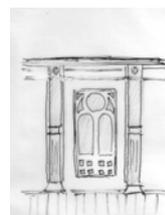


# ST MARY'S Church Drumreilly | gallery



*Marian Mulligan Architect*

A BUILDING IS invented in response to client briefs, social requirements, environment, function and context creating individual distinctiveness, respectful in place and unique in character. The key to success in the current climate is the ability to re-use and re-order existing conditions so as to meet the needs of the clients in a new and refreshing way.

In 1927, Hearne & Co. Ltd. Waterford, were commissioned to make oak panelled seating for The Sisters of Mercy Convent, Ballinamore. These, along with other items, were kindly donated to St Mary's Church Drumreilly on the occasion of the closure of their convent in October 2006. At that time Fr John McMahon was curate in Drumreilly, and he along with the Finance Committee members decided on the positioning of some of the oak panelled seating along the gable wall of the church providing an ornate reredos for the Altar and the Sanctuary.

Upon the completion of a Masters in Architecture in June 2009, I was approached by members of Drumreilly Parish Council to develop a design proposal for a new gallery to the rear of the church. A gallery space had previously existed up until 1973, when it had been removed due to disrepair and general deterioration. The purpose of the new gallery is to accommodate the choir and to provide office space while incorporating the remaining oak panelling which had not previously

been used on the Altar.

The location of the existing windows, structural requirements, access/egress and the integration of oak and walnut with the existing grooved teak underneath were just some of the issues needed to be taken into consideration when designing the gallery in order to fulfil the given brief while being respectful to existing conditions and place.

Design and the realisation of spatial relations are of particular interest to me. The physical making of models from a variety of materials has become my dominant design tool. This enables me to developing ideas from the initial conceptual design process through to the final solution through the exploration of physical three-dimensional spaces. This important communication skill proved particularly helpful in the translation of my ideas to the current Parish Council which is represented by members of the community who may not be familiar with reading plans on a regular basis.

Following approval from the Parish Council, the task of constructing the proposed gallery began. Work had started many weeks before progress could be seen in the church. Some of the panels had become damaged over time due to their age and general deterioration so countless hours was spent restoring them to their original beauty. It was during this process that we discovered the signatures of

two men who had originally installed the seats into the convent-one of whom was from Waterford and the other John McGovern, Ballinamore.

Following the arrival of the structural steel in early February, work progressed steadily much to the curiosity of the inquisitive congregation every Saturday night! Like with every project, unforeseen issues arose and solutions were adapted throughout the construction process. Many parishioners who casually dropped into the church during the build, recalled stories from when the old gallery existed. Before the building project concluded, a time capsule of drawings and writings from the First Communion class, that week's edition of the Leitrim Observer, parish bulletin and other items were hidden in the construction.

On Saturday 18th September Bishop Leo O'Reilly blessed the new gallery and the other items donated by the Sisters of Mercy. That night for the first time in almost forty years, the choir sang high from the gallery in St Mary's Church, Drumreilly.

#### CLOCKWISE

- *Previous view to rear of church.*
- *Model used to convey ideas.*
- *View from gallery to Altar.*
- *View on the gallery.*
- *Reflection of stained glass.*
- *New grooved oak curve.*

