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Monday, 25 August 2014 12:46

Restoration Of Iconic Swords Church A Priority

Written by North County Leader

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The restoration of, arguably, the most historically important building in Swords, has now become an urgent priority.

St Columba's Church, which dominates the skyline over Swords, has been closed to worshippers for the past year, after a large portion of the ceiling caved in. The site where the church is situated, is on a hill overlooking the town of Swords and has been a place of Christian worship for over 14 centuries. The church itself, was built in 1817, and is one of the most recognisable buildings in the area. The importance of this area from a tourism potential viewpoint, cannot be over-emphasised, and here in the North County, we are lucky to have some very important and interesting buildings, of historical importance. We are careful to cherish them, and many people feel that such sites are the key to unlocking the great tourist potential of the area. Places such as Malahide Castle and Lusk Round Tower are fine examples of communities being fully aware of the vast potential of these sites, which attract many visitors, bringing much needed revenue to these communities. So, why is there no urgency in restoring such an iconic building, that could reap the same benefits as the aforementioned sites?

St Columba's Church is situated on the ruins of an ancient monastery, built by St Columba, and the Round Tower there dates from the 9th century. The monastery was in the news earlier this year, as the place where Brian Boru and his son, Murrrough were waked after the Battle of Clontarf a thousand years ago. Historical research has revealed that there is very strong evidence that an ancestor of renowned Hollywood actor, Tom Cruise is buried in the adjoining graveyard, which would further boost visitor interest in the area.

It will come as a surprise to many that there has been very little funding made available by various government agencies or business interests, to restore such an iconic building. Reverend Canon Robert Deane told the County Leader, "The cost of restoring the ceiling and church to its former glory would be about E500,000, which far exceeds the capability of the relatively small number of parishioners. From the safety aspect, the church cannot be used again until restoration and repair work is done. At present, our congregation worships at the nearby Old Boro School," he said.

Members of the Friends of St Columba's Church are continuing to work tirelessly to raise the funds needed, but they face an uphill battle. This small dedicated group needs as much help as possible, and the hope is, that tourism chiefs will get their heads together and realise what a valuable revenue making resource that the restoration of this church presents.

It must be said that the County Council have been proactive in realising the potential of the church, and they have nominated St Columba's Church as their chosen charity at the St Patrick's Day parade and the Brian Boru and Flavours of Fingal festivals. However, more is needed, and the hope is that this can be realised in the near future.

A major problem is the heating in the church, which has been described as 'prehistoric' and this is believed to be a significant issue. Canon Deane added, "There is a real possibility that the entire ceiling could collapse, if remedial work is not undertaken soon, but this is all dependent on funds. The situation is not beyond repair, but funds are urgently needed," he said.

History Of St Columba's Church:

St Columba's Church is a beautiful Georgian building on a hill overlooking the town of Swords and was built in 1817. The site has been a centre of Christian worship for over 14 centuries, since St Columba established his renowned monastery here in the 6th century.

This ancient site is home to a 9th century Round Tower, which is one of the best preserved and oldest one in the country. It is also home to a 14th century Square Tower.

Throughout the centuries, as the reputation of St Columba increased, his monastery grew to become the most important in Ireland. By the 9th century, it's significance was such that Brian Boru, the High King of Ireland, and his son Murrrough, were waked here following their deaths at the Battle of Clontarf, a thousand years ago this year.



[\(/media/k2/items/cache/61b3015aa96427071e53299f0e795276_XL.jpg\)](#)

Pictured in St Columba's Church in Swords are Derek Evans (Friends of St Columba's committee), Rev Canon Robert Deane and Billy Goodwin (Friends of St Columba's committee) Inset: Pictured is part of the damaged ceiling in the church, which is urgent need of repair

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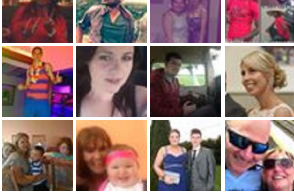


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Weather



North County

Mostly Cloudy
Humidity: 82%
Wind: 4.83 km/h

13°C

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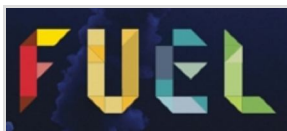
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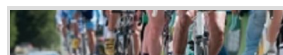


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


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