



Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh

The Parish of St. Patrick's

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The Dumbreck Pit Disaster

To the memory of those who died on the 30th January 1938

On the morning of Sunday 30th of January 1938 shortly before 12:00 noon in Kelly's section of the Dumbreck No.1 pit near Kilsyth a fire broke out as a result of an electrical fault caused partly by a rock fall, trapping and killing 9 men from Kilsyth and the surrounding villages of Queenzieburn, Twechar and Croy.



Those who died

Peter Byrne (58)

Joseph Campbell (59)

Harry Hagan (39)

Joseph Melvin Kelly jun. (30)

James Martin (38)

Joseph Martin (26)

Robert Martin (35)

Edward O'Neill (23)

Peter Walker (36)



The funerals of all of the men took place on the following Wednesday the 2nd February 1938 and the photographs above show the funeral procession of 7 of the men who were Catholics processing from St Patrick's Church through Market Street (left) and onto the cemetery via the Howe Road (right). The funerals of the other two men Joseph Kelly and Peter Walker who were Protestants, took place on the same day from their homes to their family burial plots.

Matt O'Neil in his book 'Dumbreck: a private inquiry' says: "In Kilsyth early on Tuesday evening, the coffins of the 7 Roman Catholic victims were taken to St Patrick's church to lie before the altar overnight. The processions made their way from the homes of the deceased, the coffins being carried by relays of men through the streets to the church in Low Craigends. A great many people followed behind each of the coffins. The bodies of James Martin from Croy and his brother Robert from Oueenzieburn were brought in by hearse.

On the Wednesday morning three Masses were held in St Patrick's church with the 10 o'clock service taken by Canon Macnamara, having by far the largest congregation. The funerals of the victims took place on Wednesday afternoon..."

The Kilsyth Chronicle published on Friday the 5th February 1938 said "...seven deep in parts it (the funeral procession) took nearly fifteen minutes to pass any given point. There were no conveyances in this mournful

procession - everybody walked. Neither were there any flowers. Many Catholic Clergy came behind Croy Parish Band, which led the procession... ...as well as the Provost and Magistrates. Mr Tom Cassells, MP was there.

It was expected that the funeral procession would start at 3:45 pm but it was well after 4pm before St Patrick's Church was left, so great was the throng which wished to accompany the cortege. The procession took almost an hour to complete the tragic journey, there being periodic stoppages for the changing of pallbearers. The majority of householders in the streets had drawn their blinds as a mark of respect and all places of business had ceased work.

Peter Walker's coffin was carried from Kirklands Crescent to the cemetery, the Salvation Army band accompanying. The main procession was so late that the graveside service, which was conducted by Mr James Reid, superintendent of the Westport Hall Sabbath School, was practically concluded before the arrival of the other corteges.

Joseph Kelly's remains were brought by hearse from Twechar, a short service having been conducted at the house by Rev. Gordon Ewan, Twechar Pipe Band and Kilsyth Burgh Band accompanying the march. At the graveside Rev. Ewan conducted a short service and the pipe band played the lament.

The seven Catholics were interred in one grave, while separate graves were used for the the burial of Joseph Kelly and Peter Walker. Thomas Martin who escaped the tragic fate of his comrades, was able to attend the funeral and even assisted in carrying one of the coffins.

All the local ministers, except Mr Kelt, who was far from home, were present. Canon Macnamara took the service in St Patrick's church and Rev. Father Dolan, Croy officiated at the graveside. Canon McManus, Stirling, was also present in the church. The Catholic clergy in the procession included Rev Fathers Harold and Kerr, Kilsyth, Fathers Dolan and O'Brien, Croy, Fathers Murray, McSparran and Littleton, formerly of Croy, Father Quill, Bonnybridge; Father McHugh, Falkirk and Father Wheelan, Lennoxtown.

The children from St Patrick's School, which was closed for the afternoon, chanted at the graveside as the coffins were lowered."

The Scotsman Newspaper on the 3rd of February 1938 said "Scottish Pit Disaster - Funeral of Victims at Kilsyth - The nine victims of the Dumbreck Colliery disaster were buried in Kilsyth Cemetery yesterday. Almost all the public works and places of business were closed for the afternoon. The coffins of the seven Roman Catholic victims were carried from St Patrick's Church to the graveside by miners and relatives, and were interred in one grave. Several thousand-people lined the funeral route. The funeral of the two Protestant victims, James Kelly, of Twechar, and Peter Walker, of Kilsyth, took place from their homes. A service which was held in St Patrick's Church was presided over by the Rev. Father Harold*, who descended the pit on Sunday evening, and administered the last rites. The funeral procession of the Roman Catholic victims was preceded by Croy Band. The mourners included relatives, Magistrates, and other members of the Town Council of Kilsyth miners' Union representatives, and mining officials."

*In fact, we know that it was Canon Macnamara who took the funeral service at St Patrick's and not as was misreported by The Scotsman, Fr Harold.

Fr Harold was at that time the Parish Priest of St Marie's in Kirkaldy in Fife but had returned to Kilsyth on the Sunday after hearing of the disaster. He had been the assistant priest in St Patrick's Kilsyth during the period 1923 to 1928 when a previous mining disaster had hit the town in July 1923. Then eight men had been killed and three injured in an explosion in the Gartshore no. 3 pit and he knew first hand of the trauma and emotion that another such tragedy could bring. So, it was Fr Harold who upon his arrival at the pit head was asked to don protective clothing and a hard hat and descend into the pit with the rescue workers to administer the last rites to the men who had by that time already been found dead, overcome by smoke.

The Dumbreck Pit Disaster Memorial Service 30th Jan 2010

To dedicate a new headstone for those who died

Click on any picture to see a larger image





















































Click on any picture to see a larger image



Rededication Memorial Service Kilsyth Cemetery 30th January 2010



In memory of all the men who died in the disaster at Dumbreck Colliery, Fit No.1 Queenzieburn, Kilsyth on the 30th January 1938

Order of Service Page 1

ORDER of SERVICE

Opening and Introduction by Neil McBride O'Neill

Historical background and reading of names by John Gordon, Kilsyth

Croy Male Voice Choir & Silver Band Hymn "Crimond"

> Rev. Robert Sloan Burns & Old Parish Church

Croy Male Voice Choir & Silver Band Hymn " Help Lord the souls" Belmont

> Rev Fr James Tracey St Patrick's Church

Mr Nicky Wilson, N.U.M.

Order of Service Page 2

Laying of wreaths with playing of The Last Post and Two Minutes Silence

Provost East Dunbarton

Provost North Lanarkshire

Followed by families, friends and organisations

Final Benediction L't Stephen Moir, Salvation Army

Croy Male Voice Choir & Silver Band "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide ..."

Vote of thanks and dismissal Neil O'Neill The organisers invite you to
Croy Miners Welfare & Community Centre
for Tea, Coffee and Finger Buffet
at the end of this ceremony

Acknowledgements
Scottish Miners' Welfare Fund
Ken Wilson, Land Services, North Lanarkshire
Croy Miners' Welfare Charitable Society
Croy Male Voice Choir
Croy Silver Band
The many other individuals who have helped with the organisation of this Memorial Event

Leaflets and Invitations designed and printed by Croy Historical Society Croy Miners' Welfare & Community Centre

Order of Service Page 3

Order of Service Page 4

Key to the Photo of the priests in the cortege in the Market St Kilsyth

