

Mungret Churches

A National Monument consisting of three different churches

Mungret Three Churches are Mungret Abbey, Old Mungret Church and St. Nessen's Church located 4km southwest of Limerick city, in the village of Mungret.

A monastery founded by St Nessen, before 551 AD, was originally planned to hold up to six churches and 1,500 monks. The main church - the abbey, was gifted three ounces of gold and a satin chasuble, the outermost liturgical vestment worn by clergy celebrating the Eucharist, by the King of Munster, Cormac mac Cuilennáin, in 908AD. Being such a vast and wealthy site it was sacked and plundered on at least four occasions by the Vikings. The monastery was destroyed in 1107 by Domnall Ua Lochlainn, alleged High King of Ireland, possibly due to conflict with Muirchertach Ua Briain who challenged Ua Lochlainn's claim of High King. Ua Briain controlled Dublin, Waterford and Limerick at this time. Indeed much of the country was ruled by Ua Briain, except the north-west, which was ruled by Ua Lochlainn.

In 1179, the monastery, such as it was, was granted to Briccius, Bishop of Limerick by Domnall Mór Ua Briain, King of Thomond, after the split of Munster.



Old Mungret Church is located in a small graveyard, east of the abbey. Its east gable wall has a tall splayed, narrow-pointed window. The south wall has two tall and narrow splayed windows. Experts suggest it is pre-Norman in date.



Mungret Abbey consists of a chancel, nave and tower at the west end. The tower is dated to the 15th century, the chancel to the 13th century, but no date is ascribed to the nave. The chancel shows signs of newer 15th century modifications as the walls to the north and south were refaced. The east wall has a window which is a pointed twin-light with chamfered and rebated jambs and splayed, made of sandstone. The mullions are modern limestone. The window on the north wall is a small round-headed splayed light. The north wall also has a mural stairs which rises to a gallery over the west end of the choir below. A small rectangular lop provides the light. The gallery has another opening in its south wall leading to a garderobe. The south wall has a trefoil headed piscine, sill minus bowl, and now blocked four splayed lancet-type windows. The nave is of rubble limestone with limestone quoins, three of which are sandstone, which experts believe was rebuilt. The surrounding graveyard is still in use. The two-storey tower was added in the 15th century as a living quarters for the priests. The tower has a belfry, with a bell locally known as the Bell of Mungret. Windows are a mix of rectangular splayed loops. The first floor sat on corbels with the north and south walls featuring splayed rectangular windows. A chimney flue, minus the fireplace, is on the east wall. The belfry is a narrow four floored tower with a parapet, via a straight stairs. The masonry is limestone with large dressed limestone quoins and a cavetto string course.



St Nesson's Church is a simple rectangular building north of the other two. Its two gable ends are highly pitched with access via a doorway in the west gable. It is a roofless single cell church with a small round-headed window in the east wall and a further two smaller windows in the south wall. It is believed to be the oldest of the three churches.