

Abbey of St Moling. 15th c

At St Mullins

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See also previous article at; Part II . St Mullins.

St Moling established a monastery here at Ros Broc in the 7th c AD. The Abbey is the largest building on this ancient site. The building which is now a total ruin was built in at least three stages. Stage 1: An earlier 11th

stone church formed the eastern part of the abbey. *The round tower (of which only the stump now remains) was built around the same time. According to the tradition of the time the tower entrance door faced the church entrance door to the South West.*

Stage 2; To construct the abbey building in the 15th c involved raising and thickening the existing 11th c church walls, to provide an additional storey overhead. A barrel vaulted ceiling gave a strong floor to support both the upper storey (dormitory) and the building itself. Access was by an intramural staircase, the "night stairs". This part continued in use as a chapel for the sole use of the monks.

What must in those time been an impressive hall formed an extension on the west side. This building had a hammer beam roof structure and was used probably a refectory or common room and/or library. The West gable was lighted by a fine trinity window (gothic trefoil) We could find only one entrance doorway to the now enlarged building, which led directly into the chapel. Immediately to the left of this doorway was an internal doorway leading to the new extension or west wing. The original 11th c entrance door had been blocked off.

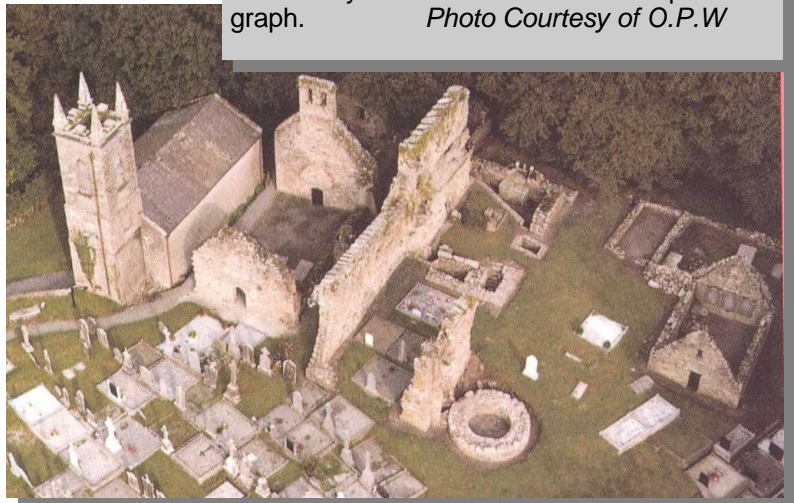
Stage 3: The monastery was suppressed after the Reformation and all lands and buildings granted to the Kavanagh family. The Abbey was then converted for private use. Whereas the chapel continued to be used for private religious services, the western part underwent major alterations.

1. A large fireplace was installed where the original 11th c entrance had been. 2. Corbels were inserted into the walls at both sides to support a timber floor

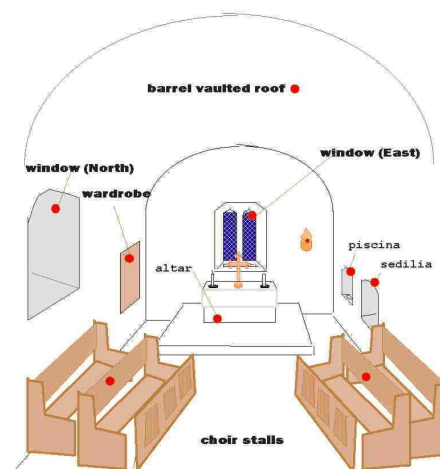
3. An intramural staircase was built into the south wall next the tower to provide access to the upper floor.

This staircase not only gives access to the upper floor but ascends the full height of the South wall. Possible reason; access to a gallery which ran along the inside of this wall.

The Abbey is the ruin at centre of the photograph. Photo Courtesy of O.P.W

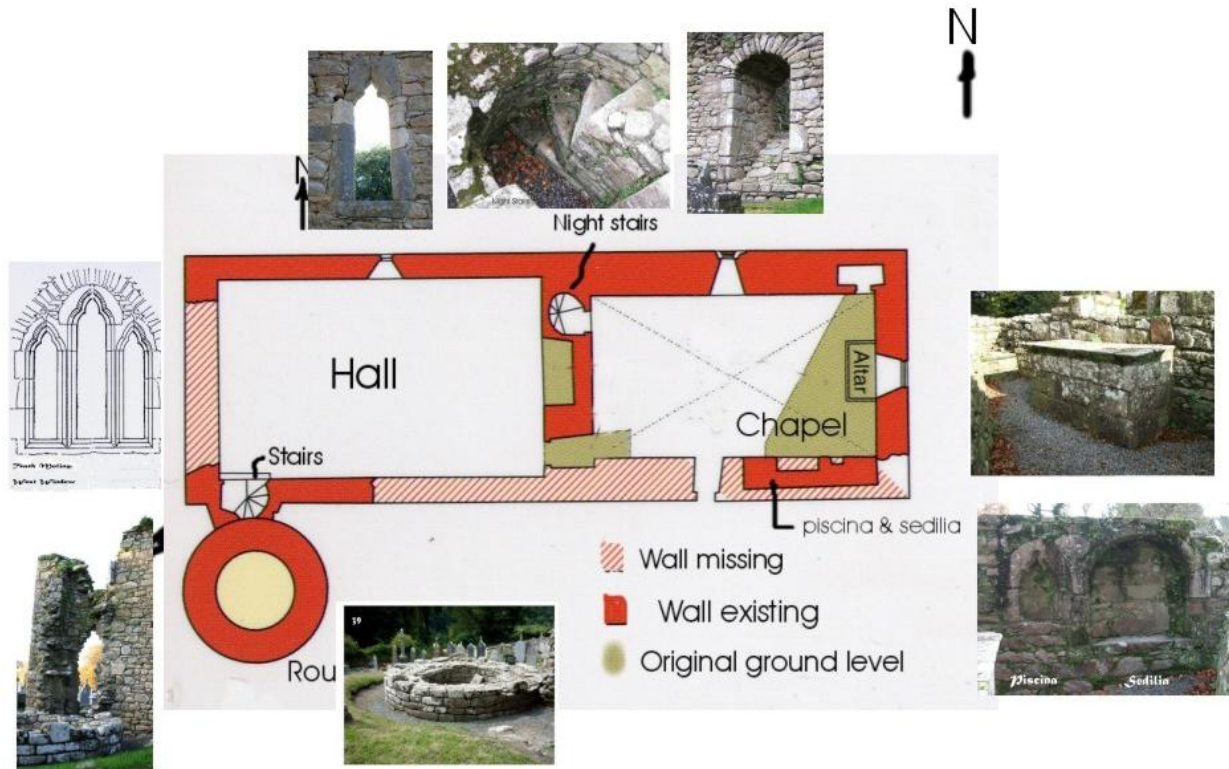


Stage 4; Following an extensive fire in 1738 the building suffered major damage. Most of the South wall collapsed and is scattered along the area once occupied by the cloister. Likewise the gables.



Artists Reconstruction of Chapel Interior 15th-16th c

Artists reconstruction of chapel interior 15thc–17thc. The chapel walls would have been lime washed thus giving a bright interior. No separate vestry was found, priests vested at LHS behind a screen adjacent to the wardrobe..



600 ST MULLIN'S (St Mullin's Borough)
 OS 26:6:3 (387,451) 'St. Mullin's Abbey (in Ruins)'
 OD 0-50 27278,13799

Church Rectangular structure (Dims 23.3m x 7.2m) represented by N, parts of S and E wall of nave and chancel church of uncertain date, modified for domestic and defensive purposes. Original structure divided by chancel arch, chancel interior being slightly narrower than nave. Ogee-headed window in N wall of nave. S wall survives only at W corner, with now broken out spiral stairs in wall thickness leading to upper levels, or to adjacent round tower. Corbels inserted in N and S walls to carry first floor. Chancel remains consist of N wall, with twin-light window, standing to full height and levelled E and S walls. Filling of chancel removed (D c. 2m) to reveal stone altar against E gable, tomb niche with worn thirteenth/fourteenth-century grave slab and piscina. Barrel vault over chancel and spiral stairs in cross wall. (Bradley 1989, 58 (B); *JRSAI* 1892, 377-88; *UJA* 1970, 68) 26:11(05)

Entry in *Archaeological Inventory of Co Carlow*. ---O.P.W

Any of the above photographs can be enlarged on screen by using the Zoom Tool

The chapel was excavated early 20th c down to **original floor level** 4' below. Further excavation prevented by modern burials. Exposed were; The altar, night stairs, doorway between chapel & hall, altar cupboard. Original 11th c entrance door.

References;

Archaeological Inventory of Co Carlow. Dúchas.

St Mullins. Heritage Guide No 5. *Archaeology Ireland Journal*.