

# Caretakers of city cemetery hit back

By ALAN OWENS

THE FAMILY who have cared for a historic graveyard in Limerick city for several decades have hit back at claims that it is in a state of neglect.

The Military Graveyard, located in King's Island, was described as being "neglected" and requiring cleaning up, in a letter to the editor printed in the Limerick Leader last weekend.

Maureen Sparling, who lives beside the graveyard, and whose deceased husband tended the graveyard for many years - a job her son John now maintains - was livid at these claims.

"It is in perfect, impeccable condition," said Maureen when contacted by the Limerick Leader.

"It never looked so well, there isn't even a beer can or a paper on the ground. My son looks after it and this is one of the best kept graveyards



A picture of Kings Island cemetery taken last Thursday

(LL)

in the city."

There are 37 headstones under the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

(CWGC) in the graveyard, along with civilian memorials and graves, which Maureen's son John is contracted to

care for.

"Those 37 graves are cleaned annually by John, and subsequently inspected by the Board of

Works - plus the CWGC check periodically on them and arrive unannounced - the last person to inspect voiced his pos-

itive approval."

The letter, written by Gordon Spillane, also claimed that "horses and other animals are enclosed within the cemetery, among bales of hay and other stable trappings".

"Our own property is a completely separate area from the graveyard and the horse is in our own property - there are no animals in the graveyard, nor has there been," said John Sparling.

"Anyone is welcome to come down and see for themselves - they need just come and ask for the key and we can let them in," added John.

Maureen explained that members of her family have been caring for the property for the last 40 years, beginning with her husband Alfie.

"This is extremely upsetting and a very troublesome letter. If we hadn't been looking after the graveyard for the last 40 years, then there simply wouldn't be a graveyard."