

State of the graveyards

THE COUNCILLORS passed a report from the cemeteries committee who visited the 10 cemeteries in the Corporation's care.

The purpose was to ascertain the present condition of each graveyard and to decide what action would be recommended to preserve and maintain them appropriately.

The following is the report, which was signed by chairperson of the committee, Cllr. Jan O'Sullivan.

Mount Saint Laurence: The general appearance of the grounds is very good following a clean-up under the Social Employment Scheme and continuing maintenance by Corporation staff.

Problems which must be addressed are:

(a) Security: the cemetery is very open to vandalism. This was highlighted by the recent trail of destruction when approximately 150 monuments were knocked and damaged. The committee decided that the gates of the cemetery should be closed, on a trial basis, at 9.00 p.m. in the summer and 5.00 p.m. in the winter. It was also suggested that a byelaw be introduced which would ensure that persons found in the cemetery after certain hours would be prosecuted. Mr. S. O'Sullivan, S.E.E., reported to the committee that an electronic alarm system could be installed on the church and extended to other parts of the graveyard if finance permitted.

(b) The restoration of the Church: Mr. S. Cooke, Senior Executive Architect gave the committee a detailed report on the condition of the Church which is of a basically sound structure, though damaged in certain places by vandals and the elements. As well as an alarm system, a rotating barrier on the church roof was recommended. The church would have to be sealed against the weather and a future use considered.

(c) Wall of the cemetery extension: This wall is in bad repair and it was suggested that the Social Employment Scheme might be used to restore it.

Mount Saint Oliver: This new cemetery is well-maintained. There were a few points noted: (a) the boundary wall needs to be finished; (b) the ground has sunk somewhat on some of the graves; (c) security must also be considered here.

Saint Patrick's: This is an old graveyard very much in need of attention. It is overgrown and the boundary wall and many of the headstones are damaged. Many members felt that the best way to maintain an old cemetery such as this would be to make a careful record of all of the graves and their location and then to set the headstones in concrete around the boundary walls. The central area would then be grassed. The cemetery would become a Garden of Remembrance; a peaceful environment where people could sit or walk.

Killeely: Killeely cemetery was found to be in a similar condition. It is also overgrown and inaccessible. The members who visited the graveyard felt strongly that action must be taken soon to prevent further decay and a Garden of Remembrance, as suggested for St. Patrick's, seemed to be the most appropriate solution. The boundary walls were in good condition here apart from one large hole.

Saint Bridget's: St. Bridget's Cemetery has no headstone, the only feature being a stark black wooden cross. A suggestion was made that a plaque should be placed at the foot of the cross to commemorate those interred there. The ground of the cemetery is sloping and somewhat uneven.

King's Island: This graveyard is well-maintained by Mr. Alfie Sparling who lives in the adjacent house. It was suggested to us that there was sometimes a problem of flooding but this was not apparent on our visit. The headstones were in good condition and Mr. Sparling was congratulated on the excellent care he provides.

Saint Michael's: During the course of the committee's visit to St. Michael's graveyard, many members expressed their appreciation of the restoration work being carried out by the Limerick Civic Trust. The work already completed shows what can be done in the maintenance of our cemeteries.

However, some members expressed concern at the capping of the stone walls with slates. It was felt that more substantial capping would be required if the walls were to be vandal-proof. In some areas of the cemetery red and brown paving (cobbleblock) had been

used. The view was expressed that if this type of paving is to be used that a stone colour (grey) would be preferable in order to harmonize with the surrounding walls and tombstones.

Saint John's: St. John's Church was donated to the Corporation by the Church of Ireland in 1975. A small graveyard surrounds the church. It is overgrown and the vaults, in particular, have been vandalised. The boundary wall is being rebuilt at present and members felt strongly that this must be faced with stone to tone in with the beautiful square in which it is situated. As with some of the other old graveyards it was recommended that some of the headstones should be set in concrete against the boundary walls, to ensure their preservation and to allow the grass to be cut and maintained.

Killalee: Members were shocked at the total state of decay in Killalee cemetery. There is hardly a trace of a headstone. This visit convinced the members of the committee that action must be taken as soon as possible to prevent the other older graveyards from falling into the same state of ruin. Sadly, Killalee cemetery cannot be restored. The best that can be done is to kill off the weeds and keep the ground clean and tidy. It was suggested that Mr. Kevin Hannon, a local historian, should be contacted for information with regard to the families buried in the graveyard.

The Quakers' Cemetery: Members were impressed at the location and design of this quiet and secluded cemetery, surrounded by trees, beside the main Ballinacurra Road. All of the tombstones are of uniform size and shape standing approximately 3' from the ground. Two of them appear to have been broken recently but the rest are intact. It was suggested that some of the greenery should be cut back and a lock placed on the outer gate and perhaps a barrier on the inner gate also to prevent further damage to the graveyard.

The committee hopes to meet with representatives of the Society of Friends (Quakers) in Waterford and with one of their members, Mr. Grubb, in Limerick, to discuss the maintenance of the cemetery.