One of the earliest medieval references to the 6th century churchyard at Killalee is contained in the *Black Book of Limerick*, in which it is described as one of the boundaries of Singland. In his history of Limerick, *Stair Aos Tri Muighe*, the Limerick historian and scholar, Gearóid Mac Spealain, emphasises the importance of this reference, as it sets out how Singland came into the possession of the Dean and Chapter of St. Mary's Cathedral.

Prior to his return to England in 1185 from Ardfinnan, Prince John granted certain "gifts" to his friends in the Limerick area. Amongst these was a grant to the Dean and Chapter of St. Mary's Cathedral who worship God there in perpetuity. These ploughlands were described as "four seisreachs or ploughlands near Singland." These ploughlands connected the swamps on either side, but in an earlier day there was need for the ford of stepping stones that gave Clochan its memorable name, Killalee adjoins Clochan, and the causeway was also the 'church ford' - the Aghkillfellin of the deed of 1597. The document gives us the initial F of the saint's name, an F ignored in pronunciation and consequently omitted in spelling. A document four hundred years earlier [1185 supra] and never hitherto examined confirms the spelling and cites the boundary as the 'ford of Fielim.' Very probably we have here the church of St. Feiliinth [or Feidhlim] whom the Genealogiae Sanctorum and the Dal Cais pedigree agree in describing as a pious lady of the line of Cartheaen.

Residents of the area and others interested in its history, toponomy and topography are indebted to Monsignor Moloney, their parish priest, for his treatise on this subject. The stream that carries flows under the precincts of the present A1 Bar from the bog on the other side of the Dublin Road - Monamuck - to its junction with the canal at the lock near Dan Troy's old home there. Diagonally opposite the A1 Bar there was an old stile beside an iron gate up to the 1950s which was the entry to the old raised boreen and causeway which led to Killalee graveyard and through which the funerals passed at the side of Sweyny's garage.

As someone who grew up in Killalee from the 1930s to the 1950s it is a cause of profound sorrow to see the cemetery fall into such disrepair. In my youth the grass was cut regularly by a member of the Anslow family, who are still resident in Pennyswell. There were still some quite respectable gravestones in good order and as young children we were aware that, occasionally, the bodies of new-born babies were found unburied there. I do not know if they were stillborn or died from other causes.

The late Kevin Hannan in his work *Limerick Historical Reflections* tells us that in the cholera epidemics of the 1830s, '40s and '50s, there were as many as fifteen funerals a day to the cemetery from the nearby St. John's Hospital and as many more to St. Patrick's. He cites a *Limerick Chronicle* report in the Summer of 1849 of two boys who were 'bringing ten corpses a day to Killalee graveyard and as they were unable to bury them, the starving dogs were devouring them.' He goes on to refer to the arrest by Constable Nash of a woman in the Irishtown named Mary Tuohy while 'she was selling 1 cwt. of bones which she had removed from the Burial Ground of Killalee.'

A Viking Connection?

While, mercifully, there are no such sordid interferences now with our ancestors who sleep there, the old graveyard with a history of more than thirteen hundred years deserves to be rescued and restored to a decent appearance by the Parks Department of Limerick Corporation.
I have written elsewhere of my strong conviction that this cemetery and that at St. Patrick’s near the Fairgreen must have served as Viking burial places during their tenure here from the 9th to the 13th centuries. They had been driven out of the city after Clontarf and lived on the outskirts from Parteen to Park. Killalee was the nearest cemetery to the Viking colony at Park of which we have any knowledge or evidence. The same contention could apply also, possibly, to the graveyards at Killeely and Kilquane, which were also outside the city and near to Viking districts at Parteen and Athlunkard.

Few other cities or countries can show such a continuum of history and Killalee deserves better of present day Limerick citizens as a gesture of decency to its Christian heritage.

REFERENCES
1. MacCaffrey, Rev. James: The Black Book of Limerick, Dublin, 1907, p. 103