

The HMAC is a Cork County Council Committee consisting of a range of external members, elected representatives and the relevant in-house staff. The HMAC is keen to promote an appreciation of the historic attributes of County Cork and this leaflet is one of a series that gives practical advice and information regarding the County's architectural and archaeological heritage.

There may be potential sources of funding from time to time, please contact the Heritage Unit for advice in this regard.



Useful Contacts

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Heritage Unit
021 427 6891 | Cork County Council, Floor 3,
County Hall, Cork
https://www.corkcoco.ie/arts-heritage |
| National Monuments Service
01 888 2169 | Department of Culture, Heritage
and the Gaeltacht,
Customs House, Dublin 1.
www.archaeology.ie |
| The Heritage Council
056 777 0777 | Church Lane, Kilkenny.
www.heritagecouncil.ie |

Masonry Walls & Conservation Works

Historic graveyards often contain the remains of a church and are enclosed by stone walls. Never remove vegetation from any of the masonry walls as it is often all that is holding the structure together. This should be done only when a proper conservation plan has been prepared by a qualified expert and approved of by the Heritage Unit and the National Monuments Service. See HMAC *Care of Historic Stone Walls* Heritage Guide.



Do

- > Where walls are covered in vegetation, following consultation with the Heritage Unit of Cork County Council, some light pruning of vegetation can be carried out on the masonry walls.
- > Designate any temporary dump sites discreetly away from monuments/memorials/church.
- > Where removal of vegetation within graveyard reveals architectural and structural fragments, leave *in situ* & contact the Heritage Unit of Cork County Council, immediately.
- > Get expert conservation advice where necessary.

Do Not

- > pull ivy/vegetation off masonry walls.
- > clean moss from wall joints.
- > carry out conservation works on masonry walls without permission from Cork County Council and the National Monuments Service.
- > dig graves near walls.
- > use concrete on historic masonry walls.

Legal Status

Nearly all historic graveyards are designated Recorded Monuments (RMP) and are subject to statutory protection under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Under this legislation any works, outside routine maintenance, requires two months written notification to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Furthermore, where a monument is in Local Authority ownership, under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004, any works may require Ministerial Consent. Cork County Council and the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht can advise in this regard.

Graveyards may be subject to other status designations. It is advised you seek clarification from your Local Authority.



Planning

It is strongly recommended that a plan is prepared prior to commencement of works.

The plan should include:

- Location
- Legal status
- Monument Ref No.
- Survey of the graveyard,
- Provide information on the historical context which should include a review of historical sources, historical maps and local information
- Photographic record where necessary
- Determine a program of works according to best practice:
 - > *Plan of graveyard identifying proposed works*
 - > *Tools and material to be used*
 - > *Methodology*
 - > *Time frame*
 - > *Team Members*

Care of Historic
Graveyards

Introduction

Historic graveyards have been an important part of community life in Cork for centuries, providing a resting place for the dead in consecrated church grounds. Generally, historic graveyards are associated with long-established parish churches.

A graveyard is generally as old as the first church on site. Many graveyards in Cork contain the ruins or 'site of' a medieval church, dating to the 14th/15th/16th centuries. A few graveyards contain a site of a church that dates back over a thousand years. Following the Reformation, churches and graveyards were transferred to the Established Church i.e. Church of Ireland. Catholic churchyards tend not to have ancient burials as most were built on new ground following Catholic Emancipation in 1829. The boundary wall usually dates to the 17th/18th century when many of the graveyards were enclosed.

Although the majority of graveyards in the county are the responsibility of Cork County Council, local interest in their care and maintenance is greatly valued by the Council, particularly when it comes from community groups. This guide has been prepared by the Historic Monuments Advisory Committee of Cork County Council to assist groups in the appropriate care and maintenance of their local graveyard.

Grave markers/headstones and family owned plots only became popular from the 18th century onwards. Therefore, counting headstones will not provide the answer. An average parish graveyard could contain up to 10,000 people if used over a thousand years.

Maintenance

Maintenance is key to keeping a graveyard in good condition while retaining its unique heritage and natural ambience. Graveyards are not only sacred places; they are also an important wildlife sanctuary providing a safe habitat for a wide range of flora and fauna. Maintenance involves the appropriate cutting of grass, removal of surface debris and clearing back of overgrown vegetation. It does not mean straightening headstones, cutting down trees, cleaning walls, removal of heavy vegetation from masonry walls and replacing old gates unnecessarily. The following is a summary guide to the recommended procedure for graveyard maintenance. For further Information see "Guidance for the Care, Conservation and Recording of Historic Graveyards" Heritage Council.



Do

- > Get permission from the owner prior to works. Where the graveyard is in Local Authority ownership, permission from the Local Area Engineer is required.
- > Ensure that appropriate Health & Safety Procedure is complied with to the satisfaction of the Local Authority.
- > Establish legal status and requirements – the National Monuments Service website (www.archaeology.ie) provides a description and reference number for each archaeological site.
- > Prepare a long-term plan in accordance with best practice, outlining the programme of works. The Heritage Unit can provide advice in the preparation of the plan.
- > Clear the site using hand tools only, such as hand trimmer, scythe, strimmer etc.
- > Leave all hummocks and surface undulations as they may mark earlier graves or hidden archaeological features.
- > Retain healthy trees and native hedgerows as much as possible. Graveyards are refuges for native flora and fauna, so minimal intervention is best practice.
- > Maintain existing pathways using gravel, small stones and grit. Where necessary, one can raise the path slightly with introduced soil. A pathway can also be created by cutting grass
- > Where appropriate, contact the local ranger from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (www.npws.ie).
- > A survey of the graveyard is an invaluable resource and is encouraged. Some training programmes are available.
- > Maintain and repair rather than replace.



Do Not

- > Do not start without contacting and getting written permission from Cork County Council (Municipal District Area Engineer & Heritage Unit). If the site is not in Council care, you must contact the owner to seek permission.
- > Do not attempt unlicensed excavation as it is illegal (this includes removal of rubble from collapsed walls, pulling up of roots, planting trees, digging drains/ducts/paths etc.).
- > Do not use any machinery to clear or level the site or gain access to graves.
- > Do not uproot trees, plants or gravestones.
- > Do not pull ivy off masonry walls or fragile headstones/vaults or uproot saplings.
- > Do not clean vegetation from wall joints unnecessarily.
- > Do not use weed killer - targeted weed killing may be used occasionally but is not encouraged.
- > Do not burn rubbish on site.*
- > Do not use the church as a temporary rubbish site.
- > Do not use metal detectors on site - it is illegal.
- > Do not plant new trees or plants (including wild flowers) without expert advice.
- > Do not burn off vegetation.
- > Do not clear vegetation during the bird nesting season (end of February – end of August).
- > Do not use abrasive tools to clean headstones such as wire brushes, disc cutters or sandblasters.
- > Do not strim up against headstones or grave markers.
- > Do not apply paint to gravestone inscriptions- work like this will require specialist advice to avoid damaging the stone.
- > Do not straighten headstones.
- > Do not remove gravestones including low uninscribed grave markers that may be loose. Where safety is an issue, any works shall be agreed in advance with Cork County Council.

**Under the Waste Management Act 1996 (as amended), it is an offence to dispose of waste in a manner which causes or is likely to cause environmental pollution.*