**History of the Local Area**

**Scoil Naomh Mhuire**

The history of our school is an important consideration when designing a crest. You will find information about the history of the school under the About section on our website.

**Saint Benignus’s Church Staplestown**

The church of Saint Benignus in Staplestown is amongst the oldest in the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. The date of its construction cannot be fixed with certainty but there is evidence to show that it was in existence in 1750. At that time, it was a low, t-shaped structure and roofed with thatch.

Forty years later, it plays a part in the local history of the period relating to the Irish rebellion of 1798. The **Irish Rebellion of 1798**, was an uprising against [British](https://kids.kiddle.co/Kingdom_of_Great_Britain) [rule in Ireland](https://kids.kiddle.co/Kingdom_of_Ireland) lasting from May to September 1798. The United Irishmen, a republican revolutionary group were the main organising force behind the rebellion.

On the outbreak of the Rebellion, the Barracks at Prosperous was garrisoned by forty soldiers of the British cavalry. At 2 o’clock in the morning of May 24, 1798, the barracks was stormed by a strong body of United Irishmen. The attack was short and fierce. Almost all of the British soldiers were killed.

In an effort to get revenge, the chapel of Staplestown was burnt down the following day by British soldiers. The church was quickly rebuilt:

“If local tradition be true (and I believe it is) the interruption of religious service was of brief duration. When the Rebellion subsided, the work of restoration was quickly taken in hand. The walls were raised by three courses, and the thatched roof was replaced by slate.”

During the next thirty years the population of the Staplestown side of the Clane Parish increased so rapidly that the little church of 1750 proved hopelessly inadequate to hold all the mass goers. Not only was the church packed, but the congregation filled the Chapel yard, and overflowed out on to the road.

Between the years 1800 and 1830, the population of Ireland increased by over two million and the population of Staplestown also increased in line with this growth. In 1829, it was documented that the church at Staplestown had been "enlarged" with capacity being almost doubled and galleries (upstairs seating added on).

Accommodation had been more than doubled. Large additions had been made to the nave and transcepts, and each addition was provided with a spacious gallery, entered, at first, from outside, by a stone staircase.

Fast forward 200 years to 1939 and we have documentation to show that the then parish priest, Father Kehoe, was busy organising fundraisers to pay for work that needed to be carried out to ensure that the church was safe and sturdy.

Close on two hundred years of wind and weather, beetles in the woodwork of the roof, a devastating deadly fungus (merulius lachrimans) in the floors and woodwork of the windows, have left this venerable relic of Penal days, in a sorry plight indeed. Its reconstruction has obliged us to replace almost everything except the walls, and entailed an expenditure of well over two thousand pounds. We are now faced with a debt of over £1,200.

The above (in blue) are extracts from a letter written by Parish Priest Father Liam K Kehoe and printed in the Leinster Leader of April 22nd, 1939. He signs off by saying:

May I ask you for support? Help, no matter how small, will be gratefully appreciated.  
        L. J. KEHOE, P.P.,  
          Clane.  
Easter Sunday, 1939.

**P.P.** ― In connection with this appeal a Sweep on the Irish Derby is being promoted and tickets are obtainable at 1s. each. 1st. prize, £25; 2nd., £15; 3rd., £10; 4th., £5.

**An article from the Leinster Leader of 22 April 1939 on the reconstruction debt of Staplestown chapel. Re-typed by Chris Holzgräwe**

In more recent times, the church has been well looked after and we are lucky to be able to enjoy the beautiful church that stands today.

***Saint Kevin’s GAA Club***

This is a significant year in the history of our local GAA Club, Saint Kevin’s. The club is celebrating its 75th year in existence. The club plays a very important role in the lives of a lot of our students and so its history is worth considering when thinking about a design for a crest for our school. There is a Wikipedia page about Saint Kevin’s which you can find here:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Kevin%27s_GAA#:~:text=The%20club%20was%20founded%20in,to%20Saint%20Kevin%20of%20Glendalough.>

***Donadea Castle***

Donadea Forest Park is one of the most popular outdoor venues in both county Kildare and the west Dublin region. There is a very important history contained within the walls of this ancient demesne, which begins in the early history period and continues for almost two thousand years.

The original Tower was built by Sir Gerald Aylmer c1624. It was extensively damaged in 1641, rebuilt in 1773, and gothicised in 1827 by the architect Sir Richard Morrison.

After Caroline Aylmers death in 1935 the castle remained unoccupied and was de-roofed in the late 50’s. Adjacent to the castle is a 19th century four-storey tower. To the rear of the castle are some fine outbuildings including the remains of a walled garden.

You will find lots more information on the History of Donadea Castle here:

<https://seamuscullen.net/donadea.html>