

Medieval Mungret (400 - 1169 AD)

The name Mungret is derived from the old Irish *mong ghairid* which translates as 'short swamp' or morass, in reference to the marshy land around Mungret. The town of Mungret was located on the *Slighe Dhala* or *Slighe Dhala Meic Umhoir* which was the road connecting west Munster to Tara, the ancient seat of the High Kings of Ireland. An ancient abbey is believed to have been erected in Mungret in the fourth century, predating the coming of St. Patrick to Ireland. St. Nessian was appointed prior of the monastery in Mungret by St. Patrick in the fifth century.

Mungret Monastery

The monastery became a thriving centre of worship and learning up to the twelfth century at which stage the monastery went into decline owing to the reform of the Irish Church. At its peak the monastery accommodated monks, clerics, nuns, scholars, lay people, pilgrims and visitors. Around 1,500 monks lived in the settlement, worshipping in six churches. The monastery was raided by Viking warriors at various stages throughout the ninth century. The churches were damaged by fire in 1080, and the entire complex was destroyed in 1088 by Donal MacLoughlin the ruling Gaelic king of Ulster.



Mungret Abbey

The abbey was built between 1251 and 1272, and is the largest of the three churches on the monastic site. The abbey was used for Protestant worship and operated as a parish church until 1882.

The graveyards surrounding the churches are still in use today. The present day section is located near the left of the abbey ruin. The Jesuits who worked in Mungret College are buried in their own section. The oldest part of the graveyard surrounds Mungret Abbey. The oldest grave is from 1756.

St Nessian's Church and the Inner Sanctum

The ruins of two of the churches remain standing today. One of these churches is dedicated to St. Nessian who was also known as St. Nessian the Deacon or Nessian the Leper. The oldest and smallest church on the site lies south of St. Nessian's. Both structures have undergone renovation over the years. It is believed that the two churches may have formed the inner sanctum of the monastic complex. St. Nessian's feast day is 25 July, he died in 551.

