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The Renovated Church.

of a design not usual in other Churches in the Diocese; a four-centred arched framing, springing from hammer-beams, and all richly moulded and peculiarly massive, and bearing the character of old examples of the 15th century English roofs. They will be of pitch pine, left untouched after the carpenter's tools, without varnishing, it being found that pitch pine, treated in this way, assumes in time an appearance as pleasing as that of old oak.

"The old Vestry, on the North side, becomes a spacious and imposing Porch, encased and adorned with cut-stone clamping, buttresses, and pinnacles. The windows, the new additions, as well as the old openings in the Nave, will be large and handsome tracery stone windows, designed in the same consistent "perpendicular" style, as the rest of the work; and specially adapted for effective filling with stained glass at a future day.

"The new seats will, of course, be open, and of the best kind, according to modern ideas, for convenience of worshipping."

History of Seago Parish Church.

The Parish of Seago derives its name from the early Irish Saint, Gobba or Gobanus, who died A.D. 639. He is said by Colgan [Acta

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Sanctorum Hiberniae, Vol. I p. 750) to have lived at the bank of the river Bann, at Seg. da. Goba, or the house of Goba, which, through the form Uide-Goba, "the seat of Goba", has been long known as Seagoe. Gobannus, it is probable, had his cell, or oratory, on the mound or fort which ever since his day appears to have been dedicated to the worship of God, and where the ruins of the old church of Seagoe are still standing.

Tradition records that the first church erected on this site was formed by staves, or made posts, interlaced with hay-ropes, and covered with yellow clay. ^{at the first attempt at plantation of Ulster in} ~~the English~~ ^{the English} settlers who accompanied ^{Elizabeth's} ~~James~~ ^{James} ~~the first~~ ^{the first} ~~plantation~~ ^{plantation} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~Ulster~~ ^{Ulster} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~1573-1576~~ ¹⁵⁷³⁻¹⁵⁷⁶ built here a church which was destroyed after a few years. No doubt it is this building which is shown on the Plantation map of 1609 standing here roofless, with a few trees around. Again the English colonists rebuilt or repaired the church, which was once more ruined in 1641. Soon after the Restoration (1660) the church was again rebuilt through the exertions of Valentine Blacker, an ancestor of the Carrick Blacker family, who died 17th August, 1677, at the age of 80, and was buried in the church he had helped to rebuild. The church was enlarged by the addition of a North aisle in 1755. Ninety years ago, as described, it was a long, low building, about 60 ft. by 22 ft., having a small southern porch (built in 1701), a belfry on the West gable, and was roofed with oak shingles. It had a small gallery at the West end, ascended by a short flight of steps, inside the church, near

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the porch-entrance, and on which the Sexton, ~~stood~~ on his apartment, stood while singing the bell in the belfry overhead. The quaint old font, afterwards removed to the new church and still used, stood under the gallery near the stair-foot. At the opposite or North-west corner, a wooden enclosure, about ten feet by eight, known as the "Dressing Room", served as a Vestry.

At the beginning of this century efforts for the building of a new church were inaugurated and promoted by the Rev. George Blacker, (the youngest brother of Dean Blacker), who was Vicar of Seagoe from 1796 to 1810. The first trace of these efforts to be found in the parish records is under April 30, 1804, when, at a Vestry held on that day, it was agreed that a balance of £40 5s 3d, then in the hands of the Vicar, "shall be laid out, along with other moneys, for the repairing, or building a new church, as may hereafter be approved of and appear necessary to the parishioners." At a Vestry held on September 3rd., 1805, it was agreed, "that the sum of two pence per acre be levied and collected off the inhabitants, to be laid out in building a new church, or repairing the present church of Seagoe, as the parishioners hereafter shall think proper." At subsequent Vestries, in the years 1806-1810, sums varying from £427 to £137 were similarly allotted to the parish "for incidental charges, and towards building a new church." In this way above £1026 were collected "towards the new church".

The Rev. George Blacker was not permitted to wit-

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ness the maturity of his efforts, as he died, amid universal regret, in May 1810, at the age of 46 years. The good work, however, was carried on under Dean Bladen, who succeeded his brother as Vicar of Seagoe, and by his cousin the Rev. Richard Alpherts, who became Curate of Seagoe in June, 1810. Their joint efforts were afterwards commemorated in a memorial-stone inserted over the East Window of the new church, on the outside, inscribed with their initials and the date of foundation, 1814.

At a Vestry held March 31, 1812, a committee was appointed for building the new church of the parish of Seagoe. It consisted of the following persons: - Rev. Richard Alpherts, Captain Woolsey, and Messrs. Robt. Fivy, Woolsey & Steinson, Wm. Overend, David Rudolle, Joseph Malcolmson, and Tolerton Sutton. When it was decided to erect a new church it was found impossible to build the larger edifice upon the old site - hallowed by its religious use for centuries - because the graves had been permitted to encroach upon the Southern and Western sides of the church, so that the earth was raised several feet above the floor. A new site, measuring above two roods and thirteen perches, in the adjoining townland of Upper Seagoe, and about forty perches distant, was granted by Lady Olivia Sparrow acting as guardian for her son, Robert Thomas St. John Bernard Sparrow. The deed of conveyance is dated March 2, 1814, and six days later, at a Vestry held on March 8, the unanimous consent of the parishioners was

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given to the Church of St. Peter, which was finally confirmed by an order of the Privy Council, on June 21, 1814. Slightly anticipating this formal authorisation, the foundation-stone of the new building was laid on Wednesday, June 1, 1814. The late Lt.-Col. Wm. Blacker has preserved the record of the document "placed under the first stone of the church of Seapoe" (see Massey's Survey of Ireland, Vol. II, p. 538). It is as follows:—

"Be it remembered, that, at a time when the dearest interests of Christianity were at stake, when in countries, even such Christian, the temple of the Most High was entered only in profanation, and the name of God invoked but in blasphemy—amidst the wildest raging of foreign war and domestic treason; amidst the convulsions of the world—even then did the parishioners of Seapoe, ('a people zealous of good works'), much incited thereto by their pious and beloved Vicar, George Blacker, (now, alas! no more), resolve to erect a new church, more suited to the dignity of their God, and better calculated to accommodate the increasing numbers of His worshippers. In furtherance of which, after many delays incidental to such an undertaking, the first stone of the intended edifice was laid on the first day of June, 1814, in the 54th year of the reign of George III. The Right. Rev. John Leslie, Bishop of Down; the Rev. Stewart Blacker, Vicar of the parish; the Rev. Richard Olpherts, Curate; John Overend and Wm. Gilpin, Churchwardens—J. Brownlee, Architect."

In addition to the amount which had accumulated from the successive allotments for the

History of the new Parish Church.

building of the Church, the sum of £1000 was borrowed from the Board of First Fruits, repayable in seventeen annual instalments, at the rate of six pounds per cent. on the original loan. A further sum of £500 was advanced by the Rev. R. Olpherts for finishing the Church, on the erection of which above £2500 would appear to have been expended. Additional sums, raised by a plot in the parish, were afterwards spent in fencing the church-yard and putting up the entrance gate; in painting and whitewashing the Church, and in plastering and clashing the exterior walls.

No record of the completion and Consecration of the Church has been preserved in the Parish books; but as a Committee was appointed on May ~~the~~ 7, 1816, to dispose of the pews in the new Church to the different families, it is probable that the Church was opened for divine service, with the usual ceremony, in May 1816.

Besides the font (ant. 320), the Bell was transferred to the new Church. This was the fourth bell which during the last century had been provided, in succession, for the old Church. The first ^(weighing 27 1/2 lbs) bell was placed in the belfry in January 1704; but owing to the improper construction of the belfry this bell was soon broken and had to be recast in Dublin. In the re-casting, 17 ^{lbs} were added to the second bell, which thus weighed 289 ^{lbs}, and was placed in the rebuilt belfry in October 1706.

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This was succeeded by a third bell in 1745; and this, in 1782 by a fourth bell which cost (including carriage) £15.15.10. At the Easter Vestry, April 2, 1782, the sum of £1.8.3 was allotted on the parish, to pay the Sexton, Mary Porter (widow of Henry Porter, a former Sexton) for ringing the Bell, morning and evening, - at six in the morning from the 25th of March to the 29th of September, and at eight in the winter; and at nine at night throughout the year. This bell was transferred to the new Church where it was used until 1860, when it was replaced ^{by} the present, the fifth Bell, in the Incumbency of the late Archdeacon James Scrimin. The following description of this Bell has been supplied by the Foundry, Messrs. Vickers, Sons, & Co, The River Don Works, Sheffield: - "1st Dec. 1880. The Steel Bell we supplied to your Church is four feet diameter; note F, and weighs 1474 lbs. It is one of the first steel bells fixed up in Ireland. In a list of 30 bells supplied by this Firm for Churches in Ireland, there is only one - that of Carrickfergus Church - of equal dimensions to our Seagoe Bell. It is 38" in height (from edge to top of dome) Round the top is the following inscription in relief, or raised letters, - "Naylor Vickers & Co. 1860. Sheffield. E. Riepe's Patent Cast Steel." On the body is - "No. 1496." The cost of the Bell (including carriage & fitting up) was £93.7.7. (See Account on p. 96 supra).

The ancient Communion Plate also preserves

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the memory of the old Church. This consists of a plate and two chalices, all of silver. The plate is inscribed - "In usum Parochiae de Seago, 1699". It was provided by the Vestry, by appointment on the parish. The two chalices were presented during the incumbency of Rev. Richard Buckley, and one of them, at least, at his expense. This one has the inscription - "Ex dono Richd. Buckley, Vicar. de Seago, in usum Parochiae de Seago, 1769." The second is simply - "Seagoe Parish, 1791."

A mural Tablet, oval, and of White Marble, sacred to the memory of Rev. Richard Buckley, was removed from the wall over the Minister's seat in the old Church, and placed on the North wall of the new Church, near the Reading Desk. It bears the following inscription - "Sacred to the memory of the Rev. Richard Buckley, who departed this life, January 18th, 1786, aged 72 years. Late Vicar of the parish of Seagoe, 33 years. A sincere friend to the faculty drops a tear of sorrow at the departure of the above worthy and honourable character." The latter part of this inscription, beginning "a sincere friend, &c.", with the permission of Mr Buckley's family, was added by the Rev. George Polackey, his successor in the Vicarage.

Although the old Church in 1816 ceased to be used for Divine Service, it remained standing for a few years in fair preservation. The internal fittings were not removed, and it was still used at funerals and for the accommodation of a Sunday School. At the Easter Vestry, March 28th 1818, the sum of £2

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was applothed "for the purpose of repairing the roof and windows of the old church." But as the necessity of more extensive repairs became more pressing, it was at length resolved at the Easter Vestry, April 4, 1820, that "the old church should be sold by auction, or before next Whitsun-tide." (Sup. 3 supra). This was so distasteful to the parishioners that ^{at} a subsequent Vestry, on the 23rd of May 1820, the resolution was rescinded "by a majority of the parishioners present," and the Vestry was adjourned until the sentiments of the Lord Bishop [Garrison] be known concerning the same" (Id.) At least, however, the gallery, pews, &c. were sold by auction on Saturday 7th October, 1820; and in the same month, the timbers of the roof, and everything else salubrious, were disposed of by auction, and the edifice was entirely dismantled. The proceeds of the two sales amounted to £35 6s 4d.; and after deducting the expenses of pulling ^{down} the building, the balance amounting to £6 8s 3d., there remained a balance of £28 18s 1d. This sum, it was resolved at a Vestry held Oct. 26, 1820, to expend "in erecting a proper iron gate, at the entrance of the new church-yard, levelling the yard, and preparing the same for planting; and the balance was appropriated in the erecting of an additional building to the stable, for the purpose of a school-house." (Sup. 5-7 supra).

At the auction, the old pulpit - a structure of old black oak, having a sounding-board, resting

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belonged on a panelled frame of oak and supported in front by two turned pillars, and having on the front the date, 1666 — became the property, it is said, of Charles Mooney, a Roman Catholic, and a public house keeper in Eden derry, in whose yard it long lay among the lumber.

Under the provision of the Irish Church Act (1869), and by the order of the Commissioners of Church Temporalities, dated 7th August, 1874, the old graveyard was vested in the Poor Law Guardians of the said Union. Subsequently the Guardians added to the graveyard about an acre of ground adjacent, purchased from the late Major Stewart Blacker, and completed the enclosure of the yard by a substantial stone wall, except on the river, or eastern side, where the old thorn fence still remains.

For many years the west gable of the Old Church, with its belfry, remained entire, and, thickly clothed with ivy, was a picturesque object. But on the night of Tuesday Dec. 11, 1883, in a storm from the North-West, the apex of the gable and old belfry were blown down. The arch of the West window was left unbroken, but the P. L. Guardians removed all the rest of the wall to a line below the sill of the window.

In February last (1890) on taking down a portion of the Southern wall, ^{of the new church.} in preparation for the new aisle, there was discovered a wide

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~~central~~ arch of brick-work passing over the central window, and apparently providing for an extension in the manner of the aisle which had been added to the old church.

In the seventy-four years, however, which have elapsed since the completion of the church, ^{under the provision of the Act in 1860,} the only important alterations in its structure and arrangements have been the substitution of open seats for the square pews, and the raising of the nave. These were effected by the late Archdeacon Scavin in 1862.

Abraham Dawson, A.M.

Rector of Seagoe

May 23, 1890.