

New lease of life promised for old cemetery

by Marie Hobbins

70,000 burials since 1855

A NEW lease of life awaits the 160-year-old Mount Saint Lawrence Cemetery and all proceeding to plan, the old graveyard, which, according to records claims that over 70,000 individuals were interred there between 1855 and 2009, is set to rival Dublin's Glasnevin Cemetery, in terms of recorded historical detail.

Members of city council's Environmental Policy Committee were presented with details of the project this week.

A series of information panels, detailing in both Irish and English, the history of the leading merchant families, patriots, eminent sportsmen, religious and others, will be erected in the cemetery and in time, family histories will be recorded for posterity.

Cllr Kathleen Leddin, who first proposed the idea some months ago, said:

"Mount St Laurence is a history of Limerick but we must get someone to professionally research the history of all those buried there, we must incorporate as much history as possible and we must also find the necessary money from the Heritage Council to carry out repairs to the Republican Plot".

The cemetery, whose burial records commenced in March 1855, is the resting place of many former Mayors of Limerick, including the Labour politician, Jim Kemmy. The graves of the Bard of Thomond and the more prominent Limerick families, as well as the Good Shepherd Convent plot, the Manchester Martyrs Memorial Monument are there, as are the burial places of the wealthy and influential and those who died in the Lunatic Asylum and the

workhouse.

Cllr Leddin stressed the relevance of "finding an appropriate use" for the cemetery's neo-Gothic Church, built in 1855 as a mortuary chapel by the local firm of Hennessy architects, who also designed the spire of St John's Cathedral.

"There is great mosaic work in the church and I feel that as the panels will not be sufficient to contain enough information we should store historical detail on panels within the church as well," urged Cllr Leddin.

Cllr Maurice Quinlivan said it is worth remembering that people visit cities to see graveyards.

Said Cllr Tom Shortt:

"The panel erected near the Treaty Stone is marvellous - it's done to a very high standard. We must remember we are the custodians of the history of the city. People would like pointers to where people of note are buried - It would bring history to the fore.

"But we must remember that people want directions to certain tombstones"

Cllr Orla McLoughlin observed that some cities pride themselves in that their cemeteries are museums.

"They are user-friendly cemeteries with interesting characters in them.

"I remember how upset I was when I couldn't find my granny - I was devastated until my mother told me about her grave and where it was".

Confirming that they only had an initial budget of €10,000, director of services, Caroline Curley, said: "This is all we can afford just now but we are responsible for cemeteries and we want the panels to be relatively stylish but also to be durable, but until we can find big funding we can't go into the cemetery church - we will look at European sources of funding. We want to get this project underway - we wanted to give something back to the city".

Sean Sabhat commemoration

AN estimated 150 people braved inclement weather to attend the annual commemoration of the death of Seán Sabhat which was organised by Limerick Sinn Féin.

The march assembled in Bedford Row, and led by a republican colour party and the Carrick-On-Suir Republican

Flute Band proceeded to Sabhat's grave in Mount St. Laurence Cemetery.

The ceremonies at the graveyard were chaired by Cllr Maurice Quinlivan.

A wreath on behalf of the Republican Movement was laid by local republican Melanie O'Meara.

A minute's silence was observed in

memory of all those who died in the cause of Irish freedom.

The main speaker was Limerick City SF chairperson Padraig Malone, who stood in at short notice for SF vice president MaryLou McDonald who was unable to make the journey due to the adverse weather conditions.



Padraig Malone, chair Limerick City SF, Cllr Maurice Quinlivan and Tom Collopy at the Sean Sabhat commemoration ceremony at Mount St. Laurence cemetery last weekend. There are plans to add an historical element to the cemetery. See story.

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