

St Patrick's cemetery gets Civic Trust blessing

by Marie Hobbins

Fairgreen graveyard one of the oldest in Limerick

ONE of the oldest cemeteries in Limerick city is being upgraded and given a makeover, with the full blessing of Civic Trust.

St Patrick's Cemetery in the Fairgreen, just off the Ballysimon Road, has already had its pathways cleaned and repaired, and a clearout of litter and debris has been completed.

Repeated calls by Cllr Kieran O'Hanlon to attend to the cemetery, which had fallen into a very neglected state and was attracting anti-social activity, resulted in the council's representative on the Civic Trust's Board of Directors, Cllr Michael Hourigan, securing approval to carry out a scheme of restoration, conservation and upkeep.

Cllr O'Hanlon, whose ancestors come from the Fairgreen area, adjacent to St Patrick's Road, has forebears buried in the cemetery.

"It is one of the oldest, if not oldest cemetery in the city, but in recent years it became an eyesore, with litter of all kinds strewn around and a lot of undesirable behaviour going on in there," he told the Limerick Post.

"The paths were completely overgrown and the headstones in a very bad state, which was a great pity as there is a lot of very genuine interest in this cemetery, in which a lot of important people are buried - in fact, up to the early 60's, burials were



Pictured in St. Patrick's Cemetery are cllr Kieran O'Hanlon Denis O'Sullivan, FAS Supervisor, Limerick Civic Trust and Monica Spencer, Limerick Civic Trust. Picture by Brian Gavin Press 22

taking place there and just recently, I noticed that two new headstones, commemorating Limerick people who were in the Royal Airforce during the 1939-'45 War had been erected. I

"On my visit, I met a family from England who were appalled at its condition but were very glad to hear that the Civic Trust had undertaken to restore it."

Commending the Trust for the "wonderful work it

has done in restoring the ancient cemetery of St Lelia's, Kileely," Cllr O'Hanlon promised to set about forming a committee to take responsibility for the cemetery's ongoing upkeep.

"There is a Marian Shrine in the Fairgreen that the local people do a great job in maintaining - I'm sure we will get great local support and will be able to appoint a caretaker - I'll make contact with the

Fairview soccer club in Fairgreen who are opening up an all-weather pitch - their caretaker may be able to be called on".

Following the death in December of Denis Leonard, founder of Limerick Civic Trust, Ms Spencer took over as director.

She told the Post: "St Patrick's occupies a very historic site, having at one time been the location for the Williamite artillery emplacements. and to-date, we've cleared the footpaths in order to gain access so that a proper assessment of works needing to be carried out can be identified.

"We've cleared high grass, weeds and briars from around the graves over the entire site and will replace some gravestones that have also fallen down and where possible, we will repair grave surrounds and kerbs

"It may be necessary to have an archaeological report carried out and this is being looked into now. As has been stated by Cllr O'Hanlon, the graveyard is completely overgrown and is a troubling sight for those with relatives and friends buried there. It is somewhat in a similar state to how St Lelia's in Kileely looked before our workers began restoration and environmental work there"

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