

St. Brigid's Well, Clondalkin

Legend has it that St. Brigid came to the site of the monastery at Clondalkin and baptised pagans at the well on Boot Road. The structure around it dates from 1761. The original railings were donated by the workers in the Paper Mills in the 1940s and the statue was given by Mary O'Toole. In the 1950s four local men, Paddy Lyons, Jimmy Gallaher, Paddy Mathis and Paddy Kelly restored the well and constructed the grotto that houses the statue. About this time there were processions to the well on the 1st February each year, the feast day of St. Bridget. The well is believed to have curative powers. A piece of rag dipped in the water and used to wipe the face, particularly of young girls, was said to cure eye complaints. After use the rag would be hung on an adjoining tree. The well was restored by South Dublin County Council in 1995. Facing back down the road you've just walked, it is possible to reach Corkagh Park by heading left at this point and taking the first left down St. John's Road. Corkagh Park merits a walk all of its own which is available on Source as an audio walk.

The renovation of St. Bridget's Well in the 1950s.

By the 1950s, St Bridget's Well had fallen into a bad state of repair. Four men: Paddy Lyons (my father) from Commons Road, Jimmy Gallaher from Convent View, Paddy Mathis from Commons Road and Paddy Kelly from Boot Road came together to clean up the well and its surrounding area. The well water was almost stagnant, muddy and dirty. In the process of cleaning out the well many relics from the past that had been tossed into the waters were discovered. They found numerous medals which they hammered onto the old hawthorn tree above the well out of respect for those who had cast them in many years previously. They also found many coins, the most unusual of these was a coin dated 1014. Tradition has it that these coins were handed over to some individual or other to be presented to the National Museum of Ireland. However, there is no record of this donation in the National Museum. The grotto structure, which was to house the statue of St Bridget subscribed for by the people of Clondalkin and its surrounds, was built by these four men. Paddy Lyons undertook the building of the stone canopy using the iron hub from an old cart wheel to shape the curve. A small piece of land was sectioned off around the well and enclosed by iron railings obtained from an old Mill house which was being knocked down. The renovation of the well was a community project and the painting of the railings was undertaken by Mr Nolan of Commons Road.

Community pride in the renovation of the well brought about an increased devotion to St Bridget. After dark on St Bridget's day the community gathered at the well, lighted candles in hand, they sang hymns and recited the Rosary. This tradition continued into the very early 60s.

This was in addition to the centuries-old tradition of visiting the well and the belief in the curative power of the waters, particularly for eye problems, but also for any ailment including warts. The pattern followed was to make the sign of the cross with a piece of cloth over the ailment area and then hang it on the hawthorn tree on the upper level behind the well. Seven Hail Marys, seven Our Fathers and seven Glory be to the Father was then recited each day for seven days.

Another major event in the life of the well at this time was the erecting of an iron cross to St Bridget. This was erected by a Mr and Mrs Doyle from Dublin on the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary. Two further crosses was erected by this couple, one to St. Patrick on the north side another to St. Colmcille in the Dublin hills.