# County Roscommon's
# *Graveyards*

## A summary of the work and findings of the County Roscommon Graveyard Survey

The survey can be accessed on
www.roscommoncoco.ie.
A printed copy of the survey
can be viewed in the County Library

# Introduction

The County Roscommon Graveyard Survey was carried out in 2005. The aim of the survey was to identify, map and create a database of basic information on every graveyard or burial ground in the county – including those no longer or not currently in use and those not in the care of Roscommon County Council.

This survey brings together for the first time basic information on all known graveyards in the county, such as townland, catholic parish, diocese, denomination, ownership and status under the National Monuments Acts and Planning and Development Act 2000. Perhaps of widest general interest, the survey highlights if any known information has been gathered for each graveyard, or if the headstones have been recorded, and where that information can be accessed - in a book, local library or from an individual.

James Ganly, on behalf of County Roscommon Heritage Forum, has compiled this survey. Thanks to Thomas Garvey for his assistance. Thanks are also due to all who co-operated and who provided information to this survey.

The full survey results can be accessed on the Roscommon County Council website **www.roscommoncoco.ie** and in the County Library Roscommon.

*Please note that survey details are subject to change.*

| Abbreviations used in the survey: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Burial Ground | BG | Church of Ireland | C of I |
| Children's Burial Ground | CBG | Representative Church Body | RCB |
| Graveyard | GY | Roscommon County Council | RCC |

GEEVAGH
KILRONAN
AGHANAGH
ARDCARNE
BOYLE
BALLAGHADERREEN
BALLINAMEEN
CROGHAN
AUGHRIM
FAIRYMOUNT
ELPHIN
LOUGHGLYNN
FRENCHPARK
KILGLASS
CASTLEREA
STROKESTOWN
TULSK
TARMONBARRY
KILTULLAGH
BALLINTUBBER
ORAN
KILBRIDE
KILGEFIN
ROSCOMMON
KILBEGNET
ATHLEAGUE
KNOCKCROGHERY
BALLYFORAN
KILTOOM AND CAM
TAGHMACONNELL
ATHLONE
CREAGH
MOORE
CREAGH (PART OF)

# Survey Background

Sources of information used for the survey included Ordnance Survey maps, the Record of Monuments & Places for Co. Roscommon, Roscommon County Council data, local knowledge and information.

The survey was conducted using current Catholic Parish boundaries. There are 33 catholic parishes or parts thereof in the county and these are shared by 5 catholic Diocese, namely:
Achonry (A), Ardagh & Clonmacnoise (A&C), Clonfert (C), Elphin (E) & Tuam (T).

The distribution of parishes within each Diocese is as follows:
Achonry - 1 Parish. Ardagh & Clonmacnoise - 1 Parish. Clonfert - 2  Parishes. Elphin - 27 Parishes and Tuam - 2 Parishes.  Total 33 parishes.

| Parish | Diocese | Parish | Diocese |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aghanagh | Elphin | Kilbegnet | Elphin |
| Ardcarne | Elphin | Kilbride | Elphin |
| Athleague | Elphin | Kilgefin | Elphin |
| Athlone | Elphin | Kilglass | Elphin |
| Aughrim | Elphin | Kilronan | Ardagh & Clonmacnoise |
| Ballinameen | Elphin | Kiltoom & Cam | Elphin |
| Ballintubber | Elphin | Kiltullagh | Elphin |
| Ballaghaderreen | Achonry | Knockcroghery | Elphin |
| Ballyforan | Elphin | Loughglynn | Elphin |
| Boyle | Elphin | Moore | Elphin |
| Castlerea | Elphin | Oran | Elphin |
| Creagh | Clonfert | Roscommon | Elphin |
| Croghan | Elphin | Strokestown | Elphin |
| Elphin | Elphin | Taghmaconnell | Clonfert |
| Fairymount | Elphin | Tarmonbarry | Elphin |
| Frenchpark | Elphin | Tulsk | Elphin |
| Geevagh | Elphin | | |

*The parish of Creagh in south Roscommon has its main burial ground in the Townland of Creagh, which is administered by Galway County Council but is included in this survey because of its importance.*

# Types of graveyards

The total number of graveyards identified in the survey is 287.
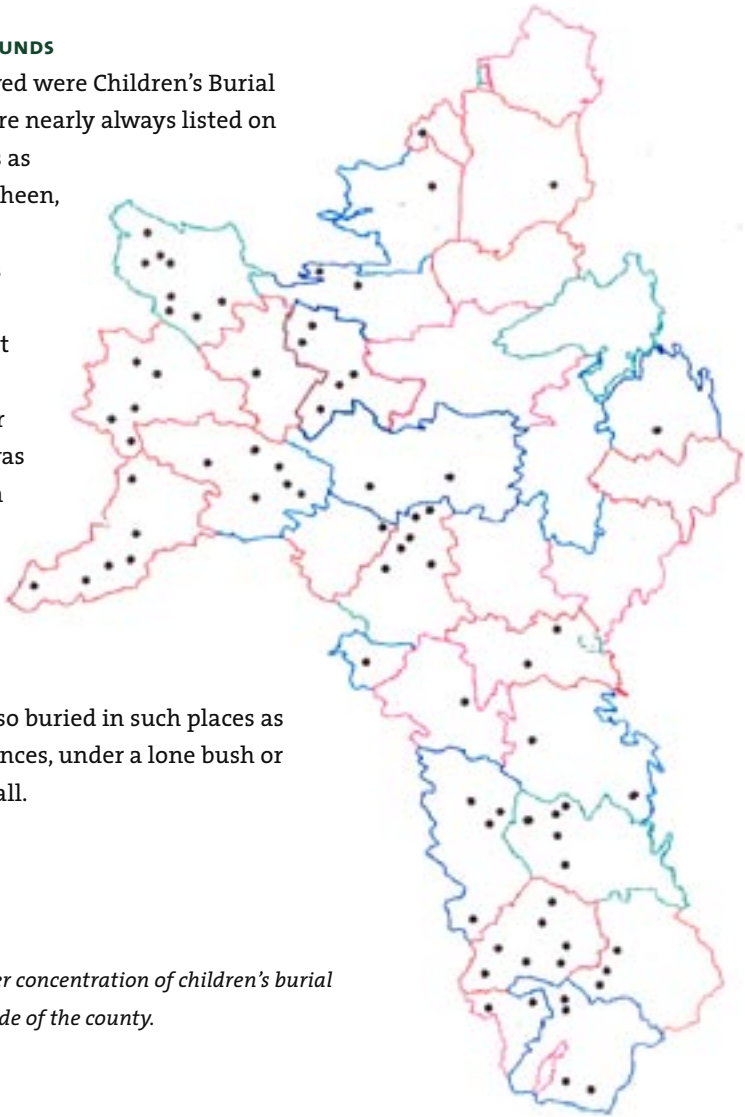
## Roman Catholic Graveyards

65% of graveyards in the county are catholic graveyards (186). Of these 48 are located at Catholic churches where Parish Priests, Curates and other religious from the Parish are buried in the church grounds or in vaults inside the church.

## Children's Burial Grounds

25% of the total surveyed were Children's Burial Grounds (CBG). They are nearly always listed on ordnance survey maps as Cillin/ Killeen, Lios/Lisheen, Caltragh, Teampaillin, or simply as Children's Burial Ground. The custom of setting apart a special place for the burial of very young or unbaptised children was common practice from early medieval times until very recently. Many of these are situated in forts or early ecclesiastical sites. Children were also buried in such places as haggards, boundary fences, under a lone bush or outside a graveyard wall.

*Note that there is a greater concentration of children's burial grounds on the western side of the county.*

## Church of Ireland Graveyards

Until the 1870's many of the old graveyards in the county were in the ownership of the Established Church. A report of the Commissioners of Church Temporalities in Ireland for the period 1869-80 listed a schedule of burial grounds vested by the commissioners in various Burial Boards throughout the country (Schedule 7). The modern day successors to the Burial Boards are the relevant Local Authorities. Since Disestablishment a number of other graveyards have been transferred to the ownership of the relevant Local Authorities.
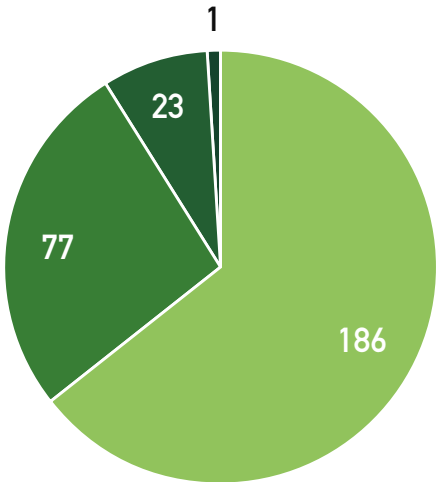


The Irish Church Disestablishment Act was the United Kingdom legislation whereby William Gladstone's administration disestablished the Church of Ireland, disassociating it from the state and as such removing the rule that tithes had to be paid to a church that commanded the adherence of a minority of the population of Ireland.

There are 23 Church of Ireland graveyards (8%). Many with churches attached. Dwindling numbers attending some of these churches mean that regular services are no longer held. In such cases the Select Vestry looks after the fabric of the church and graveyards. The Select Vestry is a number of persons chosen to represent and manage the concerns of the Parish.

## Quaker Graveyards

There is one Quaker graveyard in the County at Killea, Knockcroghery.

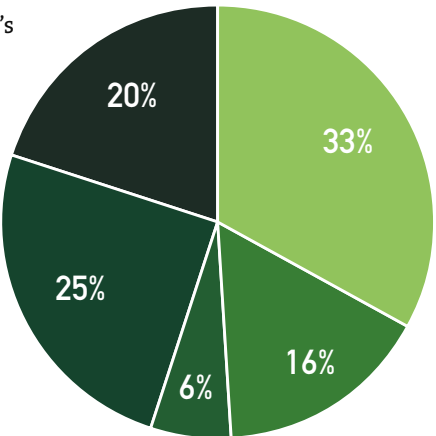| Types of Graveyard | |
|---|---|
| 186 | Catholic |
| 77 | Children's |
| 23 | Church of Ireland |
| 1 | Quaker |

## Ownership of Graveyards

Just over one third of all graveyards in the county are in the ownership of Roscommon County Council. However one fifth of graveyards are on private land, these would be mainly the Children's Burial Grounds. Look at the listing for the graveyard on the graveyard survey web page to check who owns it.
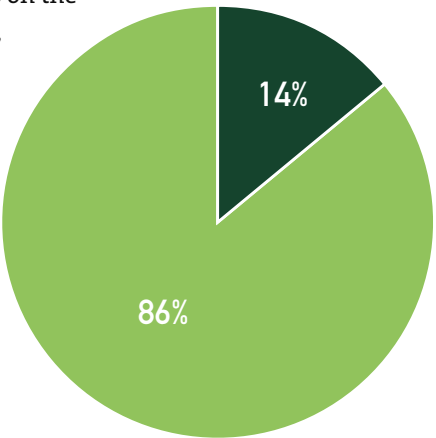


| Ownership of Graveyards | |
|---|---|
| 96 | Roscommon County Council |
| 46 | Private |
| 17 | Church of Ireland |
| 72 | Other |
| 56 | Church Authorities |

## Graveyards on the Record of Protected Structures

Some graveyards contain within them churches, mausoleums, vaults or other structures, which are protected under the Planning and Development Acts, because of their architectural or other value. Look at the listing for the graveyard on the graveyard survey web page to check if it is on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) or not. If it is, all works must be carried out in accordance with Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government Conservation Guidelines. These are also available on the heritage sections of www.environ.ie and www.roscommoncoco.ie.



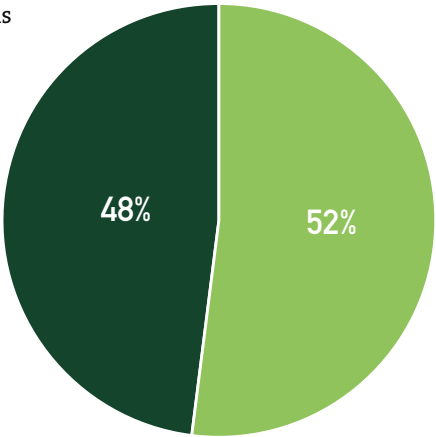| Graveyards on the Record of Protected Structures | |
|---|---|
| 40 | On the Record |
| 247 | Not on the Record |

# Graveyards on the Record of Monuments and Places

Over half the graveyards in the county are on the Record of Monuments and Places. This is important as it means that these are protected under the National Monuments Act 1930-2004. Such historic graveyards are the oldest in the county and contain structures and burials from the earliest phases of Christianity up to the present. If you are planning to carry out any work in an historic graveyard it is important to be aware of the legal obligation to comply with the National Monuments Act 1930-2004. Look at the listing for the graveyard on the graveyard survey web page to check if it is on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

If the graveyard is on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) - under Section 12(3) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994, anyone proposing to carry out, or to cause or permit the carrying out of, any work at or in relation to such monument or place, shall give notice in writing of the proposal to carry out the work to the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government and shall not, except in the case of urgent necessity and with the consent of the Minister, commence the work for a period of two months after having given the notice. This notice, with full details of proposed works, should be sent to the National Monuments Service, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, 4th Floor, Dún Scéine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2.

If the historic graveyard is or contains a National Monument, a consent for the carrying out of works is required under Section 14 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004. This consent must be obtained from the Minister of Environment, Heritage & Local Government. The National Monuments Service will advise on if this applies to the graveyard.
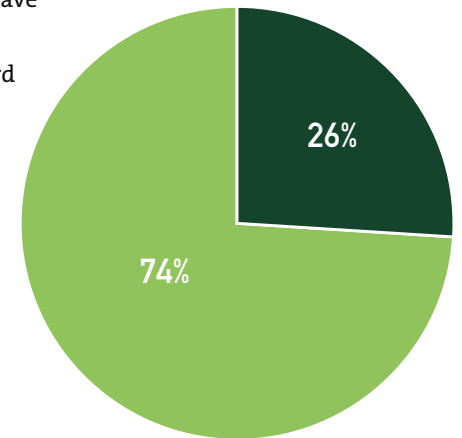
| Graveyards on the Record of Monuments and Places | |
|---|---|
| 148 | On the Record |
| 139 | Not on the Record |

Pie chart: 48%, 52%

## Graveyards with Headstone Inscriptions available

Over a quarter of all graveyards in the county have some information available on their headstone inscriptions. Look at the listing for the graveyard on the graveyard survey web page to check if there are inscriptions available. The web page will also indicate where you may be able to access the inscriptions.
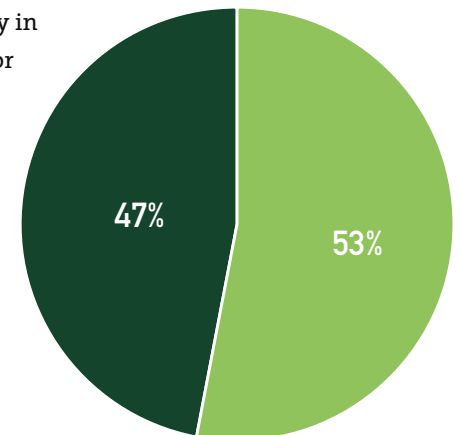
| Graveyard Inscriptions | |
|---|---|
| 74 | Inscriptions available |
| 213 | Inscriptions not available |

26%

74%

## Graveyards with information published

Over half the graveyards in the county have had some information relating to them published, usually in a local history publication. Look at the listing for the graveyard on the graveyard survey web page to check it there are any references for the graveyard.

| Graveyards with information published | |
|---|---|
| 136 | Published information not available |
| 151 | Published information available |

47%

53%

# The Need for Care and Conservation of Graveyards



Historic graveyards often contain a rich natural heritage, which may have been relatively undisturbed for years, providing a valuable habitat for insects, birds and mammals. They contain a rich flora of native wild grasses, flowers, shrubs and trees. Historic graveyards can provide an oasis for wildlife in a sea of managed farmland or buildings. Historic graveyards are in contrast to their modern counterparts that have a formal layout, paved pathways and improved grassland containing less habitat value for plants and animals.

Historic graveyards provide an insight into the skills, crafts and lives of those who built them and are buried within them. Ancient building techniques, such as vaulted or carved stonework, dry stonewalls and ironwork such as gates and railings represent the skills available in each locality at that time. Headstone inscriptions can provide an insight to the lives lead at different times in the past in each part of the county as they are frequently found to include information on a persons livelihood or cause of death. Images carved on headstones are also richly symbolic.

Historic graveyards contain within them a wealth of archaeological and architectural heritage - such as churches, bullaun stones, carved stones, rare plants, native grasses and dry stonewalls etc and may be protected under the National Monuments Acts or the Planning & Development Acts. More modern graveyards, often dating from the mid 20th century do not contain within them so many features of such character.

We must be aware that modern graveyards are the historic graveyards of the future. It is important to take care when planning to carry out works in any graveyard, but especially so in an historic graveyard.

| DO | |
|---|---|
| ✓ | Check the ownership and legal status of the graveyard and the structures within it, and seek the owner's permission to do work there. |
| ✓ | If the graveyard is on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) contact the National Monuments Service as the initial information contact, before you commence your works. |
| ✓ | Plan out the programme of work carefully, beginning with the least difficult jobs. |
| ✓ | Designate dumpsites away from monuments. |
| ✓ | Survey the site, marking in the church, and any other buildings and all gravestones and memorials. |
| ✓ | Retain healthy trees, and if planting new trees, choose native species (information on native species is available from the Heritage Office of Roscommon County Council). |
| ✓ | Leave all hummocks in the ground; they may mark structural and archaeological features. |
| ✓ | Maintain existing pathways using gravel, small stones and grit. |
| ✓ | Keep boundary walls, banks and hedges. |
| ✓ | Control vegetation using only strimmers or other hand tools. |
| ✓ | Wait until vegetation is under control to decide on conservation of structural remains. |
| ✓ | No material should be removed, especially from the interior of churches, without prior consultation with the National Monuments Service. |
| ✓ | Keep all architectural and sculptural fragments, record their position and report their finding to the National Monuments Service and the National Museum. |

| DO NOT | |
|---|---|
| ✗ | Do not start without professional advice and a plan to work to. |
| ✗ | Do not try to demolish or remove anything from the site without the landowner's permission and the approval of the National Monuments Service. |
| ✗ | Do not dig graves near walls; they can cause structural damage. |
| ✗ | Do not attempt unlicensed excavation; it is illegal (this includes removal of rubble from collapsed walls). |
| ✗ | Do not use machinery to clear or level the site. |
| ✗ | Do not burn off vegetation, or use total spectrum weed killers. |
| ✗ | Do not plant wild plants without expert consultation. |
| ✗ | Do not uproot ivy, trees, plants or gravestones. |
| ✗ | Do not pull ivy off buildings or trees. |
| ✗ | Do not pull ivy off fragile gravestones or composite tombs/memorials. |
| ✗ | Do not use wire brushes or sandblasters. |
| ✗ | Do not apply paint to gravestone inscriptions. |
| ✗ | Do not repoint any masonry without professional advice. |
| ✗ | Do not use ribbon pointing on old boundary walls or buildings. |
| ✗ | Do not level off pathways. |
| ✗ | Do not use gravestones for paving. |
| ✗ | Do not lay new pathways without consulting an archaeologist. |
| ✗ | Do not move gravestones unnecessarily or without archaeological advice and supervision. |
| ✗ | Do not burn rubbish on site, close to buildings or gravestones. |

*(Based on 'The Care and Conservation of Graveyards' by OPW)*

## Useful References:

'The Care and Conservation of Graveyards', OPW. Copies of this booklet are available from the Heritage Office of Roscommon County Council or by download from www.environ.ie

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/carvedstones

www.scottishgraveyards.org.uk

## Useful Contacts:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| National Monuments Service | The Director, National Monuments Service, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, 4th Floor, Dun Scéine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2 | 01 8883109 |
| The National Museum of Ireland | The Director, The National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 | 01 6618811 |
| Roscommon County Council | Heritage Office, Roscommon County Council, The Courthouse, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon. heritage@roscommoncoco.ie | 090 6637135 |

www.roscommoncoco.ie