

200-year-old cemetery may yield historical gems

by Marie Hobbins

ONE of the city's oldest cemeteries is on course for a major restoration, if a city councillor, in co-operation with Limerick Civic Trust, can drive the project forward.

The old cemetery of St Lelia's in Kileely, in which the noted Limerick physician, Sylvester O'Halloran, who pioneered the operation to remove cataracts from the eye, is buried, has been in a state of disrepair for

many years now.

O'Halloran, after whom the blue bridge linking the Potato Market and the park to the rear of the Hunt Museum is named, lived for a time in a terrace of houses that stood in Merchant's Quay.

Limerick city councillor for the northside, Michael Hourigan FG, who is also a member of Limerick Civic Trust, has called for a restoration project for the graveyard.

"The cemetery, which is well over 200 years

old, is located on the Kileely Road, at the centre of the local community and despite being in a very neglected state, it is of immense historical interest.

"The Civic Trust has vast experience in restoration projects, particularly graveyards. They maintain the Jewish and Quaker ethos and has also been involved in restoring St Michael's and St Munchin's graveyards," Cllr Hourigan told the Limerick Post.

The councillor, who

has already spoken with Limerick City Council, and will be meeting with the other councillors for the northside, and local residents, on Monday, April 2, said he is optimistic that the council will support the restoration project.

"I've been aware for some years now of the importance of preserving Limerick's heritage and the continuing neglect of the Kileely graveyard needs to be addressed urgently.

"I'm pleased that the Civic Trust has voiced

its willingness to take on the project and this route might present the most direct and timely way to improve the state of Kileely graveyard," he said.

Confirming that the Trust is giving very positive consideration to undertaking the project, Denis Leonard told the Post that their first priority will be to undertake clearance of the ground surface.

"Nobody knows what exactly is there, and until we clear the paths and surface areas, we

won't be able to see and evaluate, in historical terms, what exactly is in the cemetery. We can then decide on what needs to be done in terms of restoration".

Mr Leonard said they would then be hopeful of securing the assistance of FAS.

"We're looking at this very positively and checking into a number of issues regarding the restoration," he concluded.

Kileely Cemetery was also the burial place of victims of the Famine.



The old cemetery of St Lelia's, currently in state of disrepair, is on course for a major restoration plan should all parties involved meet in co-operation to further the project.



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