

A VISITORS GUIDE TO MOUNT SAINT LAWRENCE CEMETERY



LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL
COMHAIRTE CATHRACH LUIMNIGH



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Limerick County Council





INTRODUCTION

Mount Saint Lawrence Cemetery, Limerick City is one of the five largest cemeteries in the Republic of Ireland, with an area of sixteen acres.

70,000 people are buried there, with another 5,500 in the Extension.

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HISTORY

Before 1800, most burials took place in 'graveyards' or 'churchyards' located in or near the local church. By the middle of the 1800s, graveyards all over Europe were becoming overcrowded which led to the establishment of cemeteries, large purpose-built burial grounds laid out like a park.

In Limerick, the old churchyards had become overcrowded, creating the need for a cemetery. In 1849, Mount St Lawrence Cemetery was opened in the Institutional Quarter – the Medieval Parish of St. Lawrence where Limerick Prison and Mental Hospital were already situated. An Extension adjoining the Cemetery was opened in 1960.

Mount Saint Lawrence was administered by the Catholic Diocese of Limerick from 1855 to 1979, when it was transferred to the management of Limerick Corporation (now Limerick City and County Council). It is currently administered by Limerick City and County Council's Environment Department.

LOCATING A GRAVE

Burial plots may be located using a geographic coordinate system similar to latitude and longitude. As you enter the Cemetery, the Railway Boundary Line is at the top facing you and the St. Joseph's Hospital Boundary Wall is on the right. These boundaries are used to locate individual places of burial. Numerical lines run from the Railway Boundary Line towards the main entrance wall while alphabetical lines run from the Hospital Boundary Wall to the opposite side. In the case of the latter, there are four lines for each letter: A, Aa, Ab and Ac as far as Zc, followed by AA, AAa, AAb and AAc as far as EE. The intersection of these lines determines the approximate location of a grave. The records of the Cemetery are kept in Limerick City Archives and are available online at www.limerickcity.ie/archives.



INSTITUTIONAL PLOTS

Mount Saint Lawrence contains plots reserved for particular groups, including religious and diocesan graves and the Republican plot.

GOOD SHEPHERD PLOT

LOCATION: 79:X - 87:W.

One of the largest is the Good Shepherd Plot where 241 women who had passed through its reformatory for girls, industrial school and magdalene asylum on Clare Street were buried. They were unmarked until a campaign resulted in the erection of markers listing by name the women interred there.

REPUBLICAN PLOT

LOCATION 201:KA.

Established in 1921, it contains the graves of leading Limerick Republican activists, including;

George (Seirse) Clancy (1881-1921)

Joycean character and murdered Mayor; close friend of James Joyce, who immortalised him as Davin in the Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man; Mayor of Limerick murdered by the Black and Tans on 6 March 1921.

Kate O'Callaghan (1885-1961)

Anti-Treaty TD (1921-23), wife of Michael O'Callaghan, (1879-1921) imprisoned in Kilmainham jail during the Civil War, where she went on hunger strike.



Republican Plot

Michael O'Callaghan (1879-1921)

Mayor of Limerick (1920-21) murdered by the Black and Tans on 6 March 1921.

Maire O'Donovan (1876-1961)

Acting Mayor of Limerick (1921-22), first female to act as Mayor of the City, sister of Kate O'Callaghan.

Sean South (1928-57) Location 209:Ka.

IRA activist, killed on 1 January 1957 while taking part in an IRA attack on the RUC barracks at Brookeborough, Co. Fermanagh, commemorated in balled 'Sean South of Garryowen'.

Sean Wall (1882-1921)

Leading member of the IRA, Chairman of Limerick County Council (1920-21), killed by the Black and Tans at Newtown, Annacarty, Co. Tipperary on 6 May 1921.

FAMOUS EVENTS IN THE CEMETERY

1849 Official opening and blessing of the Cemetery

Mount St Lawrence Cemetery was officially opened by Dr John Ryan, Catholic Bishop of Limerick on 29th of March 1849.

1855 First Burial

Due to prolonged but unsuccessful attempts to make Mount St. Lawrence available to both Catholics and Protestants, six years elapsed between the official opening and first interment. The first recorded burial is Ellen Sharkey, aged 53 buried 14th March 1855 at 90 Ra. Her address is not recorded.

1869 Opening of Mortuary Chapel

Designed by the English Catholic architect George Goldie, the Mortuary Chapel contains beautiful mosaics. Several priests are buried underneath it. This Chapel is currently not available for public access as it requires renovation works.

1887 Unveiling of the Manchester Martyrs Memorial

On 9 December 1887, the Manchester Martyrs Memorial was unveiled in Mount St Lawrence by Dr. McNerney of New York commemorating three Irish Republican Brotherhood members executed for the accidental shooting of a police officer in Manchester in 1867.



Manchester Martyrs Memorial

1919 Funeral of Bobby Byrne, first IRA member to die in the War of Independence

On 10th April 1919, the remains of Bobby Byrne were taken from St. John's Cathedral in a huge procession to Mount St Lawrence for burial there in the presence of a large crowd. His death sparked off the Limerick Soviet, an internationally renowned general strike in the City that lasted for a fortnight (14–27 April 1919).

1921 Funeral of murdered Mayors O'Callaghan and Clancy and Joseph O'Donoghue

On 10th March 1921, the bodies of the three victims of the 'Curfew Murders', believed to be carried out by the Black and Tans were brought to Mount St Lawrence for burial there in the presence of a huge crowd. They were active in the fight for freedom during the War of Independence and were the first to be buried in the newly opened Republican Plot.

1934 Blessing of the High Cross in the Republican Plot

On 18th March 1934, a crowd of around 2,000 attended the blessing of the newly erected high cross in the Republican Plot. It was designed by Oliver Sheppard who also designed the 'Dying Cuchulainn' statue in Dublin's GPO.

1957 Funeral of Sean South

On 5 January 1957, Sean South's vast funeral cortege of 50,000 marched in silence to Mount St Lawrence for burial in the Republican Plot.

1997 Funeral of Jim Kemmy

On 30 September 1997, a large crowd of 5,000 attended the funeral of Jim Kemmy TD, who was interred in Mount St Lawrence following a moving non-religious graveside ceremony.



CEMETERY/FUNERARY ART



Mortuary Chapel

Mount Saint Lawrence Cemetery is a huge outdoor gallery of funerary art including the Mortuary Chapel, the Manchester Martyrs Memorial and 7,800 grave-markers. There are four styles in Irish funerary art in Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery: Neo-Classical, Neo-Gothic, Neo-Celtic and Modern.

Neo-Classical Style

Inspired by Ancient Greece, Rome and sometimes Egypt, this style used columns, obelisks, pediments, urns, and draperies.

Neo-Gothic Style

Inspired by Medieval Europe, this style made extensive use of pointed arches, steeply pitched roofs, pinnacles and profuse decoration.

Neo-Celtic Style

Inspired by pre-Norman Ireland, this style is synonymous with the high or 'Celtic' cross which became the most widespread grave-marker in Irish Catholic burial grounds from the 1860s onwards.

Modern or Modernist Style

This style is much simpler and more functional than the older ones, although many modern grave-markers continued to use traditional features such as the Celtic cross.



TYPES OF GRAVE-MARKERS



CELTIC CROSS



CALVARY CROSS



HEADSTONE



PEDESTAL TOMB



Also known as monuments or memorials, grave-markers are used to mark individual graves and come in many different forms.



SLAB OR LEDGER



MILITARY TABLET



MAUSOLEUM



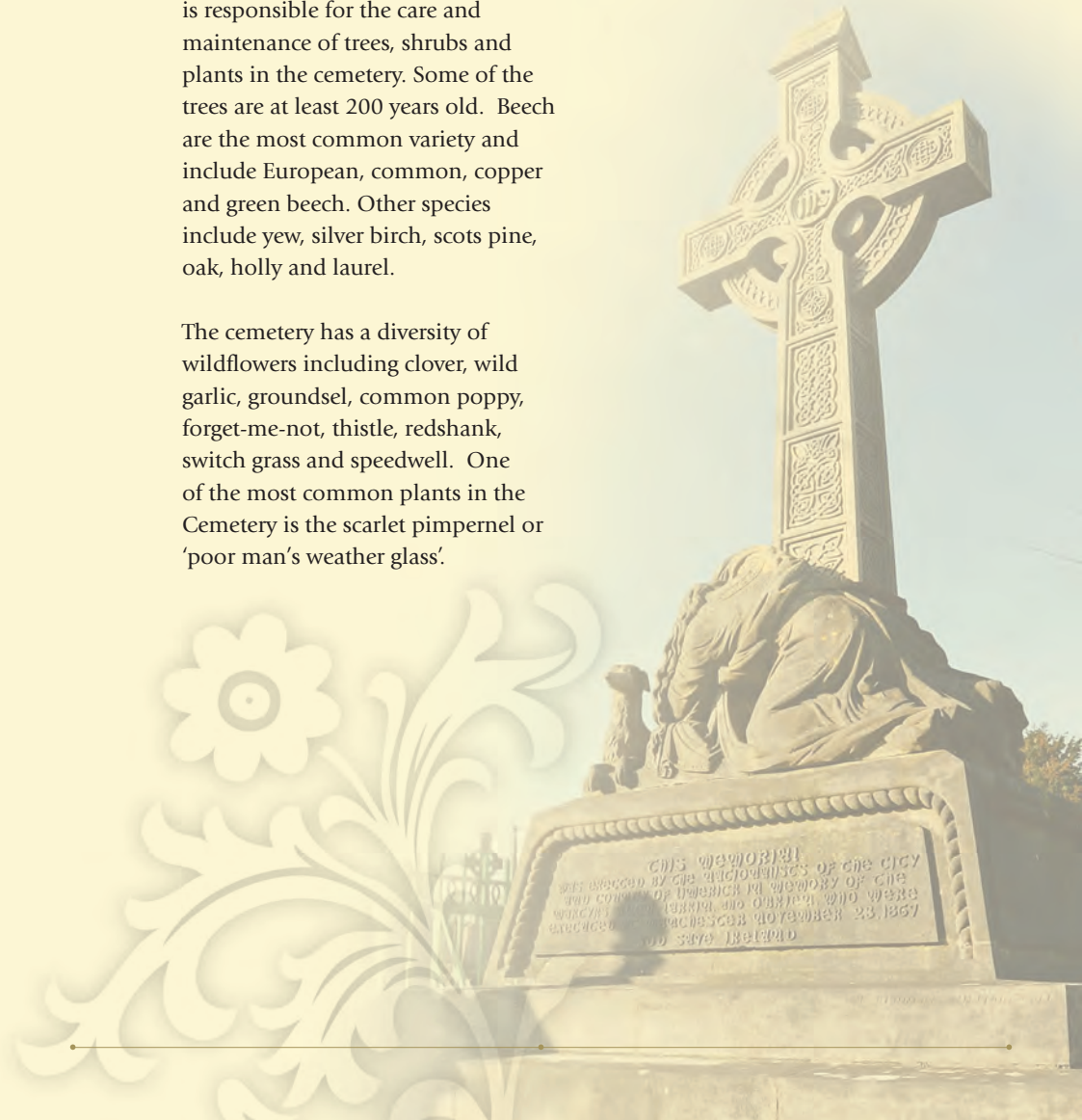
VAULT



TREES AND FLOWERS IN MOUNT SAINT LAWRENCE

The Environment Department is responsible for the care and maintenance of trees, shrubs and plants in the cemetery. Some of the trees are at least 200 years old. Beech are the most common variety and include European, common, copper and green beech. Other species include yew, silver birch, scots pine, oak, holly and laurel.

The cemetery has a diversity of wildflowers including clover, wild garlic, groundsel, common poppy, forget-me-not, thistle, redshank, switch grass and speedwell. One of the most common plants in the Cemetery is the scarlet pimpernel or 'poor man's weather glass'.





Disclaimer

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