for Christ and the Good News. 'Christ be beside me, Christ be above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left.' (Saint Patrick's Breastplate)

The sculpture of a lamb on the statue of Saint Patrick symbolises that Saint Patrick came as a shepherd.

### SAINT PATRICK'S OWN WORDS

'I now entrust my soul to God, who is most faithful and for whom I am an ambassador in my humble station. For God has no favourites and He chose me for this office to become one of His ministers even if among the least of them. What return can I make to Him for all his goodness to me? What can I say or what can I promise to my Lord since any ability I have comes from Him? Suffice it is for Him to look into my heart and mind, for I am ready and greatly desire it that He should give me His cup to drink, as He gave it to others who loved Him.'

*(Bishop Joseph Duffy 'Patrick in his own words')*



## THE MONASTERIES



Our journey now takes us to the Golden Age. It began with the founding of the monasteries. After the conversion of Ireland, many monasteries sprang up which were centres of faith and learning from the 6th Century.

This map illuminates the sites of the many monasteries in Ireland. Because of these, Ireland became known as the Island of Saints and Scholars. This house contains sculptures of Saints Brigid, Columcille and Molaise.

### **SAINT BRIGID**

(Carved from an oak from Caledon Wood)

Saint Brigid who was born at Faughart, Co. Louth founded her monastery at Kildare.

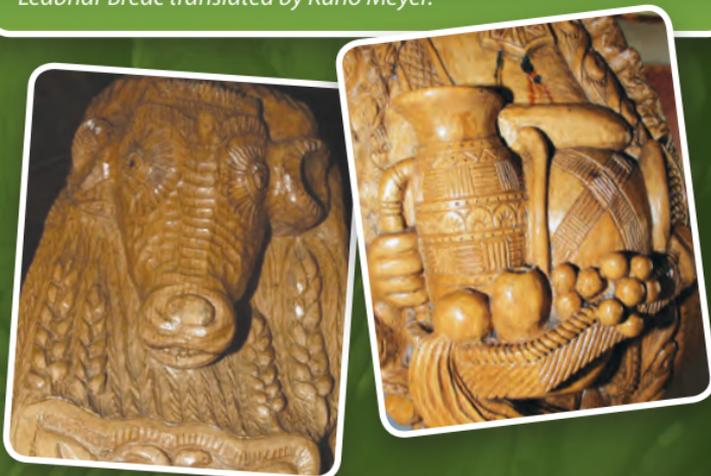
This sculpture shows the saint holding food and fruit to represent her care for the poor and the sick. She saw the face of Christ in the face of everyone she met. The cow on the back of the sculpture represents the legend that she had a cow that gave milk through the whole year. The Saint Brigid's Cross recalls the legend that the Saint made a cross of rushes to instruct an old pagan chieftain about Jesus as he lay on his deathbed. Saint Brigid died about 525.



### HOSPITALITY IN IRELAND

Oh King of the stars, whether my house be dark or bright  
Never shall it be closed against anyone,  
Lest Christ close his house against me.  
If there be a guest in your house and you conceal aught from him,  
'Tis not the guest that will be without but Jesus, Mary's Son.

*13th Century Poem written on the margins of  
Leabhar Breac translated by Kuno Meyer.*



Garden of Celtic Saints Irvinstown



## **SAINT COLUMCILLE**

(Carved from an oak from Caledon Wood)

Saint Columcille was born in Gartan, Co. Donegal of royal family in 521. He was educated in Kilmacrennan and decided to follow the monastic life. He founded monasteries at Durrow and Derry but his most famous was at Iona, an island off Scotland. At that time much travel was by boat. The roof of this house is in the shape of a boat and Columcille is presented as standing in a boat. He is holding the Cathach, the book of the psalms. Saint Columcille was often called on to be a peacemaker in his day.



## **SAINT COLUMCILLE THE SCRIBE**

My hand is weary with writing,  
my sharp quill is not steady.  
My slender beaked pen  
pours forth a black draught  
of dark blue ink,  
A stream of the wisdom of  
blessed God springs from  
my fair, shapely hand,  
On the page it squirts its draught  
of ink of the green skinned holly.

*Poem from the 9th Century  
translated by Kuno Meyer*

## SAINT MOLAISE

(Carved from an oak from west Fermanagh)

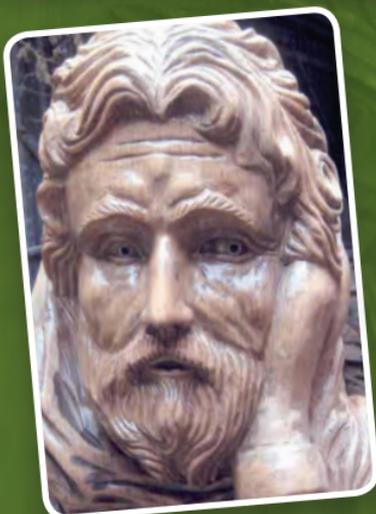
Saint Molaise founded the monastery of Devenish in the 6th Century. The sculpture shows the saint meditating as he writes a manuscript. Two candles lit beside him represent his name 'Mo Laise' 'My Light'. Saint Molaise died about 562. The Annals of Ulster record that Devenish was plundered many times by the Vikings.



### THE VIKING TERROR

Fierce is the wind tonight,  
it ploughs up the white  
hair of the sea.  
I have no fear that the  
Viking hosts will come  
over the water to me.

*Written on the margins  
of a St. Gall manuscript  
of the 8th or 9th Century  
translated by F.N. Robinson*





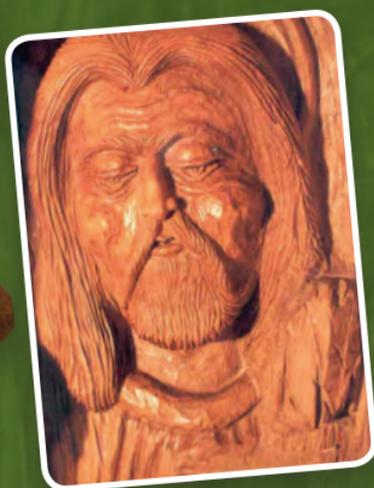
This map marks some of the places in Europe where the Irish Saints worked.

## EUROPEAN JOURNEYS

This house presents the Irish Monks who brought the peace-making influence of the Gospel to the chaos of Europe in the dark days after the fall of the Roman Empire. The sculptures in this house present Saint Columbanus, Saint Gall and Saint Kilian.

### SAINT COLUMBANUS (Carved from an oak from Shane's Castle)

Saint Columbanus was born in Leinster in 543 and studied in Cleenish and Bangor monasteries. At the age of 50 he went with 12 companions as missionaries to Europe. He founded monasteries in Gaul (France) but his most famous was at Bobbio in N. Italy. He is revered to this day by the people of Italy. This sculpture presents the saint praying in his cave.





### CHRIST, OUR TRUE TREASURE

I ask no rich gifts that will not endure,  
Gold that the miser hoards up, yet is poor,  
Christ be your portion,  
Lord of Creation,  
God the Almighty's one generation.

*Poem of Saint Columbanus translated by Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich.*



This carving represents the legend that Columbanus drove a bear out of the cave so that he could pray there.

Detail of eagle in its eyrie to show love for Creation. Many of the Saints of Ireland had a great love for the little song birds. According to the legend, Saint Kevin held out his hand long enough for a blackbird to hatch out its chicks and Saint Ciarán of Saigher healed a bird wounded by a hawk. We pray today for the peace that comes from wild beauty and for reverence for all Creation.

### THE HERMIT

I wish, O Son of the living God, O ancient eternal King,  
For a little hut in the wilderness, that it may be my dwelling.  
The all-grey lithe little lark to be by its side,  
A clear pool to wash away my sins, through the Grace of the Holy Spirit.  
Quite near, a beautiful wood around it on every side,  
To nurse many-voiced birds hiding in its shelter.

*Poem from the 9th Century translated by Kuno Meyer*



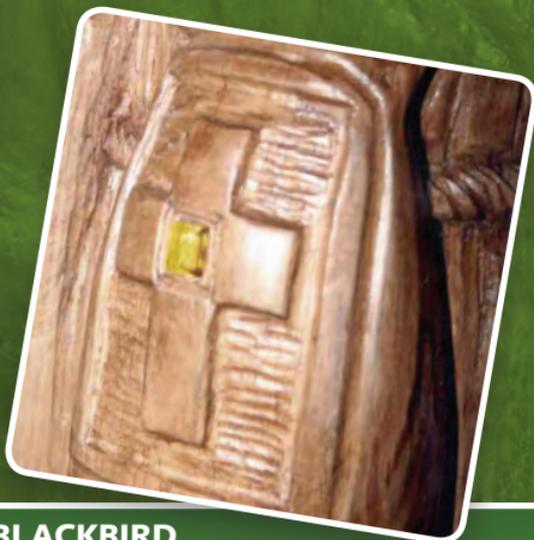
Jonas and Fr. McGourty with the carving of Saint Gall.

### SAINT GALL

(Carved from an oak from Necarne Castle)

Saint Gall travelled with Saint Columbanus from Ireland.

When Saint Columbanus crossed the Alps, Saint Gall remained in Switzerland where he gave his name to the modern city of St. Gallen. The library there has more Irish manuscripts than all Ireland has today. Saint Gall died about 630 probably very lonely, for all his friends were either dead, or in far off Gaul.



### THE BLACKBIRD

A hedge of trees surround me, a blackbird sings to me,  
Above my booklet, the lined one, the thrilling bird sings to me.  
In a grey mantle, from the top of the bushes, the cuckoo chants to me.  
May the Lord protect me from doom, I write well under the greenwood.

*Poem from the 9th Century found on the margins of a St. Gall Manuscript translated by Whitley Stokes and John Strachan*

**SAINT KILIAN**

(Carved from a chestnut tree  
from Caledon Wood)

Saint Kilian was born about 640, almost certainly at Mullagh, Co Cavan. With eleven companions, he travelled to Wurtzburg in Germany where he preached the Gospel. With two companions, he suffered martyrdom because he criticised the lifestyle of the ruling family. The sculpture shows him holding his hat as protection against storms. This is a symbol for the storms of life.

**THE HEAVENLY PILOT**

Wilt thou steer my frail dark bark o'er the dark broad ocean's foam,  
Wilt thou come, Lord to my boat where afloat my will would roam  
Thine the mighty, thine the small, thine to mark men fall like rain,  
God, wilt thou grant aid to me, who came o'er the upheaving main.

*Poem from the 10th Century from the Book of  
Leinster translated by George Sigerson*



## THE SCHOLARS

Ireland was known as the “Island of Saints and Scholars.” The tradition of learning was preserved in the monasteries and by the work of the Church even up to the 17th Century. We cannot forget the work of the Franciscan writers in the 17th Century. This house is dedicated to the Scholars. The scholars represented were from Fermanagh and Brother Micheal Ó Cléirigh worked for a time at Lisgoole, near Enniskillen.

### CATHAL ÓG MCMANUS 1439-1498

(Carved from an oak from Necarne Castle)

He was a scholar, a cleric and a political leader who belonged to the noted Fermanagh family. We remember him because he compiled the work known as the Annals of Ulster, the greatest source of early Irish and Scottish history. He lived at Seanadh Mhic Mhaghnuasa, now called Belle-Isle, near Maguiresbridge. The Annals show how important Lisgoole near Enniskillen was then as a centre of learning and faith. The sculpture shows Cathal Óg holding a Bible and the Annals.

## GIOLLA BRIGHDE Ó hEÓDHUSA

(Carved from an oak from Caledon Wood)

He was a member of the family who were the hereditary poets to the Maguire of Fermanagh. When Gaelic Ireland was dispossessed at the Plantation, he travelled to Louvain, Belgium. There he joined the Franciscans in 1607, taking the name Bonaventure and he was ordained in 1609. His learning led to his writing catechisms and Christian poetry. Fellow Franciscan, Aodh Mac Aingil, at his untimely death in 1614 said, 'Ireland was deprived of a great scholar.'



### THE APPLE TREE

O you who plant the tree,  
Who shall be alive to  
pluck its apples?  
When the bright, branched  
shoot has grown,  
Is it certain to be seen by you?

*Poem by Giolla Brighde Ó  
hEódhusa translated by  
Ciarán Mac Murchaidh*

## BROTHER MICHAEL Ó CLÉIRIGH 1589-1643

(Carved from an oak from Shane's Castle)



Brother Michael Ó Cléirigh was the leader of the group of scholars who compiled the Annals of the Four Masters. He was born near Creevy, Ballyshannon in Co. Donegal and he became a Franciscan Brother at Louvain in 1623.



From 1626-1637, at his Superior's request, he travelled around Ireland collecting and recording material for the Annals which were then compiled at Louvain. This sculpture presents him standing in the library of Louvain holding a copy of the famous Annals.



On the back of the sculpture there is a map of Ireland marking the places he visited. Sadly, there is no mark to indicate where he is buried in Louvain since the exact location is unknown.

## THE HOUSE OF THE CELTIC CROSS

High Crosses are found all over Ireland at old monastic sites. They rate with the Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow as a great contribution by Ireland to western European art of the middle ages. These crosses date from the eighth and ninth centuries and feature many biblical scenes. In this house the map at the entrance lights up the location of these Irish Crosses.



The sculpture presents, in exquisite detail, many features of the Crosses.



These photographs show the development of the sculpture from the oak tree to completion. The oak came from Shane's Castle.



### THE SWAN

At the cry of the first bird they began to crucify thee O Swan,  
Never shall lament cease because of that.  
It was like parting day from night.  
Ah sore was the suffering borne by the Body of Mary's Son.  
But sorer still to Him was the grief which for  
His sake came upon his mother.

*Prayer from the 12th Century found on margins of  
Leabhar Breac translated by H. M. Jones*

## TEACH MUIRE - MARY'S HOUSE



This house contains sculptures of Mary holding the Infant Jesus. Saint Joseph is working at his carpentry skill. This house has been planned in the style of a traditional Irish kitchen with an open turf fire, crane crook, pots and kettles. These sculptures of Mary and Joseph were from oak from John Cathcart's farm at Tedd.

### THE SACRED CHILD

God greet You, sacred Child,  
poor in the manger there,  
yet happy and rich tonight  
in your own stronghold in glory.

Mary, Virgin and Mother,  
open the stable door  
till I worship the King of Creation.  
Why not I more than the ox?

*Poem written by Aodh  
Mac Aingil a Franciscan  
priest at Louvain.*

*He was born in Downpatrick  
and died in 1626.*



## AN OLD IRISH BLESSING

May the road rise up to meet you.  
May the wind always be at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
and rains fall soft upon your fields.  
And until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.



Artwork by [www.csgwd.com](http://www.csgwd.com) T: +44 (0) 28 8952 2310

### Garden Of Celtic Saints

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