

The church known locally as *Fr Pender's Church* once stood on the Dunleckney Estate on the hillside formerly known as Knocknacorrah

(Cnoc na Cumhriaróige – hill of fragrance). The church was screened off from the manor house by a line of lime trees, which still grow there. Locals interviewed by <sup>1</sup>An t Ath Peadar Mac Suibhne stated that their ancestors 'used to stand under the shade of these trees while waiting for mass'. He was of the opinion that the site for the church was given by

Walter Bagenal (1671-1745) or possibly his son Beauchamp ( -1802).

The church was built during the Penal Law period as a 'mass house', replacing the stone building in Dunleckney graveyard. Consequently it was of simple design, constructed of timber and with a roof of thatch and resting on a stone plinth. Figures 1 & 2.

*This church was the third known to have existed at Dunleckney. According to note 539 in the <sup>2</sup>Carlow Inventory a church had existed in 1207. This was replaced by the <sup>4</sup>church in the graveyard (presently in ruins) which we date to the 15th c.*

The priest's house, garden and a well was located a short distance away, closer to the manor house. This well known as *Fr Pender's Well* is marked on the original ordnance map. The system of public roads and mass paths which existed during the lifetime of the penal church are outlined in Fig 3. In order to draw this map the authors consulted 18th c maps of the area, talked with old residents and divined where necessary.

Our readings indicate that the timber church was built in 1740. *When divining we had the strong impression that ship's timbers were used in its construction, probably for the heavy structural beams.* Part of the west end had to be removed in 1780 for unknown reasons. The remaining section served until 1810 when the building was extended and enlarged eastwards. According to records it was demolished by 1820 when services were transferred to the present St Andrew's Church in the town. The ancient parish of Dunleckney was thereby replaced with the modern parish of Bagenalstown..

The transfer of the chapel was part of grand landscaping project at that time. It was planned to have an un-interrupted pastoral vista from the manor to south and west

Fig 1



Site of Penal Church at Knocknacorrah

Also included in the clearance was the priest's house, a school, the teachers house and all tenant farmers within view of the manor.

Land for a new church and schools was donated by Col Newton on a three acre site in the town. The Col had married into the Bagenal family.

**Church Details;** The original building (1740–1780) measured 18'-6"W x 42'-0"L (5.6m x 12m). The extension of 1810 was 22'-8"L x 25'-0"W (6.9m x 7.6m).

Long axis E-W. Altar at E end. Sacristy separated from main church by a partition

Succession of pastors in 18th c. Parish of Dunleckney.

1738-1758. Rev Malachy Brophy. (Doctor of the Sorbonne)  
1784-1798 Rev Michael Brophy. (buried at Dunleckney)  
!798-1836 Rev Michael Prendergast aka Pender (built St Andrew's Church and is buried there)

#### Schoolhouses

In the late 18th c / early 19th c a small private school stood a short distance E of the manor house and close to the then public road. The school was of stone construction with a thatched roof. Dimensions 19L x 13W ( 5.8m x 3.9m) Surrounded by a low wall.

**Teacher's House.** Beside and parallel to schoolhouse. Stone house. 3 rooms. Kitchen /living space with fireplace, remainder of house split into two rooms. Door front and back next south gable. Dimensions 20L x 15'W. ( 6m x 4.6m)

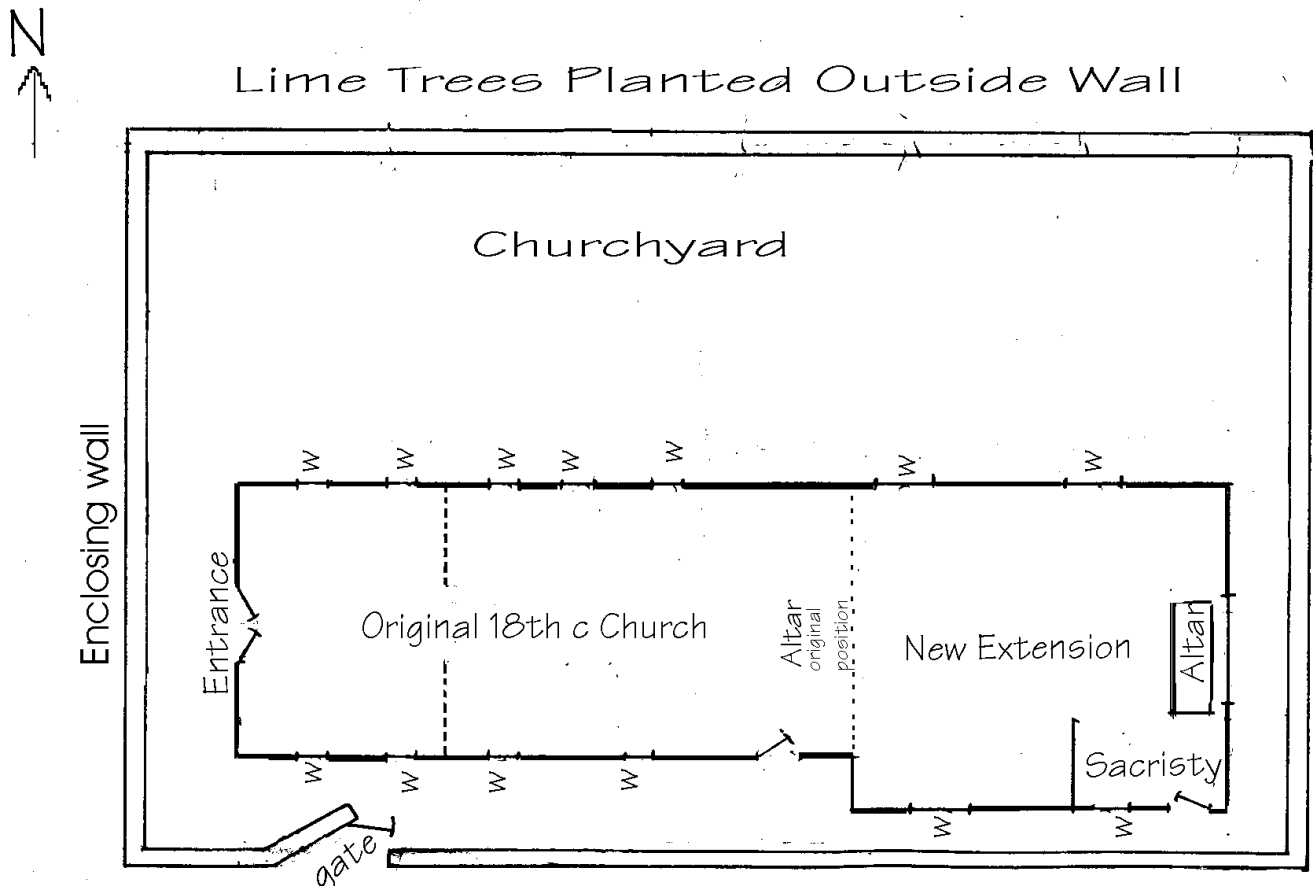
A second private school is known to have existed at Dunleckney Cross. A wall is still visible where it abuts the graveyard wall.

## A Time Slip

The ancestor of a local resident was standing one evening on the public road next to Dunleckney railway bridge, on the side nearest the town. He saw in the distance the figure of a woman dressed in old fashioned clothes walking up in the air next to the original roadside wall. Frightened by this vision he rushed home and told his father. The father told him to pray for the repose of Miss X the school teacher, now long dead.

*The boy had experienced a time slip. When the railway was being built in mid 19th c it was decided that the road go under the railway bridge. The alternative was a level crossing at that location. Miss X had been walking along the side of the road at its original level.*

Fig 2



### Notes re Map at Fig 3

Features shown by double lines did not exist before 1800 but are marked on map in order to make it readable for modern readers. For example the railway and associated bridges, station house etc did not exist before mid 19th c. Neither did the canal, or present street system that now form the town of Bagenalstown.

### Roads built since 1800:

From junction of Fenagh road with back Carlow Road (at Rathduff Cross). Built by Col Newton at his own expense about 1820. The road required a cutting through the esker alongside Dunleckney Graveyard.

Road parallel to canal between Lower Stream junction and fork at Brewery Corner (malting plant).

Green Lane connecting back road to Carlow with

Road to Leighlinbridge.

### Roads closed since 1800::

Road connecting Dunleckney Cross to back road to Carlow.

Road from Brewery Corner to top of Parade.

Mass Paths leading to Fr Pender's church entered at present junction Kilcarraig St/Station Road. Other at present site of Bagenalstown House.

<sup>1</sup>Carlovia No2-(1974) Dunleckney. AnT-Ath Peadar Mac Suibhne

<sup>2</sup>Archaeological Inventory of Co Carlow \_OPW

<sup>3</sup>Ancient Sites in Bagenalstown Area. Vol 2-Site 4. Feeley & Sheehan. 2005

<sup>4</sup>Divining for Mediaeval Churches & Monasteries in Co Carlow. Vol 1- Site 1. Feeley & Sheehan. 2003

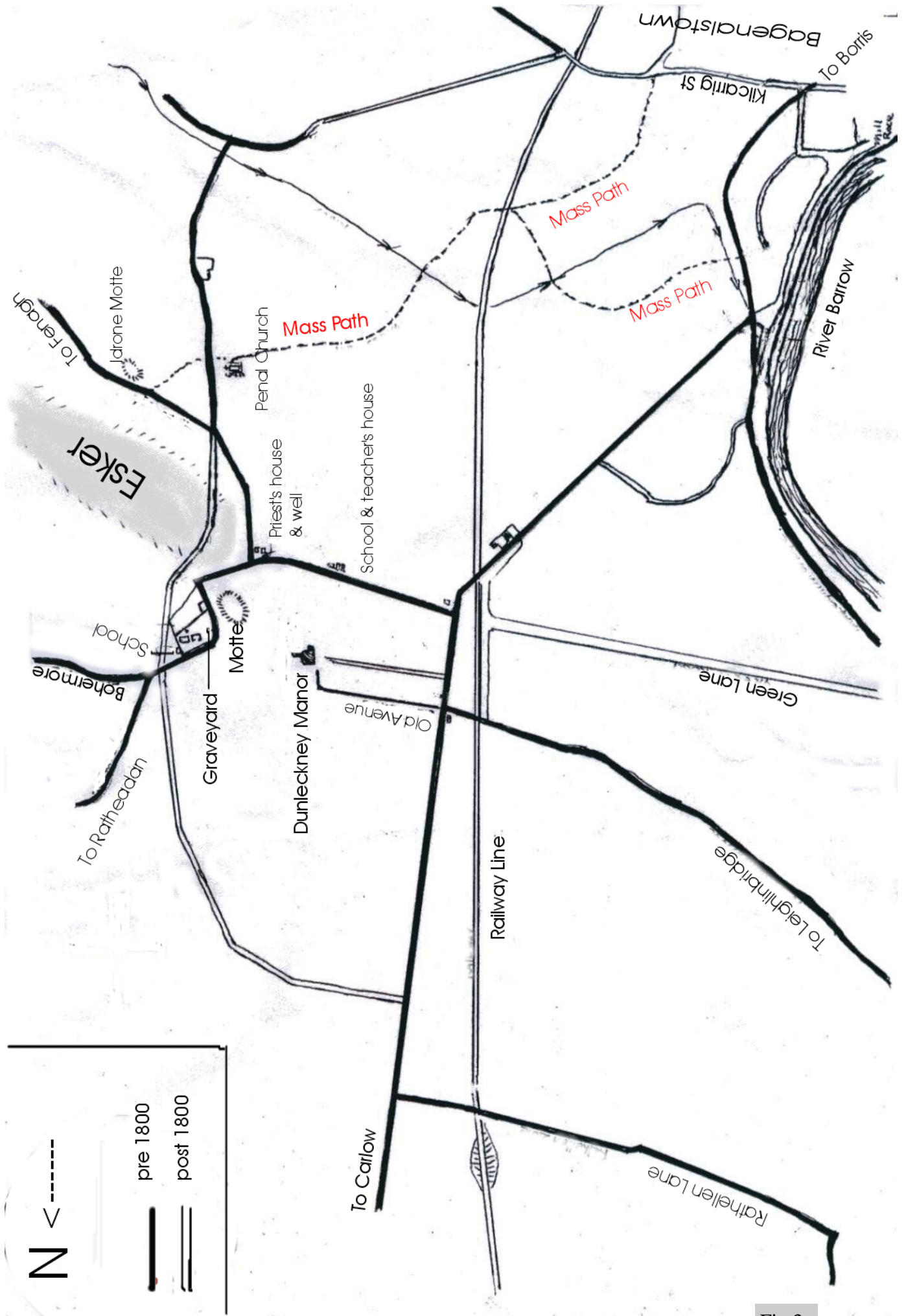


Fig 3