

## ■ JUST A MEMORY ■ JUST A MEMORY ■ JUST A MEMORY ■

**I** ALWAYS knew that I was a related to him. My grandmother Margaret's maiden name was Gillooly and so for many years I thought he was her uncle. However, after researching the family tree, I found out that her father and her grandfather Gillooly lived in Stone Park, Roscommon whereas Lawrence was born in Gallows town just outside Roscommon town and so I eventually found out that this intelligent, ambitious yet humble man was her father's first cousin.

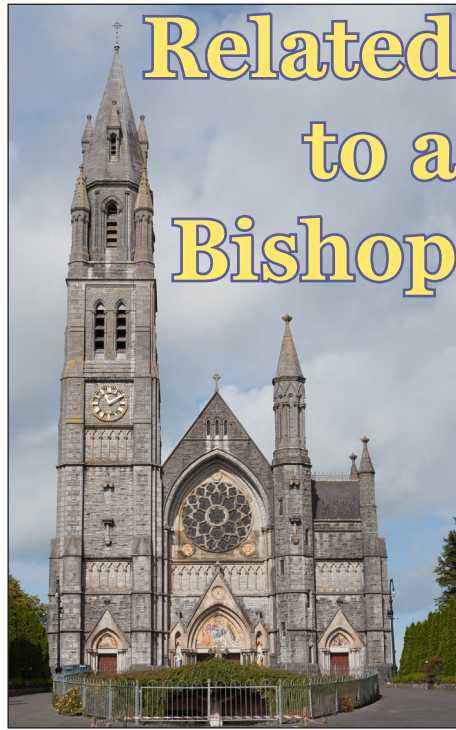
There were many things I didn't know about him until I started researching.

For over 50 years, I have walked through the main door of the Sacred Heart Church in Roscommon not realising that my ancestor, Bishop Laurence Gillooly, is to be seen holding a map on the tympanum, the triangular decorated mosaic which is to be viewed above that door. In fact, the Sacred Heart Church was built in his memory. Inside the church, a stain glass window situated between the confessional boxes and the statue of St. Therese of Lisieux shows a depiction of him in a stained-glass window and a mosaic.

I wanted to find out more about this man. It is thanks to the recent publication of a book called *Dictionary of Irish Biography* that I found about his wonderful achievements in the town of Athlone and Sligo during his prestigious career.

He was a fantastic administrator and a talented man who took on numerous tasks. It was he who instituted a system of regular clerical inspection of schools. I am very proud to say that he was the man who was responsible for the founding of Summerhill College in Athlone. And it was he appointed his older brother Timothy to be the first president of the college. His first cousin was also called Timothy. He was my grandmother's father.

While he was famously known as the Bishop of Elphin from 1856 until his death in 1895, he could have devoted his career to architecture or engineering for he took on the



The Sacred Heart Church, Roscommon, was built as a memorial to Bishop Laurence Gillooly.

By **EVELYN  
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brave and huge responsibility to oversee the construction of many churches, parochial residences, convents, schools and teachers' accommodation.

It was he who over saw the building of the present Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Sligo town. He even had an input into the design of the building despite having no qualifications in architecture.

From reading about this very hard-working man in the dictionary, I have come to believe that my ancestor was a man of no airs and graces. He was a bishop and was still willing to help out on a construction site and 'handle a wheel barrow' when he had so much other responsibilities.

Not only was he hardworking, he was humble and a man who wished to live a very simple life style. He refused to call his residence a palace instead referred to it a presbytery.

At his months' mind mass Bishop Francis McCormack of Galway (1837-1909) informed the congregation that he spent only one fifth of his income on his own personal needs. The rest of his money was given away to charities and to works going on in the diocese. Most of all he was a man of prayer spending hours in the evening in spiritual reading.

When I think of him, I think of my father Roger who had the same work ethic. A man who worked on the farm from the early hours of the morning, a man who built many of the buildings still to be seen on our farm today, a man who did not believe in wasting time. Like his ancestor before him he was out to achieve what he could in order to develop and run a successful farm to help support his family.

He was also a generous man who helped out not only own his family but also his neighbours and friends in their times of need. He was definitely a devout man too. My father never let an evening pass with praying the rosary with his young family. He was had great devotion to St. Padre Pio, receiving many healings through the saint's intercession.

In an article, describing the Ordination of Father Kevin Doran, the present bishop of Elphin, I was delighted to read that the bishops crozier is known as Gillooly's crozier. Bishop Doran remarked that the crozier was first used over 150 years ago by Bishop Lawrence Gillooly. He remarked that it was Bishop Gillooly who 'led a period of great renewal in the diocese of Elphin.'

Having found out that Bishop Lawrence was responsible for the building of the Sligo Cathedral, I now guessed he must be buried in the vicinity. It was Patrick Comerford's online description of the cathedral that led me to the exact spot of his burial. He is buried in the crypt beneath the baptistry which can be located at the rear of the main altar.

I can no longer say I don't know much about Bishop Gillooly. What I can say is that I very pleased that he is an ancestor of mine. ■