

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This is the report of a survey, carried out in June 1993, of thirty-six churches in the Church of Ireland United Diocese of Meath and Kildare with the aim of documenting and assessing the stained glass windows.

The survey is fairly comprehensive in that the short-list of thirty-six was devised by means of a preliminary survey by Mrs. Lesley Whiteside. This was designed to eliminate only (a) those churches where there were no stained glass windows and, (b) those where there was a single window which, from photographs, was not considered to be of great merit. By this means it was intended that the only significant omission in the Diocese would be the Cathedral Church of St. Brigid, Kildare. This was not included due to pressure on funding and on time.

1.2 Acknowledgments

For the task of identifying the artists and studios, I am grateful for the untiring assistance given to me by the art historian Mr. Peter Cormack of the William Morris Gallery in London, with whom I discussed my colour slides at length.

I am also indebted to Mr. Martin Harrison and Dr. Nicola Gordon Bowe, to whom I turned for further specialist advice and information. These three colleagues are the acknowledged authorities on the history of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century stained glass of the British Isles. In addition, Mr. Cormack gave me invaluable guidance in making the assessments of the windows and drawing up the categories of importance.

1.3 Status of this Covering Report

Although I have prepared a separate report for each church, this covering report contains information essential to the understanding of the individual reports. Therefore, if an individual report on a particular church is distributed, I would request that a copy of this covering report should be attached.

AGHER CHURCH

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Date of Survey

This is the report of a survey carried out on 21st June 1993.

1.2 Status

The church is in use for worship. The Rector is:

The Revd. Canon C.J. McCollum
The Rectory
Rathmolyon
Co. Meath
Tel: 0405-55267

1.3 Window and Photograph Numbering System

W1	P60	Sanctuary, East
W2 & W3		Nave, South, East to West
W4		Nave, West, South-most
W5	P61	Nave, West, North-most
W6 & W7		Nave, North, West to East

2. REPORT

2.1 Stained Glass Attributions

W1	doc: Thomas Jervais; Dublin	18th century
W5	Heaton, Butler & Bayne; London	mem 1901

2.2 Dimensions of Windows

W1	Single light 88" x 53";
W5	Lancet 89" x 19" incorporating main light 49" x 19", upper light and two small tracery lights.

2.3 Description

W1 St. Paul Preaching to the Athenians
W5 Charity.

2.4 Window Guards and Double-Glazing

W1 has double-glazing in obscure glass, sealed all round and W5 has wire guards. The double-glazing has carelessly positioned horizontal glazing bars, conflicting with the drawing of the figures.

2.5 Condition

W1 is precariously frail but W5 is in good condition.

2.6 Assessment

The East window is historically important, being by the major Dublin-born artist, Thomas Jervais, best known for his virtuoso painting of the great West window of New College, Oxford from the designs of Sir Joshua Reynolds. It is a rare example of a window from the eighteenth-century and is highly characteristic of the style of that neglected period in stained glass history. We have placed it in the top category of importance (see Section of the covering report). It was commissioned by the Wellesley family for Dangan Castle.

Note: this beautifully-sited estate church has elegant original leaded-lights with small square quarries and ruby borders set in stone openings of unusual pattern.

2.7 Proposals

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If the church were to close, the Jervais window should be preserved, possibly in the new Stained Glass Museum of Ireland at Creagh, Skibbereen. In any case, immediate steps are needed to restore this window: because of its simple structure, it would be a very straightforward task to dismantle and re-lead it. There are some important windows here and every effort should be made to preserve them in accordance with modern practice. The problems associated with double-glazing and a description of more suitable alternatives are set out in Section 6 of the covering report.