



CHRIST CHURCH ILLAWARRA

By J. A. Dumaresq

The Church was originally built as a school house by Captain Edward Dumaresq in 1840-41, shortly after taking up his grant of land at Illawarra in 1835 and coming to live at Mount Ireh on the opposite side of the river. It was evidently used for the holding of religious services as well, shortly afterwards, as there is a list of incumbents of the said church dating from 1846, the first three of whom were the wardens of Christ College then situated at Bishopsbourne.

A parsonage and stable were built not long afterwards as the parsonage is mentioned in the deed transferring the land and buildings to Bishop Russell for the Church of England in 1858. The parsonage a two story stone building, which had been unoccupied for many years was finally demolished during the second World War to provide stone for raising the level of the road near Longford.

The original school building was a rectangular stone structure ending where the chancel starts today. A concrete block near the centre was the site of a fireplace for warmth in winter.

In 1858 Captain Dumaresq gifted the church and nine acres of land on which it stands to the Church of England together with an endowment of 200 acres from his estate nearby.

A daughter of the Rev. Thomas Watson who came to the parish from India in 1875 married Edward Dumaresq's son Henry and was thus the great grandmother of the present occupant of Mt. Ireh.

In the 1880's the nave and chancel were added and were consecrated by Bishop Sandford in 1888.

The finely carved altar was donated by members of the Watson family who had migrated to New Zealand.

Local children were educated in either the church or the rectory buildings until 1899 when the State Department of Education took over the responsibility and a local State school was built.

Hanging in the church is an illuminated address to a retiring Sunday school teacher showing a drawing of the structure as it appeared about 1900 before the addition of the spire which was added in 1908.

Though the congregation has declined with the decreasing rural population, services are still held in the church monthly.

As well as Edward Dumaresq and other pioneers of the district the cemetery contains the grave of the well known Australian artist Tom Roberts.

The 29th. World Ploughing Championships held at "Mt. Ireh", May 1982. The first time held in the Southern Hemisphere. 38 ploughmen from 19 countries taking part. A stone from each country is set in the Cairn beside the church.

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