

Masonry Walls & Conservation Works

Never remove vegetation from any of the masonry walls as it is often all that is holding the structure together. This should only be done when a proper conservation plan has been prepared by a qualified expert and approved of by the Heritage Unit and the National Monuments Service.

Do:

- ✓ Following consultation with the Cork County Council, in certain circumstances, some light pruning of the ivy/vegetation can be carried out on the masonry walls.
- ✓ Designate any temporary dump sites discreetly away from monuments/memorials/church.
- ✓ Where removal of vegetation reveals architectural and structural fragments, leave in situ & contact the Heritage Unit immediately.

Do Not:

- ✗ Do not pull ivy/vegetation off masonry walls
- ✗ Do not clean moss from wall joints.
- ✗ Do not carry out conservation works on masonry walls without permission from Cork County Council and the National Monuments Service
- ✗ Do not dig graves near walls
- ✗ Do not level off pathways or make new paths
- ✗ Do not use graveslabs for paving

Useful Contacts

Heritage Unit
Cork County Council, Floor 3,
County Hall, Cork
021 4276891
www.corkcoco.ie/heritage

Cemeteries Section (West Cork)
Cork County Council
The Courthouse
Skibbereen, Co. Cork
028 21299

Cemeteries Section (North Cork)
Cork County Council
Annabella, Mallow,
Co. Cork
022 30427

Cemeteries Section (South Cork)
Cork County Council,
Divisional Services South, Floor 5,
County Hall, Cork
021 4285126

National Monuments Service
Department of Arts, Heritage
and The Gaeltacht,
Customs House, Dublin 1.
01 888 2000
www.archaeology.ie

The Heritage Council
Church Lane,
Kilkenny.
056 777 0777
www.heritagecouncil.ie

Further Information

- *Archaeological Inventories of County Cork, Volume 1-5.* Available in your local library. See also www.archaeology.ie
- 'Guidance for the Care, Conservation and Recording of Historic Graveyards' Available at www.heritagecouncil.ie
- 'Care and Conservation of Graveyards', 'Ruins: The Conservation and Repair of Masonry Ruins' and 'Iron - The Repair of Wrought and Cast Ironwork' all available at www.ahg.gov.ie
- This leaflet, along with additional information, is available online at www.corkcoco.ie/heritage. Also have a look at www.itsabouttime.ie

Some Frequently Asked Questions

How old is the church and the graveyard?

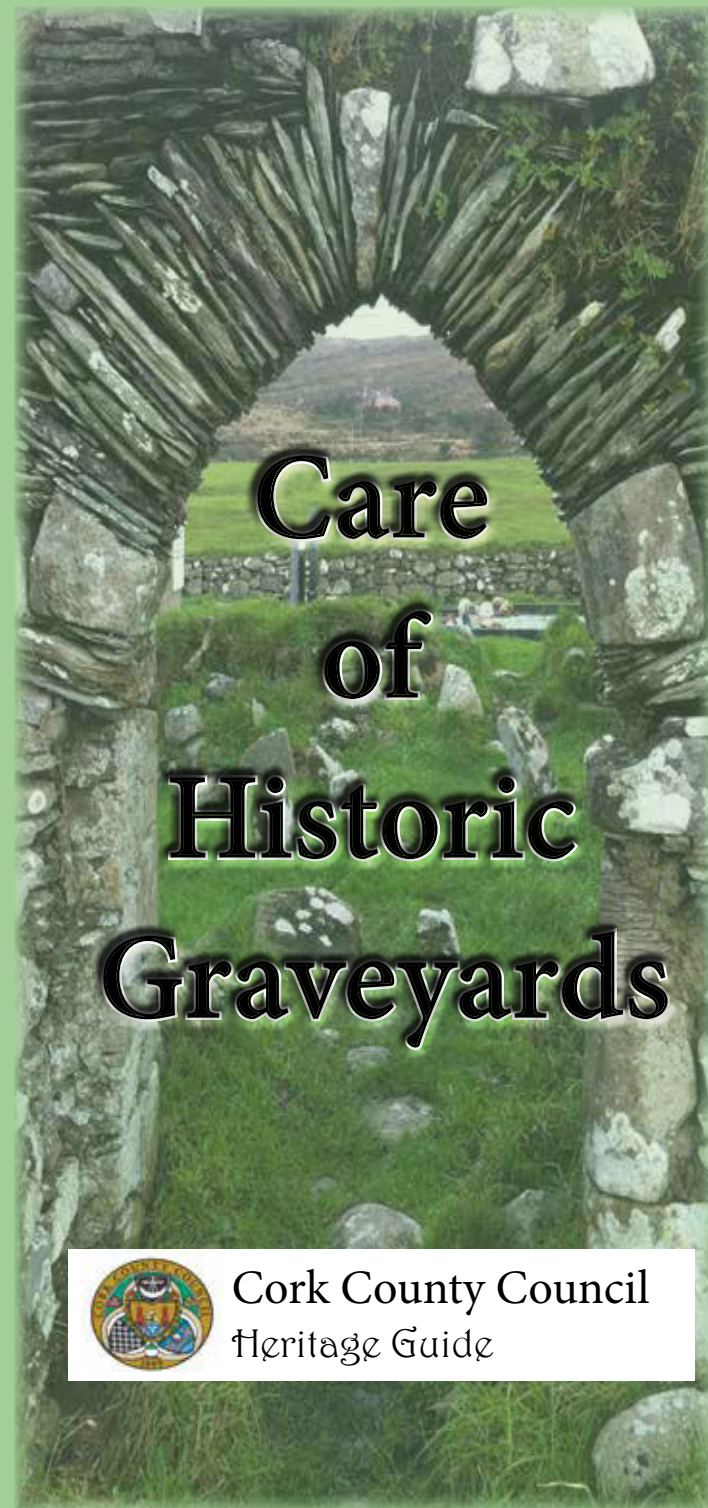
A graveyard is generally as old as the first church on site. Many graveyards in Cork contain the ruins or 'site of' a medieval church, dating to 14th/15th/16th century. A few graveyards even contain a site of a church that dates back to over a thousand years ago. Following the Reformation, churches and graveyards were transferred to the Established Church i.e. Church of Ireland. In some instances, the existing medieval church was replaced or rebuilt as an 18th/19th century Church of Ireland church. Catholic churchyards tend not to have ancient burials as most were built on new ground following Catholic Emancipation in 1827.

How many people are buried in the graveyard?

Grave markers/headstones and family owned plots only become popular from 18th century onwards. Prior to this, the location was not significantly marked. 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!

Where did they all fit?

Over the centuries, the same area was used for burial repeatedly within consecrated grounds, slowly building up the ground levels. The favoured location for burial was firstly inside the church, if not there then immediately to the south of the church. As burials became more numerous they extended to the east and west, the north side of the church only used when no other option left. Traditionally, burials are orientated east west with the memorial facing east, which is considered to be towards the direction of the risen Christ on the day of Redemption.



Cork County Council
Heritage Guide

Introduction

Historic graveyards have been an important part of community life for centuries, providing a peaceful and spiritual resting place for the dead on holy consecrated church grounds. Generally, historic graveyards are deemed to be those that pre date the early 20th century and are usually associated with historic churches. Although the majority of graveyards in County Cork are formally the responsibility of Cork County Council, local interest in the care and maintenance of the graveyard is welcomed and valued by the Council, particularly from community groups. This guide has been prepared by Cork County Council to outline how local groups can participate in the care of their local graveyard through appropriate maintenance and conservation.

Legal Status of Historic Graveyards

Nearly all historic graveyards are designated Recorded Monuments 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 notice to be given to the Minister of the Department of Arts, Heritage & 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 Monument Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht can advise in this regard.



Maintenance

Maintenance of the graveyard means removal of surface debris and clearing back vegetation. This does not mean the removal of any vegetation from masonry structures. The following list outlines the do's and don'ts of graveyard maintenance.

Do:

- ✓ Check both the ownership and legal status & requirements of the graveyard. Where the site is in the Council's ownership, it is strongly advised before any work occurs that a general programme of works is agreed in advance with Cork County Council (Cemeteries Section & Heritage Unit).
- ✓ Where the graveyard is not in Council care, you must seek the owner's permission prior to works beginning. In any case, regardless of ownership rights, the Heritage Unit is always happy to provide advice on historic graveyard works.
- ✓ Check www.archaeology.ie for site details (including ID no.)
- ✓ Write out a plan outlining the programme of works.
- ✓ Clear the site using only hand tools, such as hand trimmer, scythe, strimmer
- ✓ Leave all hummocks and surface undulations as they are, 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, you can raise the path slightly with introduced soil. A pathway can also be created by mowing one through grass
- ✓ Where appropriate, contact the local wildlife ranger from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (www.npws.ie)
- ✓ Prepare an ongoing management plan
- ✓ A survey of the graveyard is an invaluable resource and is encouraged. Some training programmes are available through your local Leader group.

Do Not:

- ✗ Do not start without contacting and getting approval from Cork County Council (Cemeteries Section & Heritage Unit). If the site is not in Council care, you must contact the owner to seek approval.
- ✗ Do not attempt unlicensed excavation as it is illegal (this includes removal of rubble from collapsed walls, pulling up of roots, planting trees, digging drain/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 moss from wall joints.
- ✗ Do not, in general, use weed killer - targeted weed killing may be used occasionally but is not encouraged.
- ✗ Do not burn rubbish on site, close to buildings or memorials*
- ✗ Do not use church as 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 (March - September).
- ✗ Do not use wire blaster or sandblasters to clean headstones.
- ✗ 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, especially 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. Contact the Environment Section of Cork County Council for further advice.