

Fr John Lee

We know very little about the time that Rev. Fr. John Lee spent in St Patrick's Kilsyth. He appears to have been in Kilsyth for less than one whole year. In fact, in the Catholic Directory for Scotland he is absent as having been recorded as the Parish Priest of St Patrick's Kilsyth and in historical sources such as 'Irish born Secular Priests in Scotland' by Bernard Canning, p116 he is NOT noted as being the Parish Priest of Kilsyth.

His absence from the Catholic Directory is explainable in so far as if he arrived in Kilsyth at a date after the annual return for the Directory had been made and had left before the same return was completed the following year then he would not appear. Equally the primary source for Canning appears to be the Directory and so he is also absent from that record.

However we know he was here in Kilsyth from two sources - firstly his name appears on the Parish Registers in his own hand having conducted a number of Weddings between March and August 1890. Secondly, we also have a newspaper article from The Tablet - suggesting that he had left Kilsyth and returned to Ireland. See below...

'ADDITIONAL CLERICAL CHANGES.

In consequence of the return of the Rev. John Lee to Ireland, the important mission of Kilsyth has become vacant. His Grace the Archbishop has now appointed the Rev. Michael Turner, South Queensferry, to Kilsyth....'

Page 36, 4th October 1890 - The Tablet

John Lee was born in Limerick in 1851 and he was a ordained a priest for the Diocese of Limerick but sent on loan to the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh where he arrived in 1878. His first Parish was The Immaculate Conception in Kelso where he was stationed as assistant priest from 1878 – 79. He was then sent to St Michael's Linlithgow for 5 years from 1879 – 1883. In 1883 again as assistant priest he went to St Patrick's in the Cowgate in Edinburgh for a year from 1883 – 84. His last officially recorded position in Scotland is that of assistant priest at St Margaret's Loadhead in Midlothian.

Canning at this point records Fr Lee as returning to Ireland to Plusakerry in County Limerick from 1887 where he is recorded as Assistant or Curate until 1892. Obviously, this is at odds with the article in the Tablet and the records in Kilsyth. It is possible that he did indeed return to Ireland then and was enticed back to Scotland with the prospect of a promotion as PP in Kilsyth - for a while. The call of the old country certainly worked as he is recorded as continuing in Ireland as assistant priest thereafter in St Mary's Limerick 1892-1896 and then St Michael's Limerick from 1896 – 1908. His temporary return to Scotland and his promotion to Parish Priest for whatever reason did not last as he remained a curate for a further 18 years from 1890 to 1908 before becoming a Parish Priest in his home country of Ireland.

In 1908 he was finally to become Parish Priest of Askeaton County Limerick a position which lasted until 1915. It would appear that he moved briefly in 1915 to Kilfinane County Limerick and then to Bruff County Limerick later in 1915 where he was to remain PP at Ss Peter and Paul's until 1926.

Fr John Lee was to become a member of the Cathedral Chapter of Limerick during his final position in Bruff becoming Rev. John Canon Lee. He died on 22nd April 1932 and is buried in Bruff parish Churchyard.

In a book called *'The Diocese of Limerick from 1691 to the present Time'* by Rev John Begley Archdeacon published in Dublin in 1938 on Pg 609 there is a short reference to Rev John Canon Lee where he is described as *'He was a frail build but very energetic in making parochial improvements...'*
The epitaph on his headstone reads:

IN MEMORY OF VERY REV. JOHN CANON LEE
PARISH PRIEST OF BRUFF 1926 - 1932
REMEMBERED FOR HIS GREAT CHARITY AND ZEAL
THIS MONUMENT HAS BEEN ERECTED BY
HIS FRIENDS AND PARISHIERS OF
BRUFF
R.I.P.



The Church Yard of Ss Peter & Paul, Bruff, Co Limerick.



The grave stone of Rev John Canon Lee.