

## St. Tola

Abbot and Bishop

Feast Day March 30

St. Tola's father was Dunchad, son to Ernin, son of Garuan, according to the Psalter and Calendar of Cashel. St. Tola came from the race of Kien, son to Olild Olum, and he descended from the illustrious Galengi family from Gallen, which comprised a great part of County Carlow and Kildare with some of the Laois County.



He was born, after the middle of the seventh century. For many years led the life of a hermit, at a place called Disert Tola, in the parish of Killoolagh, barony of Delvin, in the county of Westmeath. Here, he lived a hermitical life, and built a monastery, in the eighth century. He was Abbot to those who were attracted to his sanctity.



Dysert O'Dea Abbey, St Tola's Church, was originally the site of the 8th century hermitage church of St Tóla. This monastic site was extensively rebuilt in the 12th and 17th century. The fine three-light east window in the ruins of Dysert O'Dea Abbey. By the church is the 11th century round tower blasted by the guns of Cromwell's army! It was built as a belfry and a refuge for monks and their valuable books and treasures. It may have been one of Ireland's tallest round towers at ~100 ft (33m)?

Later, St. Tola was called to preside over Clonard, County Meath until his death at the assumed date of March 30, 737 AD.

A miracle, which took place, in the year 1034, is ascribed to the merits of St. Tola. Coirten Ua Maebuain, Lord of Dealbhna, was killed by some of his clansmen, on the threshold of Disert Tola church. In punishment for this sacrilegious and unnatural murder, the perpetrator of the crime was killed the very same hour he perpetrated the treacherous act.



St. Tola's High Cross is a magnificent 12th century piece of stone carving. The east face depicts a stylised crucifixion on the cross head with the figure of a bishop below.

