

“The Chapel Yard” later known as St. Michael’s – Cemetery

Every generation has its keepers, men and women who cherish and preserve elements of our past, our history and culture for this and future generations. Many of these people with a great love of history receive little or no financial recompense for their on-going labour. Amongst these special people are two dedicated individuals, namely Laurence ‘Larry’ Quigley and Carmel Roice. The old burial register in Gorey was a poor programme, to find a family-grave, and in many instances many graves were not registered. To consider taking on registering each and every grave in St. Michael’s Cemetery was a task beyond belief. Visitors attending or visiting the Gorey Cemetery over a five year period must have wondered at (Larry) endeavouring to decipher or interpret and to find out what each character or mark represented. To consider this mammoth work grave after grave, row after row and most of all inclement wet and cold weather which is very much part and parcel of Ireland’s cold climate, where ‘Larry Quigley’ had completed his work in the cemetery.

Carmel began her assignment as ‘Larry’ had taken up residence in Dublin. In the years 1940 our family numbering five children were residents of 13 Clonattin Road opposite the gate entrance to the cemetery. For the next five years we were constantly in what could be then described as a small cemetery. Quiet apart from the area where the old vaults are situated, the new burial ground had been consecrated in the year 1886, Kilnahue and (Clonattin – the Gorey Parish – Cemetery), most burials were taking place in these ancient Gorey Cemeteries. Circa – 1900 funerals began to take place on a regular basis, as the older cemeteries were quiet a long distance from Gorey town especially when the weather was inclement and at that time the second period of the 19th Century the locals buried their dead at the two former town cemeteries. Not everyone at that time could afford the hire of a horse-drawn carriage or hearse. They were manually carried on the old style ‘Coffin-Bier’ which was a coffin shaped frame of wood for conveying a ‘Corpse’ to their family plot or plots. The coffin was carried shoulder high, and during the ‘famine’ and for many years that followed, many of the workhouse deaths were interred in a cemetery known as the ‘Shank-Yard’ or workhouse cemetery. Kilnahue graveyard was full to capacity and the clergy made an order, not to inter any persons who died during the ‘famine years’, and for many years afterwards.

A special area for the famine-dead would be brought by horse-carts from the Gorey workhouse down Gorey Main Street to Gorey’s old Parish Cemetery – situated in the field at Clonattin. Both Kilnahue and Clonattin cemeteries were attended to by local people throughout many decades, who wished to see these old graveyards clean and tidy, but in a short time the condition of weeds once again spread throughout the cemeteries.

St. Michael’s R.C. Gorey Cemetery is currently maintained in immaculate condition throughout, a credit to all those concerned. This continued good work is surely a dedication and labour of

love. The burials on the right hand side of the cemetery (close to the Courtown Road), commenced circa 1900's, as this area filled with graves a new section was opened.

C. 1940's and section followed section as the new land was required and the overall cemetery is now quiet an extensive site. Note: - Kilnahue and Clonattin were still in use for many years during the 20th Century.

In those early years prior to the burials in much of the cemetery, the 'cemetery – field' was a meadow and the local children used the 'cocks of hay' for daily playtime. A century ago many families could not afford to erect a memorial headstone, it often involved two generations of family before a headstone was erected.

The four dominant travelling families of County Wexford include, O' Brien's, O' Connor, Berry and Cash, and in later years spared no expense on their family memorials in Gorey.

In the early years of the 20th Century St. Michael's Cemetery was the site of two R.C. Chapels – the first was in usage pre 1798, and the Chapel that was built to replace the first chapel was used until Pugin's masterpiece St. Michael's Church, Gorey was completed in 1843. Pre any burials until the early years of the 20th Century, the old people of that time referred to the Gorey Cemetery as the Chapel Yard. Also interred in St. Michael's Cemetery are titled families, Esmond's of Ballinastragh, great benefactor of the R.C. Chapels, and Church. Moore O' Farrell a former owner of Ramsfort House, who helped financially on many Gorey town projects including 'The Old Town Hall' which was cited on the Arklow Road.

Mai Travers Fitzpatrick, born 1900 heard from her grandfather, Edward Travers born pre -famine 1st May 1840 and died 1929, that the first burial to take place was a 'Mr. Tyndal', The Ballingarry family of 'Tyndal' were members of the C. O. Ireland faith, and it's possible that this man Tyndal embraced Catholicism. One major problem of undertaking an inventory of the Gorey Cemetery is the 'repeat' of Christian and surnames and many of them blood related.

Related - some related families

Redmond's Butchers	Larry and Peter Browne
Breen's Poultry Dealers	French's Publican
Webb's Undertakers	Hunts Business Family
Kavanagh's Undertakers	Thomas Williams
Rams Arms Undertakers	Many Travers Businesses'
Bates Undertakers	David Roice Chemist
Duncan Undertakers	Flusk Families
Laurence & Aidan Murphy Undertakers	Master M. Redmond
Patrick and John Flood Undertakers	Bolgers Hardware
Percival Undertakers Ballycanew & Gorey	Brennans Hardware
John & Patrick O'Connor 82 Main Street	
Miss Annie Redmond Main Street	
The Cooke family 3 Business families, Main Street	
Mulligan Farmers & Business people	

This modest list is far from completion and we look forward to the inventory on-line.