

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

CLANE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



THE PEOPLE'S CHURCH, CLONGOWES WOOD COLLEGE

The People's Church was constructed between 1819 and 1821. It was originally a two storey building and consisted of a large classroom on the ground floor with a dormitory overhead. In 1819, when Fr. Charles Aylmer was Rector, there was a serious outbreak of typhus fever in the college due to poor quality drinking water and overcrowding (there were 201 students enrolled). Fr. Aylmer, reacting to medical advice and to the concerns of the parents, sent the boys home for six months. He then embarked on a major building programme which saw the construction of the Lower Line Gallery (now the Concourse), the Higher Line Gallery (now the 1966 Building) and a shorter gallery which is now the People's Church.

When the students returned in September their numbers had dropped considerably to just over one hundred. Fr. Peter Kenny returned as Rector in 1821. He realized that with just over one hundred pupils in the school he wouldn't need the shorter gallery for student accommodation. In August 1822 he converted it into a chapel for the boys. The first Mass was celebrated here on the 1st of November 1822 – The Feast of All Saints. It was the Boys' Chapel until 1907 when the Present Boys' Chapel was built. Since 1907 it has been known as the People's Church and serves the local people of the surrounding area and is much loved by them.