

Main Contractor

ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH



Passion and pride from QMAC Construction



HOMETOWN RESTORATION PROJECT SETS WIDE-RANGING CHALLENGES FOR DONAGHMORE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY...

Every heritage project exudes history, but few can claim a direct connection to the introduction of Christianity in Ireland.

That brought an obvious pressure for QMAC Construction during the restoration of St Patrick's Church in Donaghmore – and it was further enhanced by the fact that the company is based just outside the village.

St Patrick brought the Christian faith to the Donaghmore area around 450AD and it later became a monastic centre, as evidenced by the ancient High Cross in the village. It remained an important centre of Christianity, with work on the present St Patrick's Church completed in 1846, just as the Famine was beginning.

Various works have been carried out in the intervening years but this major restoration project, led by QMAC Construction, is one of the biggest undertakings. The result



is breathtaking, with QMAC's painstaking attention to detail evidenced throughout. Peter Quinn, Director of QMAC Construction, said, "We always strive to meet the highest possible standards and we are pleased with the way the team worked together to deliver an exceptional project at St Patrick's Church."

As Sean Mullen, Contracts Manager explained, the project tested the company's skills to the limit.

"Like all heritage projects, you are not really sure of what surprises you are going to face until you really get into it, and St Patrick's wasn't any different. In the end, such was the extent of our work, that the only original elements of the building that remain are the walls, but even these have been extensively restored and repaired." One of the major aspects of the work undertaken was the roof, which had been badly damaged by a bomb in the village during the Troubles.

"The bomb had lifted the whole roof up and set it off position, so we had to get it all realigned," added Sean. "As well as repairing the existing trusses, beams and wall plates, we installed 10 new queen post trusses and replaced all the rafters. This involved a lot of temporary works, including indoor scaffolding."

In addition to the roof, QMAC was also tasked with providing a solution to some of the additions that had been made to the rear of the church.

"We had to demolish the sacristy and the committee rooms which had been added to either side of the altar," Sean said. "They were not in keeping with the rest of the building and the decision was taken that it would be easier to remove them completely and start again, rather than patch up what was already there." This work included having to pile the foundations and involved moving the oil tank, which had actually been installed under the altar, to a newly constructed plant room to the rear of the building. The new plant room is the hub for a completely new heating system that incorporates trench heating in the main body of the church.

Internally, the flooring was completely renewed using ornate tiles and white oak. New pews have also been installed throughout the main body of the church and the balcony, where a newly restored organ is situated.

Despite all the new aspects to the church, QMAC has been able to retain the quintessential heritage of the building. The ornate and detailed High Altar, the reredos

and baldachino, as well as the ambo and the baptismal font were donated to the parish by the former Holy Rosary Church on the Ormeau Road in Belfast, while all the stained glass windows have been restored, including the main feature windows above the altar which were originally made by Mayer of Munich in 1895.

The stencil work on other ceiling panels reflects the colours in the aisle tiles which are a reproduction of an 1870s stencilling uncovered in a Dublin church. The Stations of the Cross originally came from a church in Belgium and have been repainted and repaired in contemporary colours.

The High Cross has also been reproduced in beautiful carvings on the front doors while, during the renovation work, two headstones were unearthed and re-erected, one on each side of the church entrance.

Yet despite the use of traditional methods and materials, the building also boasts modern technology, including a state-of-the-art AV system, new lighting and CCTV, all of which have been sensitively integrated into the traditional design of the church. From the new lease of life given to the external stonework to the ornate beauty of the altar, QMAC Construction has considered every minute detail to create a restoration project to be proud of.