



The Temporary Roof of the Cathedral

■ JACKIE HUGHES

In the aftermath of the Cathedral fire, among the early emergency works to be undertaken was the installation of the temporary roof. This work was carried out by Frank and Dolores Kiernan, of Kiernan Steel Fabrications. They placed other work on hold to commence fitting the temporary roof on the hull of the burnt-out Cathedral.

We watched each day as their youthful agile work team scaled the very high scorched walls a few weeks after the burning of the building to fit Lego-like pieces of steel. Steel manufactured in their factory on the outskirts of Longford town at Carriglass now spans the immense interior space to support the corrugated roof cladding.

The cladding has been well tested by the record snow-falls and freeze-up of 2010/11 and some continuous spells of wet weather during the summer into the autumn and winter months of this past year. This cladding will have some years to serve before the building is restored to its former glory and the new Cathedral roof is fitted.

It was only when the Cathedral was opened to us, the public, one Sunday in September that it was fully appreciated the great value of the temporary roof and how snugly the building looked, though highly scarred like a 'war zone' by the great fire. This temporary roof will be a great comfort to the workforce under its great shelter as they display their various special skills required for the restoration, during the coming years.

Frank Kiernan supplied the following technical information.

In early February 2010 KSSL Ltd completed a survey of the existing walls and spire for dimensions to detail steel support fabrication drawing by our Draughtsman Francis Scriven.

Fabrication commenced on all the roof steel in the KSSL factory in Carriglass, Longford and was transported from our factory to Longford on to the Cathedral site.

Two large mobile cranes were utilised to erect this steel. One crane was used to lift our steel erectors in safety cradles while the other crane was used to lift the steel sections and roof purlins into place. Our erectors then bolted the steel within the 2mm tolerance that is allowed for structural steel.

Internally the horizontal steel was required to brace the external walls to the internal walls which were fixed to the old brickwork by chemical mortar fixings. Steel was required in all arches between the large limestone columns - as they were badly damaged in the fire; with large internal cracks showing up in the X-ray surveys.

The next phase of KSSL work was the fitting of the cladding on the thirty degree roof. Safety netting was fixed on the underside of the steel to provide safety for the cladders. A 1.5m high edge - protection was erected around the perimeter of the roof and using crawler boards on the roof purlins, we fixed our cladding, produced by C.P.F.Ltd in Longford.

The Cathedral roof extends 0.600m out by the existing external walls to allow for air circulation to keep the building dry and damp free. The steel and cladding around the spire was complicated and took experience and patience to make it water tight.

The above project is indeed a high profile and complex one, but all personnel in Kiernan Structural Steel Ltd are very proud of being involved in this historic and prestigious Cathedral.

We look forward to the official opening of St. Mel's Cathedral circa Christmas 2014 D.V.

We cannot list all KSSL workers involved in this project as there would be over 75 names but the majority hail from Longford town and county.

