

KILLEELY churchyard, now almost completely hidden in the fine corporation housing estate, was once a noted landmark with its tall tapering yew trees contrasting sharply with the lighter green of the fields stretching down to the river. It was the only direct link with the old parish that once extended to the foot of the Clare hills at Cratloe and Ardnacrusha. The old church was in ruin before the Crorwellian occupation, and the fabric was afterwards used in building part of the boundary wall, a practice that accounted for the disappearance of many early Christian churches.

With the population explosion from the last quarter of the eighteenth century to the famine years, and the cholera epidemics of the 1830s, the graveyard, like many others in and around the city, became overcrowded. In 1839 we find the people of Thomondgate district complaining of the dreadful effluvia from Killeely where the festering corpses were covered only with a sprinkling of earth, and of dogs carrying pieces of human flesh around the countryside. From the eighteen fifties the people were urged to take family burial plots in the new Mount St. Laurence cemetery, but the people were slow to depart from the traditional practice of burying their dead with their ancestors. Furthermore the old stock of the parish were jealous of their ancient territory and were reluctant to take the remains of their loved ones across the Shannon to far away Mount St. Laurence. Thus Killeely was much in use up to the early nineteen hundreds, and to a lesser extent afterwards.

We find the following reference to Killeely in the Limerick Chronicle of November, 1875: "We are

KILLEELY

credibly informed that the state of Killeely cemetery calls for immediate attention at the hands of those whose interest or duty it is to look after the health of the community.

"The cemetery, which by the way has been used for years past, is already overcrowded, and the interments which are made there from time to time cannot, as a matter of course, take place but in a manner calculated to prove injurious to the health of the populace close by.

"It is even alleged that dogs are in the habit of prowling through the cemetery nightly - with what purpose can be readily imagined - and that the smell emanating from it is something frightful. We could add to these sickening details were it not that enough has, in our opinion, been already said to show the desirability of having immediate steps taken to remedy such a shocking state of things."

After a strenuous campaign by the health authority and the clergy Mount St. Laurence's was accepted by most people, though a number of families continued to use Killeely, but, like all institutions that pay no dividends it was generally neglected.

The following appeared in the Chronicle in 1879: "The Town Council will, at its next meeting, appoint a competent person who can read and write, as caretaker of Killeely graveyard, at a salary of £7 a year." Sixty years afterwards the same paper noted: "The City Council was shortly to commence the erection of 360 houses in Killeely, Thomondgate. The housing

scheme would be built around the old cemetery, the tenants would thus have an ideal opportunity of moralising on their final end. Killeely graveyard was for long the Valhalla of Thomondgate. Early in the century it was closed by a Local Government Board order, except for a few families who had established a right of burial. However, there were secret burials and skirmishes with police on several occasions. An amusing tale is told of the death of an old woman who wished to be buried in Killeely. The coffin arrived at midnight and was laid on the boundary wall, when a voice from inside cried out: 'I'll give a hand!' Sequel - consternation and flight."

After the unfortunate felling of the yews and hawthorns in the 1940s the undergrowth, no longer in the shade, spread at an alarming rate. In a few years every monument and stone had disappeared in a jungle of briars and grass. This welter of rank vegetation continued to develop and expand with each annual cycle until the early seventies, when a committee of local gentlemen initiated a scheme for the rehabilitation of the old place. Perhaps the most pleasing result of this charitable work was the uncovering of the O'Halloran family vault. This was immediately restored by St. Senan's Historical Society.

For long the name 'Killeely' has posed a problem for historians, it being contended that no early Irish saint would have a name like Lelia, though Fr. Jasper White goes so far as to assert that the self same

Lelia was sister to St. Munchin.

John O'Donovan, who visited the churchyard in 1839, tells us that there is no record of the original spelling of the name, and that it is compounded "... like the names of most parishes in Ireland, of Cill, a church and the name of a saint." He goes on to suggest that the place was dedicated to the Virgin St. Fialia.

In the calendar of Irish saints there is a Dalcassian saint named Laidhain, whose feast was celebrated on August 11th. In the Black Book of Limerick there is an entry for the year 1201 which set out the name of three churches on the northern outskirts of the city, including 'Killiedun.' In the list of Irish saints Liadhain is described as the daughter of Diarmuid who was grandson of Cartheann, the chieftain who was baptised by St. Patrick at the well in Singland. There has been a number of attempts to translate 'Liadhain' to 'Lelia' in view of the latter name attaching itself to Killeely for centuries, and the most plausible explanation lies in the suggestion that the 'D' in Laidhain was at an early period substituted for 'L' thus resulting in 'Killeely.' Philologists tell us that such substitutions were quite common.

Fortunately St. Lelia has been firmly established, indeed I might say, consolidated, in her old parish. The Bishop of Limerick Dr. Jeremiah Newman, re-established the old parish a few years ago and dedicated the splendid new church which is situated only a short distance from the original one to St. Lelia.

Nevil's Shoes and Sports

29 O'Connell Street, Limerick.
Telephone (061) 418692

*Would like to wish all their
Customers a very Happy
Christmas and a Prosperous
New Year.*

*Thanking you for your
continued support*

KILLEELY churchyard, now almost completely hidden in the fine corporation housing estate, was once a noted landmark with its tall tapering yew trees contrasting sharply with the lighter green of the fields stretching down to the river. It was the only direct link with the old parish that once extended to the foot of the Clare hills at Cratloe and Ardnacrusha. The old church was in ruin before the Cromwellian occupation, and the fabric was afterwards used in building part of the boundary wall, a practice that accounted for the disappearance of many early Christian churches.

With the population explosion from the last quarter of the eighteenth century to the famine years, and the cholera epidemics of the 1830s, the graveyard, like many others in and around the city, became overcrowded. In 1839 we find the people of Thomondgate district complaining of the dreadful effluvia from Killeely where the festering corpses were covered only with a sprinkling of earth, and of dogs carrying pieces of human flesh around the countryside. From the eighteen fifties the people were urged to take family burial plots in the new Mount St. Laurence cemetery, but the people were slow to depart from the traditional practice of burying their dead with their ancestors. Furthermore the old stock of the parish were jealous of their ancient territory and were reluctant to take the remains of their loved ones across the Shannon to far away Mount St. Laurence. Thus Killeely was much in use up to the early nineteen hundreds, and to a lesser extent afterwards.

We find the following reference to Killeely in the Limerick Chronicle of November, 1875: "We are

KILLEELY

credibly informed that the state of Killeely cemetery calls for immediate attention at the hands of those whose interest or duty it is to look after the health of the community.

"The cemetery, which by the way has been used for years past, is already overcrowded, and the interments which are made there from time to time cannot, as a matter of course, take place but in a manner calculated to prove injurious to the health of the populace close by.

"It is even alleged that dogs are in the habit of prowling through the cemetery nightly — with what purpose can be readily imagined — and that the smell emanating from it is something frightful. We could add to these sickening details were it not that enough has, in our opinion, been already said to show the desirability of having immediate steps taken to remedy such a shocking state of things."

After a strenuous campaign by the health authority and the clergy Mount St. Laurence's was accepted by most people, though a number of families continued to use Killeely, but, like all institutions that pay no dividends it was generally neglected.

The following appeared in the Chronicle in 1879: "The Town Council will, at its next meeting, appoint a competent person who can read and write, as caretaker of Killeely graveyard, at a salary of £7 a year." Sixty years afterwards the same paper noted: "The City Council was shortly to commence the erection of 360 houses in Killeely, Thomondgate. The housing

scheme would be built around the old cemetery, the tenants would thus have an ideal opportunity of moralising on their final end. Killeely graveyard was for long the Valhalla of Thomondgate. Early in the century it was closed by a Local Government Board order, except for a few families who had established a right of burial. However, there were secret burials and skirmishes with police on several occasions. An amusing tale is told of the death of an old woman who wished to be buried in Killeely. The coffin arrived at midnight and was laid on the boundary wall, when a voice from inside cried out: 'I'll give a hand!' Sequel — consternation and flight."

After the unfortunate felling of the yews and hawthorns in the 1940s the undergrowth, no longer in the shade, spread at an alarming rate. In a few years every monument and stone had disappeared in a jungle of briars and grass. This welter of rank vegetation continued to develop and expand with each annual cycle until the early seventies, when a committee of local gentlemen initiated a scheme for the rehabilitation of the old place. Perhaps the most pleasing result of this charitable work was the uncovering of the O'Halloran family vault. This was immediately restored by St. Senan's Historical Society.

For long the name 'Killeely' has posed a problem for historians, it being contended that no early Irish saint would have a name like Lelia, though Fr. Jasper White goes so far as to assert that the self same

Lelia was sister to St. Munchin.

John O'Donovan, who visited the churchyard in 1839, tells us that there is no record of the original spelling of the name, and that it is compounded "... like the names of most parishes in Ireland, of Cill, a church and the name of a saint." He goes on to suggest that the place was dedicated to the Virgin St. Failia.

In the calendar of Irish saints there is a Dalcassian saint named Laidhain, whose feats were celebrated on August 11th. In the Black Book of Limerick there is an entry for the year 1201 which set out the name of three churches on the northern outskirts of the city, including 'Killiedun.' In the list of Irish saints Liadhain is described as the daughter of Diarmuid who was grandson of Cartheann, the chieftain who was baptised by St. Patrick at the well in Singland. There has been a number of attempts to translate 'Liadhain' to 'Lelia' in view of the latter name attaching itself to Killeely for centuries, and the most plausible explanation lies in the suggestion that the 'D' in Laidhain was at an early period substituted for 'L' thus resulting in 'Killeely.' Philologists tell us that such substitutions were quite common.

Fortunately St. Lelia has been firmly established, indeed I might say, consolidated, in her old parish. The Bishop of Limerick Dr. Jeremiah Newman, re-established the old parish a few years ago and dedicated the splendid new church which is situated only a short distance from the original one to St. Lelia.

