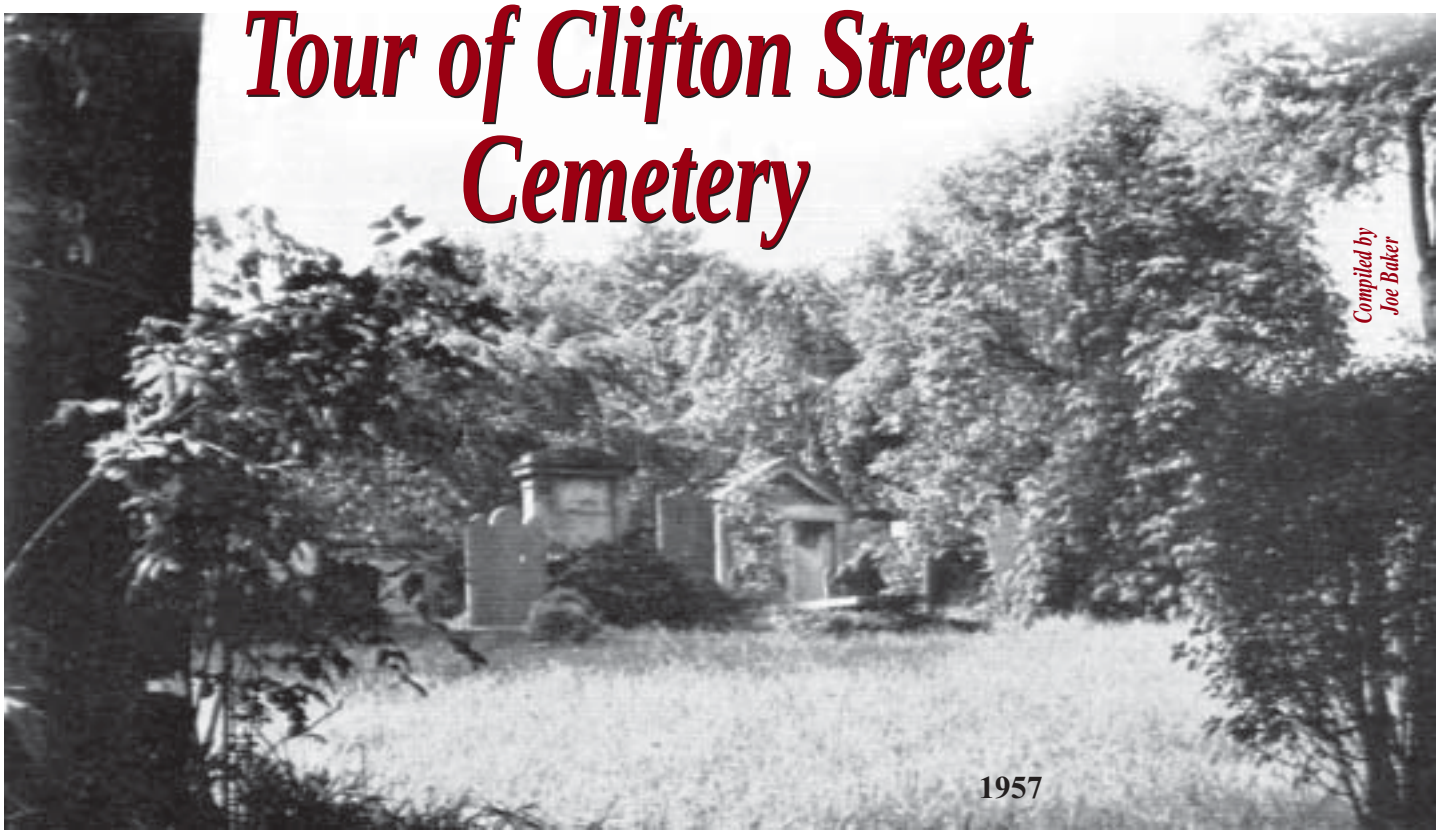
Tour of Clifton Street Cemetery

Compiled by Joe Baker



THE BELFAST CHARITABLE SOCIETY

On the 20th of August 1752 a meeting was held in Belfast by the leading inhabitants of the town and adjoining countryside to consider the question of building a poor-house, hospital and church. It was at this meeting that the Belfast Charitable Society was born.

The necessity for a poor-house is shown by the following resolution passed at a subsequent meeting:

Resolved -that, whereas a poor-house *and hospital are greatly wanted in Belfast for the support of vast numbers of real objects of charity in this parish, for the employment of idle beggars who crowd to it from all parts of the North, and for the reception of infirm and diseased poor; and, whereas the church of Belfast is old and ruinous, and not large enough to accommodate the parishioners, and to rebuild and accommodate the parishioners, and to rebuild and enlarge the same would be an expense grievous and insupportable by the ordinary method of public cesses: Now, in order to raise a sum of money to carry those good works into execution, the following scheme has been approved of by the principle inhabitants of the said town and gentlemen of fortune in the neighbourhood who are friends to promote so laudable undertaking.*

The scheme was a lottery by which they were to raise a sum of money, the tickets of which were sold in the large cities and towns throughout the British Empire. But as the scheme did not receive much encouragement in London, and the tickets were cried down, the committee of the Belfast Charitable Society sent over two members, Mr Gregg and Mr Getty, with the power of attorney to promote the project.

Notwithstanding the scheme was still decried, and legal proceedings had to be taken to compel the purchasers to pay for their tickets.

At last, a sum of money having been obtained, a memorial was presented to Lord Donegall asking him to grant a piece of ground for the erection of buildings. The land the Belfast Charitable Society had in mind was in the countryside at the North of the town which today makes up part of the New Lodge area.

Lord Donegall granted the land to the Society, and later advertisements were issued inviting plans for the building of a poor-house and hospital, the cost to be £3000, and the stone, sand, lime and water to be supplied by the inhabitants of the town and district.

The plans of a Mr Cooley, of Dublin, for a poor-house to accommodate 36 inmates and a hospital to contain 24 beds were approved, and on the 7th of August, 1771, the foundation stone was laid, and placed within it were five guineas and a copper tablet with the following inscription:-

THIS FOUNDATION STONE OF A POOR-HOUSE AND INFIRMARY FOR THE TOWN AND PARISH OF BELFAST WAS LAID ON THE FIRST DAY OF AUGUST, A.D. M,DCC,LXXI, AND IN THE XI. YEAR OF THE REIGN OF MAJESTY GEORGE III THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ARTHUR EARL OF DONEGALL AND THE PRINCIPAL INHABITANTS OF BELFAST FOUNDED THIS CHARITY; AND HIS LORDSHIP GRANTED TO IT IN PERPETUITY EIGHT ACRES OF LAND ON PART OF WHICH THIS BUILDING IS ERECTED

In addition to the hospital and poor-house the building contained assembly rooms for the use of the townspeople and profit of the charity.

On the 17th of September, 1774, the hospital was opened for the admission of the sick. In this hospital were made the first trials of inoculation and vaccination in the north of Ireland, because, the minutes show that on the 4th of May, 1782, the thanks of the committee were given to Dr W. Drennan (the United Irishman) for his introduction of the plan of inoculation, and on the 29th of March, 1800, a resolution was passed permitting Dr Haliday to try the experiment of vaccination on a few children in the poor-house, provided the consent of their parents was obtained.

An extern department was afterwards established and wards were also allotted for the treatment of lunatics, and it can be found from an entry in the committee book that a lunatic at one time had to be chained down and handcuffed. It also appears that there was a lock hospital as well as a reformatory in connection with the building.

For a number of years the Belfast Charitable Society remained the only charity in the town of Belfast, but gradually other institutions became established which relieved its expenditure, and with the erection of a dispensary in 1792 and a hospital for infectious diseases in 1799 the Society was then able to close its extern department .

In August 1817 the hospital was moved to Frederick Street where it was named the 'Royal Hospital', and it was here that the hospital remained until the early part of the present century when it was moved to the Falls Road and renamed the 'Royal Victoria Hospital'.

Since coming under the operation of the Irish Poor Law Act the Society has been, in its practical operation, limited to the class of decayed citizens. Reduced tradesmen, artisans and servants, under this act, were seen to be fit and sent to the work-house on the Lisburn Road

In 1867 an additional wing at the back of the poor-house was erected at a cost of £2.500 which was paid by John Charters (a mill owner),and in 1873 two additions, at each side of the building, were erected by Edward Benn at a cost of £2.850.

John Charters and Edward Benn also gave donations to the poor-house along with a large number of others, but donations were not enough to run the poor-house and the Society had to find other ways of raising money, and in 1795 a new idea for making money was presented to the committee.

THE NEW BURYING GROUND

Poor-House 27th October 1795

Present The Rev. W. Bristow, vice-President; Thomas Whinnery, William Tennant, J. Monear, William Clarke, Samuel Gibson, Samuel Neilson, James Kennedy.

Resolved. That it is recommended to the next general board to consider appropriating one of the fields up the lane for the purpose of a burying ground, and also whether some new regulations ought not to take place relative to the house in front of the Poor-House, in consequence of the erection of the New Barracks.

(Signed) William Bristow
vice-president

That was the resolution passed in the board room of the poor-house which marked the beginning of what is now known as Clifton Street Cemetery.

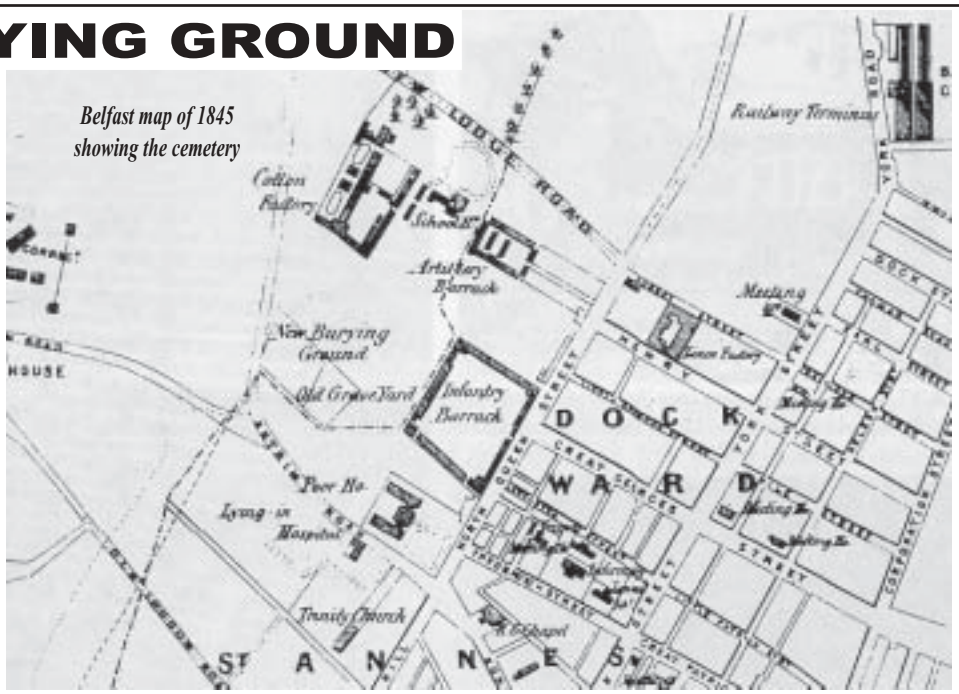
At present it is unknown just who came up with the idea of building a graveyard, but without doubt, it must have been one of the gentlemen present at the above meeting.

There were two reasons why the Society wanted to build a graveyard; the first was for somewhere to bury the poor who had died in the house and the second was to simply raise money.

On the 3rd of November, 1795, a meeting of the general board was held in the Poor-House, at this meeting it was resolved:

That the field, number 5, lately in the possession of the Rev. W. Bristow, be enclosed with a wall and appropriated for a burying ground, and the committee are hereby empowered to lay it out and dispose of it in such a manner as may appear most advantageous to the society, and at the same time ornamented.

From this resolution it can be seen that field number 5 of the poor-house grounds was to become the new graveyard. Field no. 5 was at the top of what was then known as 'Buttle's Loney'.



This was a lane which ran along the south and west sides of the Poor-House, then continued up to the grounds of Vicinage, the home of Thomas McCabe, which is now the grounds of St Malachy's College.

In December, 1795, plans were made as to how the graveyard was to be laid out. Soon afterwards work began on the walls and gate. In just over a year the graveyard was ready for the selling of lots.

It was at this time that the graveyard was named the 'New Burying Ground' to distinguish it from the 'Old Burying Ground' which at that time stood next to St George's Church in High Street.

Poor-House, March 1797

The public are now informed that the Burying Ground near the Poorhouse is now ready, and that Messers. Robert Stevenson, William Clarke, and John Caldwell are appointed to agree with such persons as wish to take lots.

This was the notice which informed the public that the Burying Ground was now open.

At present it is unknown who bought the first lot, but what is known is that the lots were being bought very quickly .

Two years later a meeting of the General Board was held in the Exchange Rooms at the bottom of Donegall Street.

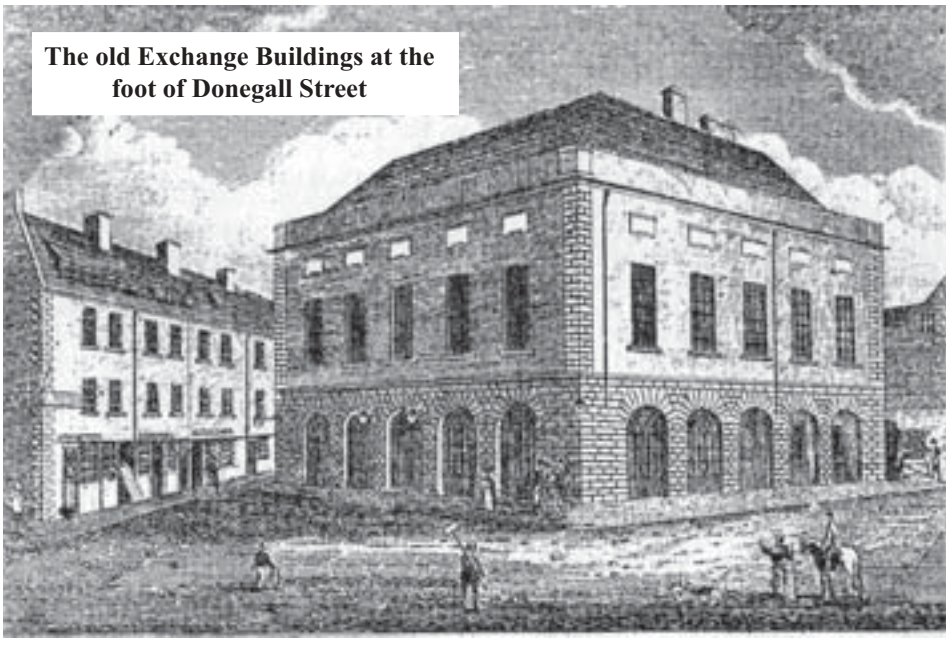
Exchange Rooms April 16th 1799

At a meeting of the General Board.

Present. The Rev. W. Bristow, Vice President, in the Chair; Rev. Mr. Vance, F. Turnley, W. Clarke, R. Bradshaw, T. Stewart, R. Hyndman, S. Hewitt, J. McCleery, R. Stevenson, S. Gibson, T. McDonnell, T. Whinnery

Resolved. That a portion of the Poor-House burial ground be laid apart for interring such poor persons as may die, not having funds to pay for their interment in the same or some other burying ground, the same to be regulated by the committee for the time being.

(Signed) William Bristow
Chairman.



The old Exchange Buildings at the foot of Donegall Street

The ground laid aside for the poor was a large stretch of land at the top end of the Burying Ground, and it was this ground that was to become a 'mass grave' during the various fever and cholera outbreaks.

One of the reasons the Board gave this ground for the burial of the poor was that they could save money on burying the paupers in the Shankill or Friar's Bush graveyards.

Another section of the Burying Ground was also laid aside for the burial of paupers, and due to large sections of the Burying Ground being used, it was not long before the lots being sold were almost gone.

The Burying Ground over the next two decades was now almost full, and in 1819 a report was read at the Charitable Society's annual meeting, part of which was a follows:

The Burial Ground is already so full as to call for the particular attention of the subscribers. The wall lots, in particular, are all disposed of,

and, consequently, the graveyard must cease to be a source of accommodation to the public, and of emolument to the charity, without considerable enlargement. It appears to your committee that in the first place, the enclosure should be completed on the south east side, so as to afford room for some additional wall lots, which are the most profitable; and that as soon as may be, the Charitable Corporation should get possession of the adjoining field, now in the occupation of Mr. W. McClure. By the alteration to the burial ground, a simple, but signal improvement has been made, partly a the expense of the Corporation, under the superintendence of certain members of the committee.

As this shows, the Poor-House Committee would have to enlarge the Burying Ground if they wished to make any more money on it, and at a meeting held in the Poor-House on the 24th of March, 1827, it was agreed:

That field number 6 be enclosed with a proper wall for the purpose of extending the Burying Ground; and that Messrs. Munford, Sinclair, Suffern, McTeir and Mackay be a committee to carry into effect the enclosing and draining of the said field.

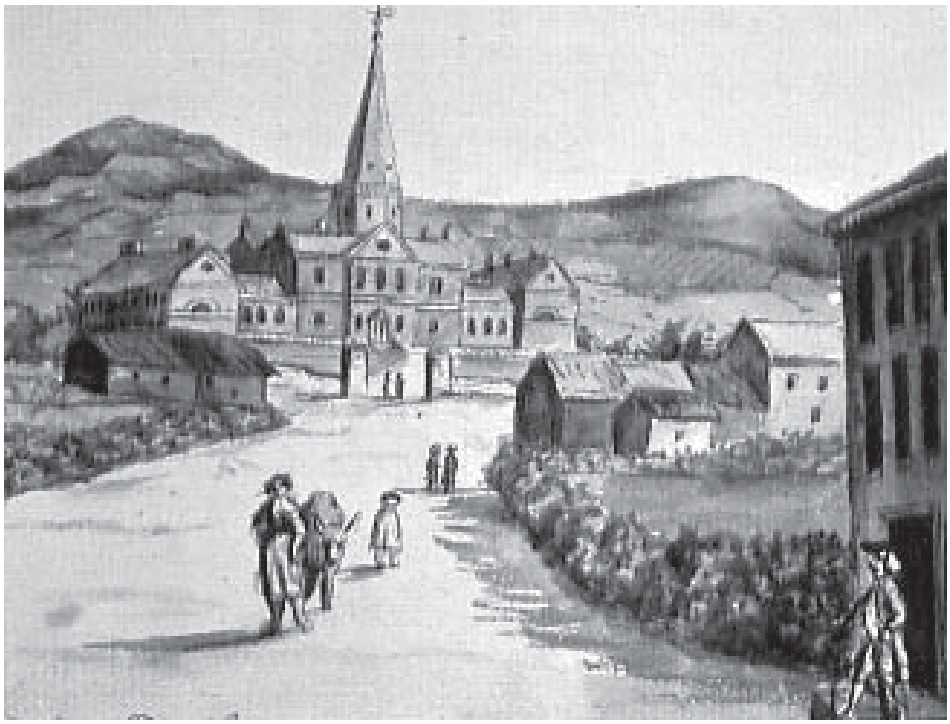
Chairman.

Field number 6 was below the present Burying Ground. In April,1827, work began on the walls which were erected as funds would permit.

The old gate, which stood where St Enoch's Church now stands, was bricked up and the new gate was erected on what was then called 'Hill Hamiltons Avenue' (now Henry Place), and at the same time a gate lodge was built for the Burying Ground's caretaker.

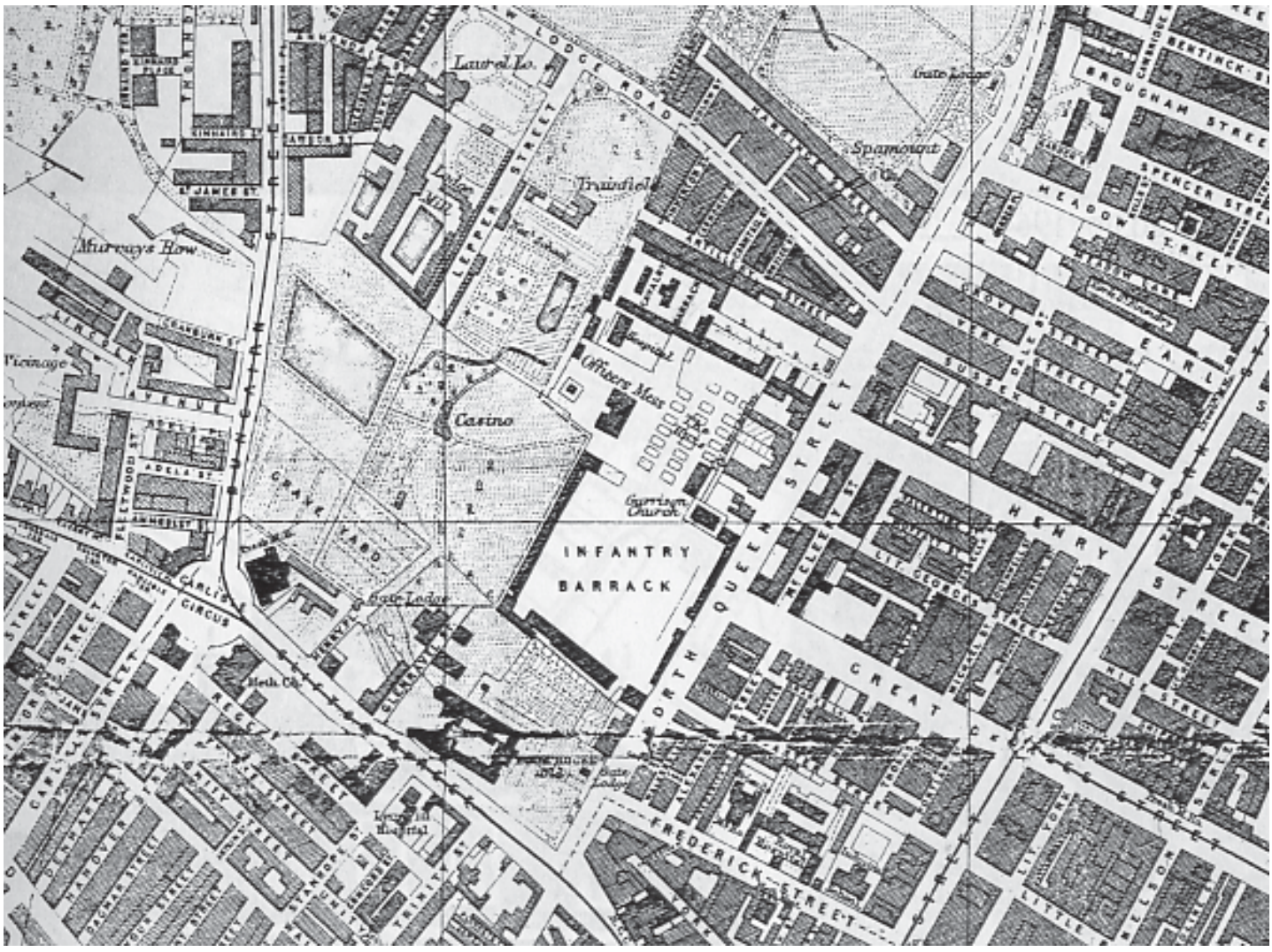
By 1828 the new section of the Burying Ground was ready and people began to buy lots almost as soon as it had opened. Because of this the Committee decided to keep a registry of all the burials taking place and this began three years later in 1831.

Before this new part was opened, a new problem was now facing the Committee of the Burying Ground, and of all the burying grounds throughout the British Isles. That problem was 'Bodysnatching'.

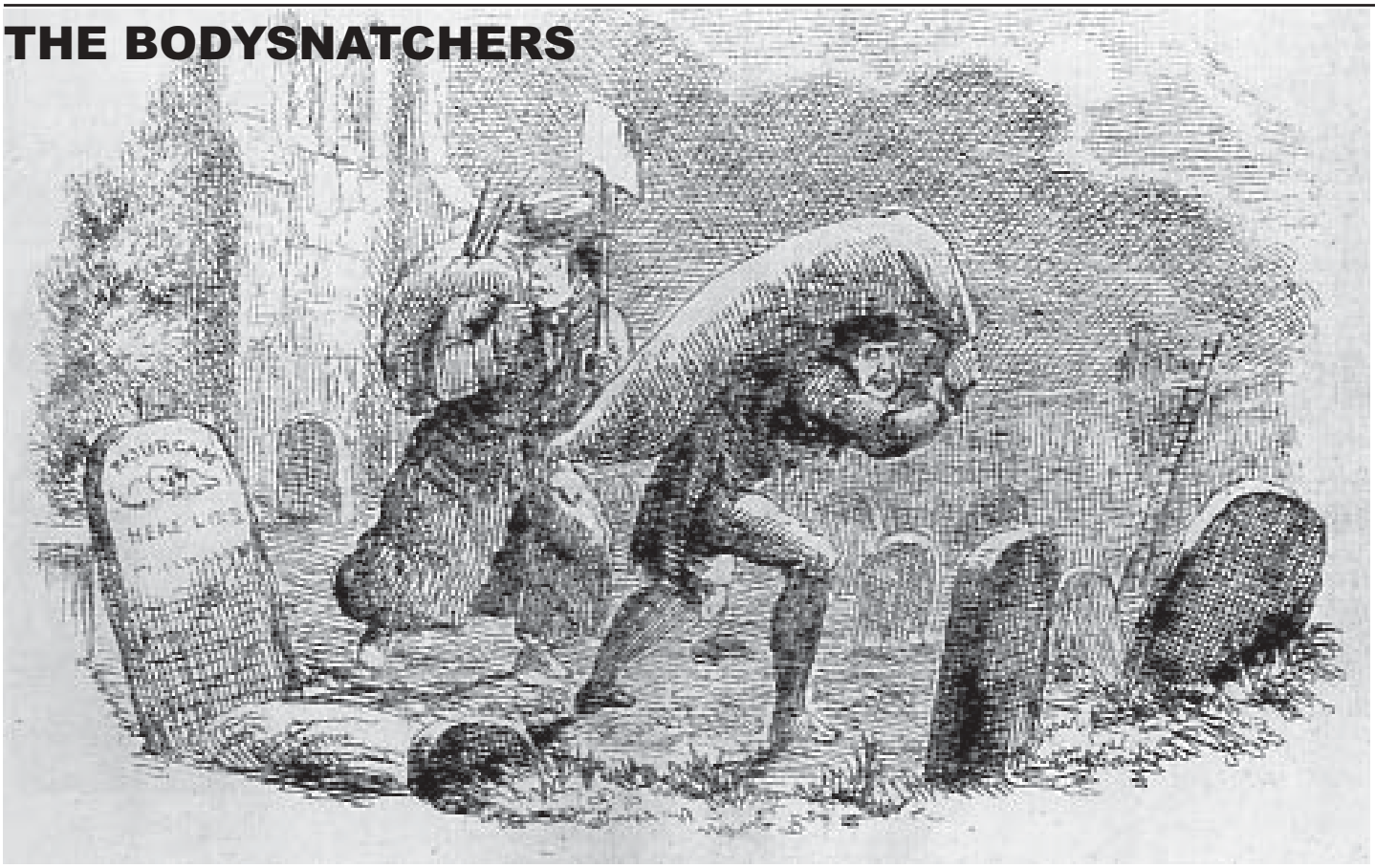


ABOVE - The Poor House

BELOW - Belfast map of 1888 showing the cemetery



THE BODYSNATCHERS



In the late 1700s and early 1800s the medical profession was very much in its infancy, and the doctors of the time needed dead bodies on which to carry out experiments so that they could try to fully understand the workings of the human body.

The legal supply of these bodies was useless to the doctors because only the bodies of those hanged were all they could obtain as subjects for anatomical dissection.

Not only were the bodies of hanged criminals scarce, but the anatomists were not free from the vengeance of the families and friends of the hanged criminals.

So, where there were those engaged in medical research there was the need for dead bodies. It was this need that gave rise to a new crime - a crime that became known as 'bodysnatching'.

This was not the start of bodysnatching. In fact the first official notice of bodysnatching is recorded in the minutes of the Edinburgh College of Surgeons on May 20th, 1711. It reads as follows:

Of late there has been a visitation of sepulchers in the Greyfriars churchyard by some who, most un-christianly, have been, stealing, or at least attempting to carry away, the bodies of the dead out of their graves.

It is unknown what the reason was behind that particular case of bodysnatching, but up to the demand of the early 1800s, incidents of such as this were few and far between.

In the late 1700's bodysnatching was carried out by gravediggers and anatomy students, but as high prices began to be paid for corpses, others became involved. These people were variously known as 'Resurrectionists', 'Crunchers' and 'Burkers'.

The latter was a direct allusion to the infamous Ulstermen (today referred to as Ulster Scots) Burke and Hare who, in 1827, extended their conception of the activity to murder.

William Hare ran a tramps, lodging house in Tanner's Close, Edinburgh. In Christmas 1827, an old man died in this house owing Hare the sum of £4 for rent. Everything was made ready for the funeral, and it was then that Hare had the idea to make up for his rent loss.

Burke

Hare

Knox

He told his friend, William Burke, that there was no prospect of him ever getting his £4 from the old man's relations, so he proposed to take the body out of the coffin and sell it to one of the schools of anatomy in the city.

The pair returned at once to Tanner's Close unscrewed the lid of the coffin, removed the body of the old man and replaced it with bark and stones. They refastened the lid of the coffin, and after concealing the corpse in a bed they then accompanied the bark and stones to the cemetery and saw it decently buried.

Burke and Hare later took the body to a Dr. Knox and sold it for £7.10s; Hare receiving his £4, and Burke taking the balance. This was a 'sell' which went on to lead to quite a few horrific murders.

Burke and Hare went on selling the bodies of those they had murdered in Hare's lodging house, but unknown to them their last murder was to be a big mistake for the pair, due to the fact that the victim was very well known in Edinburgh.

'Daft' Jamie was recognised by Dr. Knox's door-keeper and also by several of his students. The police soon received a 'tip off' and they raided 10 Surgeon's Square which was Dr. Knox's school. Inside they found the murdered body of a woman named Mary Docherty, and soon after Burke and Hare were arrested.

At their trial in 1828 Hare turned King's Evidence and Burke was sentenced to death, with the order that his body should be handed over for public anatomy.

In Belfast the bodysnatchers stole from all the graveyards; Shankill, Friar's Bush and Clifton Street. It is unknown just how many bodies were stolen, because of the way in which the work was carried out.

The bodysnatchers would come into the grave-yard in the middle of the night, look for a fresh grave and dig it up using a wooden shovel so as to make less noise. They then removed the body from the coffin and refilled the grave. The body was then placed in a barrel and later sold.

Due to the fact that there was no real local demand for bodies, the bodysnatchers then had the added problem of shipping the bodies to where the demand was, either in Edinburgh, London or Dublin.

Numerous corpses had been discovered in transit to the medical schools.

They were shipped in brine as bacon, and most of those discovered coming from Belfast were from the Burying Ground at Clifton Street. For example, in 1828 the body of a man named John Fairclough was found in Warrington, England. It was proved that the body was originally stolen from Clifton Street graveyard.

However, four years before this, the bodysnatchers dug up the wrong grave in Clifton Street graveyard. The following appeared in the Belfast Newsletter on the 20th of January, 1824:-

A REWARD OF FIFTY POUNDS

Is offered by the COMMITTEE of the BELFAST CHARITABLE SOCIETY, to any person who shall, within Six Weeks, give information to the STEWARD against, and prosecute to conviction, the Person or Persons guilty of the atrocious offence of entering the Burying ground behind the Poor-House, on Monday Night, 12th inst. and raising an Infants Coffin, several years interred. It remained unopened on the ground.

Signed, by order,
WM. ST. JOHN SMYTH,
CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE.
Poor-House
Jan 17, 1824

There are many incidents of bodysnatching recorded in the files of the *Belfast Northern Whig*. One such case was of particular interest, due to the manner in which the accused were arrested. The report told of the appearance in court of James Stewart, James Pemblico and Robert Wright who were all charged with the offence of attempting to steal away bodies from the New Burying Ground (Clifton Street) on the night of the 24th of November, 1827.

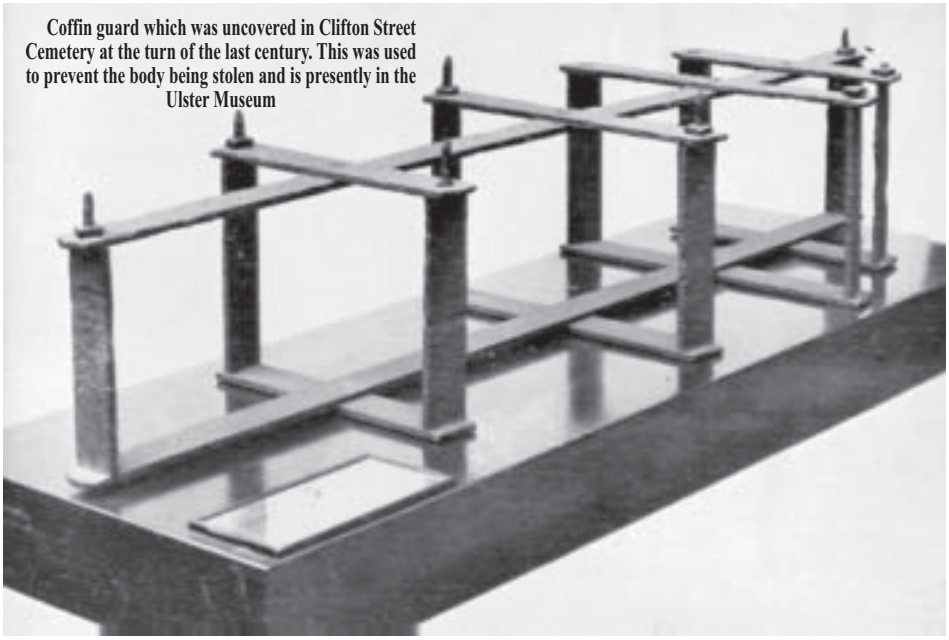
The report continues:-

Between five o'clock and six o'clock on Monday morning, the watchman at the cemetery was accosted by one of the prisoners who asked him did he ever ' rise a body ' as it was a proceeding which gave him such delight. The watchman surprised at the question, immediately entered the graveyard but found all right and on his return he was told that if he would consent to join in the work, money and drink should be given him in abundance.

Determined to detect the persons who attempted to bribe him from his duty, he manifested an inclination to come to terms and subsequently made an appointment to meet his unknown friends at a public house in Park Lane at 10 o'clock. He met the three prisoners there, who treated him with ale, entered fully on the subject, discussed the pleasures of bodysnatching, and promised to give him two sovereigns for allowing them to enter the church-yard in the night. This he agreed to and received a sovereign on account. He informed Mr Kilshaw, his employer, of the matter and in the course of the day five constables were placed to watch.

Needless to say, the bodysnatchers were apprehended 'red handed' and the watchman commended for his action. Unfortunately, this prosecution did not discourage other

Bodysnatchers at work by Dicken's illustrator, Phiz



Coffin guard which was uncovered in Clifton Street Cemetery at the turn of the last century. This was used to prevent the body being stolen and is presently in the Ulster Museum

bodysnatchers from invading the burying ground as many reports in the *Belfast Northern Whig* covering the years 1824 to 1832 show.

The families of those buried in Clifton Street used many different devices to prevent raids on their loved one's graves.

A lot of the families kept watch on the graves at night until the bodies were in a state of decomposition. Other families hired watchmen to do this for them, and it was not uncommon for these watchmen to enter the burying ground armed.

Until 1831 the Burying Ground committee would not allow watchmen into the graveyard if they had guns, but after a meeting held in that year the committee decided to supply their own watchmen with firearms. However on the 27th of February, 1833, there was cause for an investigation:

Poor-house 27th February, 1833

At a special meeting of the committee held for the purpose of enquiring into the circumstances connected with firing shots in the graveyard on the night of Monday last, one of which struck the barrack, and entered through one of the windows of the room in which the soldiers were sleeping.

Two soldiers of the 80th regiment deposed that at about half past twelve on Monday night, the 25th inst., a shot was fired from the rear of the barracks, which entered through the centre pane of one of the windows, and that about two o'clock, four o'clock and six o'clock the shots were repeated but they do not think that any of them struck the barracks. On the whole they are sure that about six shots were fired.

After having heard the statement of the men who were on watch on Monday night, the 25th inst. - viz, John McIlwain and James McFarlane fired several shots on Monday evening unnecessarily, thereby causing both alarm and danger, thereby acting contrary to their orders, and in consequence thereof the committee be summoned for Saturday to take into consideration the propriety of not allowing firearms to the watchmen in future.

(Signed) A. C. Macartney. Chairman

The two watchmen were 'sacked' for firing shots to pass the time. Before the new watchmen had started, a decision was taken that they should have only blank ammunition for their guns, and that a report was to be made each morning.

Eventually, though, the Society became completely frustrated with the system of watchmen guarding the Burying Ground. This led to the withdrawal of watchmen for good. The watchmen, it seemed, could not be trusted to keep or protect the Burying Ground satisfactorily. So disgusted were one family with the entire situation that they made their own 'coffin guard'. This was an apparatus (used quite successfully) to prevent the removal of a dead body from its coffin, being a cage like framework in which the coffin was placed. Bars were then placed across the top, bolted, and the coffin was then buried. One of these was found in the graveyard in the early 1900's, and is now on show in the Ulster Museum. (Pictured above)

Other ways to prevent bodysnatching included the building of large vaults for burial, and the placing of stone slabs on top of graves all of which can be seen today in Clifton Street graveyard.

Bodysnatching ended as suddenly as it had began. In the early part of the 1830s a bill was passed legalising and regulating the conduct of schools of anatomy and surgery. Almost at a stroke the operations of the bodysnatchers were over.

It is easy to see that bodysnatching was an unnecessary evil and one that thrived on the anomalous nature of the law.

One authority on the subject has written of the whole episode:

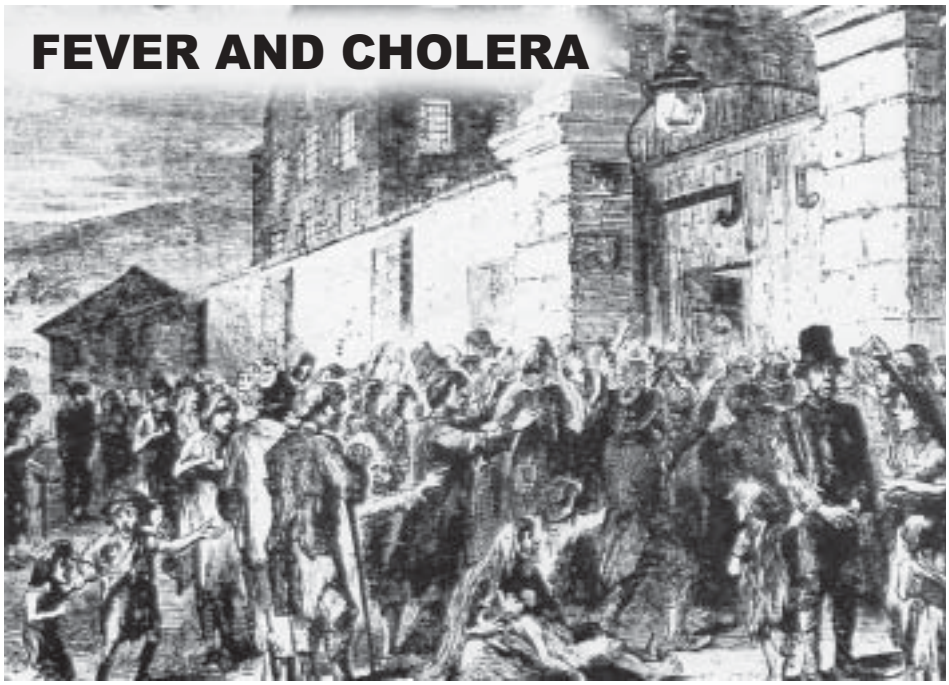
There was little choice in the matter. It was either a violation of graveyards so that the profession of medicine might rest on the sure ground of a knowledge of human anatomy, or that ignorance should prevail and medicine fall to the level of quacks and charlatans.

One of the guns which was used by the guards at Clifton Street Cemetery to prevent the activities of the bodysnatchers.
It is presently preserved in Clifton House which was the old Poor House

NORTHERN WHIG MONDAY 6TH FEBURARY 1832

POOR-HOUSE BURYING GROUND - We have been requested to state, that, in consequence of those persons lately interred in the Poor-House Burying Ground, having been in the habit of firing guns, charged with slugs and bullets, which sometimes alarmed the neighbourhood and passengers, and also injured the tombs and head-stones in the grounds; the Poor-House Committee lately came to a resolution, that they would employ two responsible persons, for whose faithfulness they required considerable security, and for whose correct conduct they feel themselves accontable, to watch the graves of all persons buried in these grounds; and who will require but a trifling remuneration. They will be well armed; and will have watch-dogs constantly with them. This arrangement, if faithfully adhered to, will give general satisfaction, and relieve the minds of many families.

FEVER AND CHOLERA



On the 7th of April, 1846, 33-year-old Margaret Owen, who lived in 34 Henry Street, was buried in the poor section of the New Burying Ground. Her cause of death was recorded as fever.

Nothing much was thought of by this death. After all, people were dying of fever at a rate of around one hundred per year. However, what was different about this death, was the fact that it was the first in a new epidemic for this burying ground.

The town of Belfast had been hit by a fever epidemic in 1836-1837. At that time the fever was accompanied by outbreaks of Influenza (flu) and Erysipelas, which was a skin disease caused by a bacterial infection. Together these caused a very high death rate in the town.

The fever which struck Belfast in the 1840s was in fact two different types - Typhus and Relapsing. Both of which were carried by body lice, fleas and ticks.

Both fevers first caused pain in the joints and muscles, extreme headache, continuous vomiting, widespread rash, and later a slow and painful death for its unfortunate victim.

At the same time as the fever outbreak, Ireland was facing another, more serious problem, the potato blight, otherwise known as the 'Great Famine'.

The 'famine' had a less disastrous effect in the north of Ireland, than on many other parts of the country. One reason for this was due to the fact that the people in the northern counties were not completely dependent on the potato for survival, since oatmeal was traditionally an additional article of their diet.

Nevertheless the North was severely affected, and many people left their homes in search of food and work in the towns. The fever epidemic which followed was attributed to the introduction of infection by the ten thousand refugees who had crowded into the poorer areas of Belfast.

Andrew Malcolm, who was a doctor in the General Hospital in Frederick Street, at the time of the outbreak wrote:

We will remember the aspect of the hordes of poor who thronged into the town from all parts. Famine depicted in the look, in the hue, in the voice and gait. The food of a nation had been cut off; the physical strength of a whole people was reduced; and this condition, highly favourable to the impression of the plague-greath, resulted in the most terrible epidemic that this island has ever experienced.

What was happening was simple; the poor from all over Ireland were coming into the already overcrowded poor areas of Belfast in search of food and work, and with them they brought the fever.

In 1847 the *People's Magazine* printed a series of articles written by Dr Andrew Malcolm entitled 'Sanitary Inspections of Belfast' and in one of these he presented a map of the New Lodge district, back-to-back houses were shown along with pumps, open sewers and other problems. He examined in detail the various 'rows' and 'courts' and the few streets which then existed. In these he found gross overcrowding with most two up-two-down houses with sometimes upwards of five families in each.

Other poor areas such as Carrick Hill and the Pound Loney were worse again. Indeed, all the poorer districts of Belfast with their appalling conditions proved no hindrance to the spread of this new fever epidemic.

It was not long before large numbers of people began to die. Bodies were being found in the streets and others were being left outside graveyards for burial by their families or friends. At the New Burying Ground, sometimes up to four bodies were being found outside on Henry Place. For example on the 27th of February, 1847, the body of an unknown two-year-old child was found on the doorstep of the graveyard gatehouse, it was the first of many.

By now the number of people dying was rising at an alarming rate with sometimes upwards of one hundred people being buried in the New Burying Ground every week. When the fever had reached its height, Belfast was struck with outbreaks of dysentery and small-pox. By now, preventing the fever and other diseases was seen as an impossible task.

More worrying, was the new outbreak of dysentery. This disease attacked the bowels and abdomen before leading to a very painful death.

The first person to die of dysentery and to be buried in the New Burying Ground was 26-year-old Alexander McMurry. He was an inmate of the Poor-House. The day after his death, another seven people died from the same disease - all of them inside the Poor-House.

To cope, the Board of Health, which had just been set up, had to enlarge the Union Infirmary and move Poor-House inmates (thought to carry the disease) into it. The Board also had built a large shed in the grounds of the General Hospital which was facing the Poor-House in Frederick Street.

Two unused hospitals, the College Hospital, which was in the old Barracks, and the Cholera Hospital were once again opened. Later tents were erected in the grounds of the Workhouse to accommodate 700 convalescent patients.

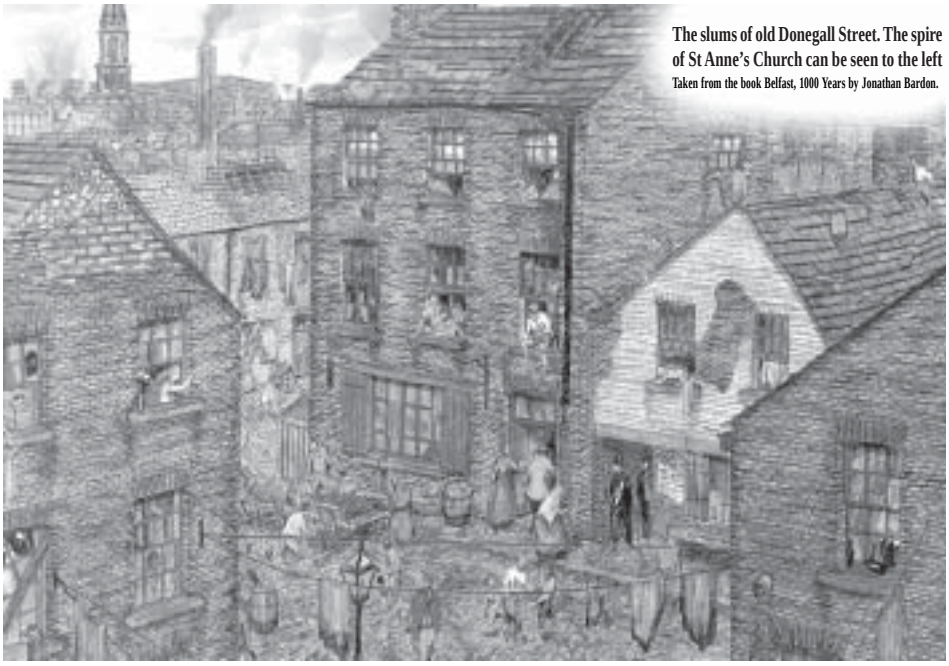
Back in the burying grounds of Belfast, burial space was running out, and at the New Burying Ground, bodies were arriving faster than the gravediggers could accomadate them.

On the 9th of July, 1847, the *Belfast Newsletter* described the scene in the New Burying Ground:-

In the course of the present week we saw no fewer than twenty coffins, containing the corpses of persons who had died of fever in the various hospitals in town during the proceeding twenty four hours lying for interment in that portion of the New Burying Ground appropriated for that purpose; while cart loads would arrive before the common grave was ready for their reception:

A sight so melancholy was never before witnessed in Belfast.

Some of the coffins contained more than one body in each, as the registry books of the Burying Ground show, and sometimes up to five bodies were placed in one coffin (which were really large boxes). Soon after, coffins were not used at all. When the



The slums of old Donegall Street. The spire of St Anne's Church can be seen to the left
Taken from the book Belfast, 1000 Years by Jonathan Bardon.

poor ground was full, the cholera ground, which was last used in the epidemic of the 1830s, was once again opened. Even the gap between the Antrim Road wall, and the graveyard wall was used.

In the *Belfast Newsletter* of the 16th of July, 1847, it was reported that the parish ground was full. The congestion at Friar's Bush was as serious as at the New Burying Ground. At the same time the Rev. Richard Oulton described how he was shocked by the sights to be seen in the New Burying Ground, where coffin was heaped upon coffin until the last was not more than two inches below the surface.

The problem now was burial space. More would have to be found or the fever epidemic would have to be stoped quickly. At this time it was fully realised that to control the epidemic, it was first necessary to control vagrancy, and thus prevent more paupers coming into the town.

To do this a meeting was held by the Poor-House Committee on the 20th of July, 1847. It was at this meeting that it was agreed that all beggars were to be 'placed' in the House of Correction (prison) and that this was to begin on August 3rd.

The following is the first report on the beggars first convicted:

August 3rd, House of Correction.

Present. Dr Denvir, J.Getty, Dr C. Purdon, A.J. McCrory, J. Knox, Rev R. Oulton, Rev W. Bruce in the Chair.

Samuel Burns aged 16 from parish of Kilmore near Crossgar convicted of begging on Carrick Hill to be confined for one fortnight.

James McDonnell aged 25 from Drumane, Tullamore West, latterly from Glasgow sent by the town found begging in Hercules Place to be confined for one fortnight from yesterday.

Biddy Flinn who had with her a 10 year old son and a child about 2 years old living in Queery's Entry, North Street, was found begging in College Square North to be confined for one fortnight from yesterday with the liberty to have the children with her.

As the days went on the lists became longer at each session as more and more beggars were being arrested and confined to the House of Correction.

If the idea of doing this was to prevent begging in the streets by people who had come to Belfast for that purpose and to scare away others, then it had worked. The Poor-House minutes for the work done in the House of Correction continue until February 5th, 1848, which was when the last of the vagrants were disposed of either by dismissal or transfer to the Police Office.

From August there was a gradual decline in the fever. By November the General Hospital ceased to admit any further fever cases, and the following month the Barrack Hospital was closed as the new Workhouse Hospital provided sufficient beds for any remaining cases.

At the end of 1847 Dr Andrew Malcolm was warning people through the pages of the *Peoples Magazine*, that cholera was spreading at an alarming rate towards Europe, and at the same time the Board of Health, which had been set up to combat the fever epidemic, was being disbanded, even though Belfast was still suffering a high death rate. According to the census of 1841, the mortality rate per 1,000 in Belfast was 28% the average age of death was nine years, and one half of the population was under the age of 20 years.

Dr Malcolm, having demonstrated that Belfast suffered to an unusual extent from preventable disease, went on to examine the sanitary state of the town in detail. He dealt first of all, with housing and reported the following:

The great majority of the poorer houses in this town consist of four rooms varying in size from 7 feet to 10 feet square in two stories. They are generally occupied by two families... We have known as many as eighteen or twenty persons sleeping within such limited apartments;... Poor lodging-house keepers have been known to cram three beds into one apartment and three persons into each bed.

The first case of cholera occurred in the Lunatic Asylum on the 1st of November, 1847, and for upwards of a month was the only case.

This was Asiatic cholera which had last appeared in the town in 1832 and affected almost 3,000 people, killing over 500, most of whom are buried in the poor ground of Clifton Street.

Soon this disease began to appear in various localities in the town. A cholera hospital was opened in Howard Street, and the General Hospital in Frederick Street was enlarged to treat cases from the North Queen Street and 'Sailortown' areas, the Union Hospital dealing with the rest of the town.

In the Poor-House, great care was taken to prevent the entry of infection. During the new cholera threat, no inmate was allowed out and no one was allowed to come in. Only on Sundays did the inmates get out, and this was only to go to their places of worship under strict supervision.

During this epidemic the Poor-House escaped infection, entirely due to these measures being taken. The poor who had died of cholera outside the house were causing the committee in charge of the burying ground a major problem of where to bury them.

Wednesday 9th July 1847

Present. Dr Stevelly, Dr Denvir, Dr Cooke, J Getty, J Knox, R Magee, R Simms.

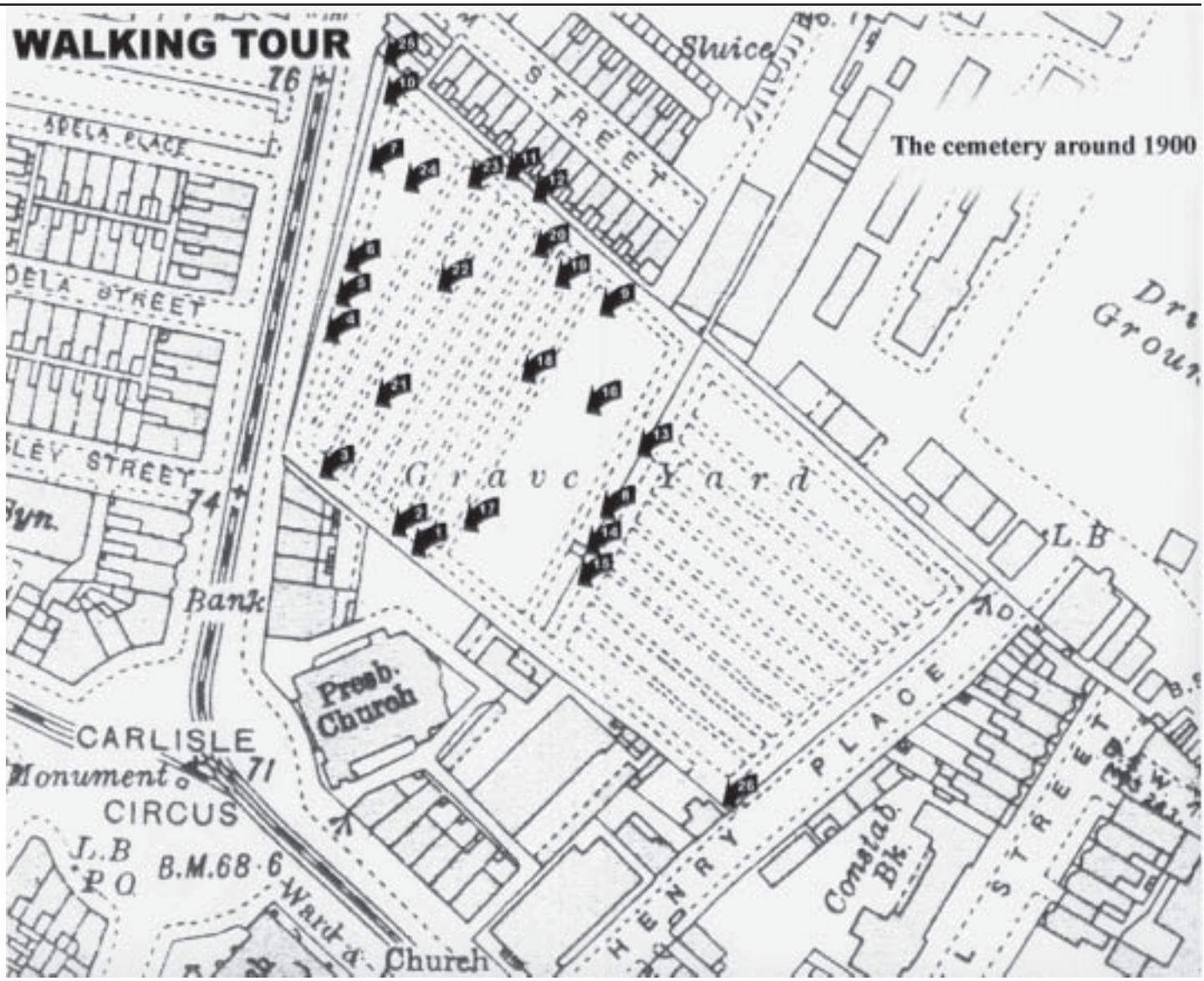
Rev W Bruce in the Chair.

This meeting was summoned in consequence of the very great difficulty of finding burial ground for the poor in the present crisis.

At the suggestion of the board of health, a certificate as to the safety from infection in opening the graves of bodies buried in the time of cholera in 1832 and 1833, was signed by many of the most respectable medical practitioners.

And so, after this meeting the order was given that the mass grave of the earlier cholera victims was to be reopened.

However, the cholera outbreak did not last as long as had been expected and was claiming fewer victims. Soon the scare was over, and when it was the mass grave at the burying ground was filled in for the last time.



Clifton Street Burying Ground is the final resting place of many of Belfast's forefathers, as well as some of its wayward sons. Everyone from mill owners, shipbuilders, paupers, thieves, politicians and political rebels all rest within its walls.

The following is a tiny selection of some of the people buried here. Not all are famous or well known, but all show the diversity of the people buried here.

Given that there are thousands laid to rest here it would be impossible to conduct a tour of all the graves. It would also be impossible to look at all the graves of noted individuals as there are simply too many of them. Another feature of this tour is the fact that it only looks at the Upper Ground. This is due to timing of the tour and we think most people will agree that up to three hours spent walking around a graveyard just might be a little bit too much! As mentioned, the purpose of the tour is to show the diversity of those buried here be they rich or poor, skilled and unskilled. Where else would you get Unionist MP's lying alongside Nationalist leaders? After all, as the old saying goes, we are all equal in death!

Remember man as you pass by
As you are now so once was I
As am am now so you shall be
Prepare yourself to follow me

Inscription on tombstone in Lower Ground

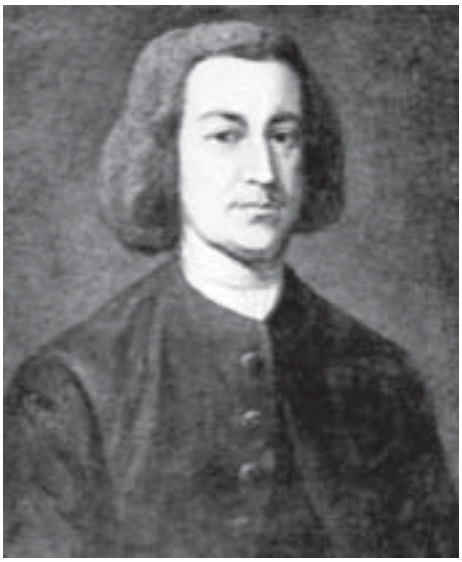
1 - The Hyndman memorial still remains almost intact with the exception of a small statue of a dog which stood on top of it. It is unknown what the reason was behind this particular statue but, at a guess, it would be almost safe to assume that it

was a devoted family pet.

This statue created another story, only this time it was a widely known story given a local theme. The story was that the statue was erected on the grave to commemorate Hyndman's dog which lay on his grave after his death until the dog itself died. A nice story but completely untrue in relation to Belfast. The true story occurred in Edinburgh and surrounded a dog which became known as Greyfriars Bobby. The basic story is told on one of the many web sites on the subject (www.greyfriarsbobby.co.uk)

In 1858, a man named John Gray was buried in old Greyfriars Churchyard in Edinburgh. His grave levelled by the hand of time, and unmarked by any stone, became scarcely discernible; but, although no human interest seemed to attach to it the sacred spot was not wholly disregarded and forgotten. For fourteen years the dead man's faithful dog kept constant watch and guard over the grave until his own death in 1872. James Brown, the old curator of the burial ground, remembers Gray's funeral, and the dog, a Skye terrier called Bobby, was, he says, one of the most conspicuous of the mourners. The grave was closed in as usual, and next morning Bobby, was found, lying on the newly-made mound. This was an innovation which old James could not permit, for there was an order at the gate stating in the most intelligible characters that dogs were not admitted. Bobby was accordingly driven out; but next morning he was there again, and for the second time was discharged. The third morning was cold and wet, and when the old man saw the faithful animal, in spite of all chastisement, still lying shivering on the grave, he took pity on him, and gave him some food. This recognition of his devotion gave Bobby the right to make the churchyard his home; and from that time until his own death he never spent a night away from his master's tomb.

Often in bad weather attempts were made to keep him within doors, but by dismal howls he succeeded in making it known that this interference was not agreeable to him, and he was always allowed to have his way. At almost any time during the day he could be seen in or about the churchyard, and no matter how rough the night, nothing could induce him to forsake that hallowed spot, whose identity he so faithfully preserved.



2 - Valentine Jones was one of the early builders of the town of Belfast. He was engaged in commerce with the West Indies in partnership with a Mr Bateson, and later went on to run an extensive wine trade, his premises occupying almost one side of Wineseller Entry. Valentine Jones was involved in almost every public venture of importance in Belfast, particularly the founding and establishing of the Belfast Charitable Society, and he contributed to the building of their poor-house. He was responsible for the building of fine houses which stood on the east side of Donegall Place, and it was in one of these houses, next to the Imperial Hotel, that he spent his latter years. On a darker side he was one of those who wished to bring a slave trade to Belfast.

3 - In 1795, Henry Joy (junior) sold the Belfast Newsletter to a consortium of five Edinburgh men consisting of Robert Allen, George Gordon, Ebenezer Black, James Blair and Alexander Mackay. Robert Allen, who was a banker,would appear to have negotiated the purchase and raised the necessary capital. Soon after George Gordon, became the editor and publisher and he was later joined, in 1796, by Alexander Mackay who took over the management. After the death of Ebenezer Black in 1804, Alexander Mackay 'bought out' his associates and became the sole proprietor of the newspaper. He remained the proprietor of the Belfast Newsletter until his death in November, 1844.

The newspaper remained within his family up until 1989, when it was sold by Mr O. Henderson who was the great, great, great-grandson of Alexander Mackay.

4 - In this vault are buried the remains of Dr Alexander Haliday and his nephew, Dr William Haliday.

Dr Alexander Haliday was the most distinguished physician in the north of Ireland for much of the latter part of the eighteenth century. He was the first president of the Linen Hall Library and was also closely connected with the Belfast Charitable Society. In 1770 he played a key role in bringing peace when the 'Hearts of Steel' attacked the Belfast Barracks after one of their members had been arrested and taken there. His nephew, Dr William Haliday, was also connected with the Belfast Charitable Society and was an early president of the Belfast Medical Society.

5 - This vault is the resting place of the Luke family. Buried here is the body of Samuel Luke, a merchant who lived at 4 Antrim Place (lower Antrim Road). Born in Belfast in 1791, he died in June, 1844.

Also buried here is James Luke who, along with John Thompson, became partners of the Belfast Commercial Bank in 1821. This bank went on to become the Belfast Banking Company; and James Luke became a director. He died in London in October, 1862, at the age of 79 years.

6 - Without doubt the most famous person buried in the New Burying Ground is the United Irishman,Henry Joy McCracken. Henry Joy McCracken was born in High Street Belfast, on the 31st of August, 1767. His father was John McCracken, who was captain, and part owner of a vessel which traded between Belfast and the West Indies. His mother was Ann Joy, daughter of Francis Joy who had established the Belfast Newsletter in September, 1737. The Joy's had, in all probability, fled to England from religious persecution in France, coming to Ireland with the armies of James I.

The McCrackens, generations earlier, had settled at Hillhall near Lisburn, having been driven from Scotland during the persecution of the Covenanters by Claverhouse.

After John McCracken and Ann Joy married they set up home in High Street next to Ann's brother, Henry Joy, and it was there that most of their children were born.

Henry Joy McCracken had four brothers, William, Robert (who died in infancy), Francis and John. He also had two sisters, Margaret and Mary Ann.

Later in life Henry Joy McCracken became acquainted with Thomas Russell, both of whom were associated with William Drennan and Theobald Wolfe Tone and a number of others, the most prominent of whom was Samuel Neilson, the son of the Presbyterian minister of Ballyroney. At this time the idea was born among them of uniting their fellow countrymen, Protestant and Catholic, into one grand confederacy of 'United Irishmen'.

Soon after the "Society of United Irishmen" was born. McCracken laboured with the energy of his enthusiastic nature to promote the interests of the Movement, but at no time did he come forward as a leader or seek to obtain any position of honour in the Society, which he was instrumental in establishing. The main aims of the Society were to break the connection with England and win independence for Ireland. However, once these aims became clear it was outlawed by the authorities and many of its members were taken prisoner and held in various prisions throughout Ireland.

Henry Joy McCracken was arrested and taken to Kilmainham jail in Dublin where his brother William was already incarcerated. Both were the first 'Unitedmen' to be held in this jail. Henry Joy McCracken spent almost a year in this prison, but had to be released in 1797 because of his failing health.

After his release he returned to Belfast, and almost immediately set about organising the North for a planned rising. Soon after he was appointed Adjutant-General for Antrim, then Commander-in-Chief of the 'Northern United Irish Army'.

During this period there existed another Society called 'The Defenders'. They were mainly Roman Catholic, and their object was to defend the rights of their class and creed when attacked. When the plans were being made for the United Irishmen's rebellion the Defenders joined with them.

The plan of the rebellion was to attack a large number of towns throughout Ireland; and Henry Joy McCracken was determined to make his chief attack on the town of Antrim. In command of around 3,000 men, from both the United Irishmen and The Defenders, he set out to attack the town on Thursday the 7th of June, 1798.

When they arrived within sight of the town they saw that a number of homes and other buildings had been set on fire by the retreating troops. McCracken had planned to attack the town from four different directions with four columns three of which were to arrive at 2.30pm and the fourth, from Randalstown, to enter by Bow Lane soon afterwards. Unknown to McCracken, the royal troops had received reinforcements from Blair's Camp. What followed was a long and bloody battle in which the Royal Troops defeated the 'United Men', but at the great expense of many killed and wounded. Henry Joy McCracken ordered his men to retreat, and he himself escaped to the Cavehill where he stayed in the home of a follower named David Bodel. Bodel got in touch with McCracken's friends informing them of his whereabouts.

Later a pass was obtained under a false name for McCracken to flee in a foreign vessel which was tied up in Larne. When all was ready he proceeded towards Larne accompainied by John Quiery and Gavin Watt, but when they crossed the commons at Carrickfergus they met four yeomen, one of whom, a man named Niblock, knew McCracken. All three were arrested at once and taken to Carrickfergus, then soon after to the old Artillery Barracks in Belfast.

On the 17th of July, 1798, McCracken was taken for trial to the exchange at the bottom of Donegall Street, his trial being under the presidency of Colonel Montgomery. Just before the

trial began, McCracken's father was approached by the crown prosecutor who told him that there was enough evidence to convict his son, but that his life would be spared if he would inform on his friends, in particular Robert Simms. His father replied that he would rather his son die, than to do such a dishonorable action. He was soon found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging.

At five o'clock Henry Joy McCracken was taken to the place of execution: the old market house, which stood at the corner of High Street and Cornmarket, which had been given to the town by his great grandfather. His sister, Mary Ann, was by his side right up to the gallows, and once there McCracken tried to address the people who had gathered, but his speech was muffled by the soldiers who had began to shout and stamp their horses' feet.

In a few minutes all was over. His body was then given to family and friends. His body was taken to the family home in Rosemary Street, and soon after he was buried in the Episcopal church in High Street.

A number of years later this graveyard was cleared away, and in 1902, what are belived to be his bones were unearthed and placed in a coffin, and then kept in the home of Francis Joseph Bigger for seven years. On the 12th of May, 1909, the remains of Henry Joy McCracken were buried in the grave of his sister Mary Ann in the Clifton Street burying ground.

Before his coffin was buried, a sealed phial (glass bottle) was placed inside it. The phial contained a parchment and written on this were the following;

These bones were dug up in
the old graveyard in High
Street in 1902, and from
several circumstances are
belived to be those of Henry
Joy McCracken.
They were reverently treated
and were placed here by Robert
May of Belfast, 12 May 1909,
when the monument was
placed to his beloved sister.

There are in fact two monuments erected on this grave, one, erected by Francis Joseph Bigger, is to the memory of Henry Joy McCracken, and the other (mentioned above) is erected to the memory of Mary Ann McCracken on which appears the following inscription;

Mary Ann McCracken
the beloved sister of
Henry Joy McCracken
born 8th July 1770
wept by her brothers scaffold
17 July 1798
died 26th July 1866
DILEAS GO h-EAG
(Faithful until death)

When the Society of United Irishmen was founded, Mary Ann McCracken along with her sister-in-law Rose McCracken were sworn into the Movement.

After the Societies defeat at Antrim, Mary Ann helped her brother up until he was captured and later hanged. Just as Mary Ann had seen her brother make the supreme sacrifice, she also witnessed the execution of the man who had won her heart. Five years later Thomas Russell was hanged, outside Downpatrick jail, in 1803. After the exection of Russell, Mary Ann withdrew from politics and began to work for the poor of Belfast, especially those within the poor-house on North Queen Street. Here she began a number of projects which included weaving for the women and teaching for the children.

She later joined with the English prison reformer Elizabeth Fry to form a 'Ladies Committee' in the poor-house. Together they won many improvements in conditions inside the poor-house and also in the work-house on the Lisburn Road. Mary Ann was also a member of the committee which was set up in Belfast to abolish the use of 'climbing boys', who were chimney sweep helpers, and also campaigned for better conditions for children working in factories. Mary Ann McCracken's work for the poor women and children continued until her death in July, 1866.

7 - Along the same wall where the grave of Henry Joy McCracken is situated, is the grave of another famous United Irishman, William Drennan.

Drennan was born in Belfast on the 23rd of May, 1754. He was the son of Thomas Drennan,who was minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Belfast, and of his wife Anne Lennox. William Drennan obtained his early education in Belfast, and later he entered Glasgow university at the age of fifteen, and recived the MA degree in 1771. He then went to Edinburgh in 1773 to study medicine, and recived the MD degree of that university in 1778. He went to Newry in 1783 where he practised as a doctor until 1791 when he moved to Dublin.

A little known fact is that Drennan is the real founder of the United Irishmen and was the author of the Society's celebrated test. He also became the first Secretary, and went on to become President of the Movement.

Another little known fact is that Drennan based the United Irishmen on Freemasonry hence the name 'The brotherhood.'

In 1794 William Drennan was arrested and tried for publishing a 'wicked and seditious libel' which was addressed to the Irish Volunteers, but he was acquitted of this charge. This experience seems to have given him a distaste for the more extreme views in politics, and while still a keen observer and supporter of the United Irishmen, he seems to have taken no part in its projects.

Perhaps the most important legacy are his letters published as a collection by the Public Record Office in 1931, which were called The Drennan Letters. These were a pile of letters found in an old tin box in the home of John Swanwick Drennan (fourth son of William Drennan). The letters were correspondence between William Drennan in Dublin, and Martha McTeir in Belfast. Covering the period between 1791-1794, the letters give an almost daily account of the proceedings of the United

Irishmen, and also tell about the members of the Society, from Wolfe Tone to Lord Edward Fitzgearld. A lot of what is known about William Drennan today is due to these letters, along with important information about other members of the United Irishmen.

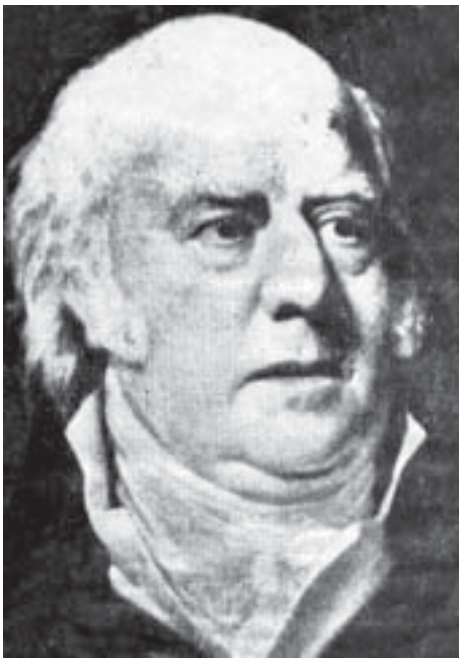
In 1800 William Drennan married an English woman named Sarah Swanwick, and in 1807 he inherited the property of his cousin Martha Young. Being now relieved from the necessity of practising his profession, he moved from Dublin to Belfast where he settled at Cabin Hill in the Upper Newtonards Road. Later he founded the Belfast Magazine, and he began to take a keen intrest in history and poetry, some of which can still be read. He died on the 5th of February, 1820, and his coffin was carried by six poor Protestants and six poor Catholics. On his tombstone is recorded the poem in which he was the first to call Ireland the 'Emerald Isle'.

William Drennan M.D.
born May 23rd 1754 died February 5th 1820
Pure, just, benign thus filial love would trace,
the virtues hallowing this narrow space,
the emerald isle may grant a wider claim
and link the patriot with his country's name.

Among the other United Irishmen buried here include Robert and William Simms **(No. 8)** who were the owners of the Ballyclare paper mill, and who were at McArt's Fort on the Cavehill with leading members of the United Irishmen including McCracken and Wolfe Tone, when they all swore allegiance to the Movement. The Simms brothers, along with Samuel Neilson, also set up the newspaper of the Movement in January 1792 which was called the Northern Star, and which was destroyed by the military in 1796.

Robert Simms was the man the authorities wanted Henry Joy McCracken to inform on at his trail in 1798. He refused, embraced his father and said 'farewell then'. Robert and William Simms remained in Belfast after the defeat of the United Irishmen, and settled at The Grove.

Another "United Man" buried here is William Steele Dickson. **(No. 9)** He was born in the townland of Ballycraigy in the parish of Carnmoney, Co. Antrim, on the 10th of November, 1744. Little is known of his early life and in his narrative he wrote, 'my boyish years were spent in the usual, and I'm sorry to add, useless routine of Irish country schools.'



At first his thoughts turned towards law and politics, but after his return from college he was persuaded by his friend, R. White, to become a candidate for the office of a Preacher of the Gospel. He was later appointed minister of Glastry, Ballyhalbert, on the 6th of March, 1771. Afterwards, he became a Doctor of Divinity at Glasgow University.

William Steele Dickson was still minister of Glastry when the Volunteer Movement began. He joined and became Chaplin and later Captian of the 'Echlinville Volunteers' which were raised by Charles Echlin and numbered, according to the roll of September, 1779, eighty armed and uniformed men. In 1791, Dickson expressed his approval of the United Irishmen, a Society which he later joined.

On the 22nd of May, 1779, at an Inn known as the Whitecross in Pottinger's Entry, Belfast, William Steele Dickson was elected the chief of the Insurgent Army in Co. Down. At a meeting the next night, in the same place, soldiers of the Royal Irish Artillery, led by Major General Barber, raided the Inn, searching for documents telling who the leaders of the United Irishmen were. No documents were found as all the leaders were elected the night before. From this it can be seen that the Major's informer had got the wrong night!

On the 5th of June, 1797, Dickson was arrested and taken to Lisburn under a military escort. He was forced to walk the whole way under a scorching sun, amid clouds of dust kicked up by the horses' feet. The reason for this action was to force him to tell them the names of the United Irishmen's leadership. He refused. After being held in Lisburn he was later taken to the 'Black Hole' in Belfast, and in July, 1797, he was again moved, this time to the Artillery Barracks where he was held for over a year.

On the 12th of August, 1798, he was taken to a prison ship which was anchored in Belfast Lough, and soon after, imprisioned in Fort George, Scotland. On the 13th of January, 1802 he was released after spending over six years in prison.

On March 4th, 1803, William Steele Dickson became minister of a newly formed congregation in Keady, Co. Armagh, his pay being £50 per year. The Lord Lieutenant, upon being asked, refused to grant the 'Royal Bounty', to what he called, 'this Rebel Pastor' whose 'crimes' had never been proven.

In 1817, William Steele Dickson retired from Keady and went to live in Belfast on the charity of a few friends. He died two days after Christmas in 1824 and was buried in the poor ground of Clifton Street, his entire funeral procession being made up by his close friend Dr H. Montgomery and eight others.

So ended the life of one who had endeavoured to neutralize the poison of prejudice and bigotry, fostered the seeds of religious liberty and sought to promote union and harmony among his fellow countrymen of all religious persuasions; a man who was buried among the people he cared for most: the poor.

The site of his grave was left unmarked for 85 years, until, in 1909, Francis Joseph Bigger erected a tombstone to his memory with the following inscription:

William Steele Dickson
Patriot-Preacher-Historian
born at Carnmoney 1744
died at Belfast 27th December 1824
DO CUM ONORA NO HEIREANN

(For the honour of Ireland)

10 - Henry Joy was born in October 1754. He was son to Robert Joy and grandson to Francis Joy, who was the founder of the Belfast Newsletter. He was the proprietor of this newspaper until 1795, and was the owner of the Cromac Paper Mills which stood near the present Ormeau Avenue.

He was also an active member of the committee of the Belfast Charitable Society, a Society which his father helped to begin. His aunt was Ann Joy, who married Captian John McCracken, and among their children were Henry Joy and Mary Ann McCracken.

Henry Joy lived in a large stately home, which stood near the top of the present Cliftonville Road, named 'The Lodge'. It was from this house that the New Lodge got its name, after the road which was built to lead to it. He later moved from 'The Lodge' to a large house in Donegall Place, and it was here that he died on the 15th of April, 1835.

11 - The Ward family were the owners of a business in Belfast which went on to become one of the largest printing firms in the British Isles, which was called Marcus Ward & Co., and which had offices in London and New York. Apart from printing, the company also manufactured artistic books, pictures, leather goods, colour printing and various sorts of stationary.

One of their inventions is still very much in use to this day - the Christmas card!

12 - Dr Andrew Marshall began his medical career as a naval surgeon. In 1805 he came to Belfast and entered into partnership with James Drummond as an apothecary in High Street. He was the first secretary and treasurer of the Belfast Medical Society which was founded in 1806, and soon after he became surgeon to the Fever Hospital and later the Poor-house.

Andrew Marshall also took an active part in the founding of the General Hospital in Frederick Street, and was its first consulting surgeon. This hospital later moved and changed its name to the Royal Victoria Hospital.

Dr Andrew Marshall

Dr. James Drummond

13 - Thomas Mulholland and his son Andrew started business as manufacturers of calico and muslin at the beginning of the 1800s. They later purchased a cotton mill which stood in Winetavern Street and soon after bought 'McCracken's Mill' which stood in Francis Street. By the 1820's Andrew had built a cotton mill in York Street which, after being burnt down in 1828, was rebuilt as a linen factory.

This factory went on to become the world famous York Street Flax Spinning Company Ltd, which remained the property of the Mulholland family until it was destroyed by the German Luftwaffe, during a bombing raid in 1941.

14 - This vault is the burying place of the Dunville family.

The firm Dunville & Co. Ltd was a leading whiskey distillery in Belfast for much of the 1800's and early 1900's.

It was all started by John Dunville who began his career by being apprenticed to William Napier, who owned a distillery in Bank Lane. John Dunville later became a partner with Napier in 1808, and in 1825 the firm became Dunville & Co. The firm was also a leading tea merchants in Ireland, but this was given up in the 1860s as more space was needed for whiskey. John Dunville died on the 21st of March, 1851, at the age of 65 years.

15 - John Ritchie came to Belfast in January, 1807, to carry on the shipyard which had been started in the town by his younger brother, Hugh, and which stood on the south side of Pilot Street. It appears that John Ritchie did not enter into any of the public movements, and on his death a short announcement appeared in the local press.

His brother Hugh is also buried in this graveyard (next to the grave of Henry Joy McCracken). He is buried along with his brother William who, it is said, brought shipbuilding to the town of Belfast around the year 1792. He died in 1834.

16 - STRANGERS GROUND. (CHOLERA GROUND)

This is a large stretch of ground at the lower part of the Upper Ground. It was used for the burial of paupers, strangers and epidemic victims. It is unknown how many people are buried

in this ground, but given the fact that it was used as a 'mass grave' twice in the mid- nineteenth century, the numbers are, without doubt, into the thousands.

17 - This grave is the burying place of Jane and Mary McClement, both of whom died as a result of suffocation by gas in their home in June, 1878.

The following newspaper report is from the Belfast Newsletter of July 1st 1878.

DEATH OF TWO SISTERS FROM SUFFOCATION.

Dr. Dill, Borough Coroner, held an inquest on Saturday evening, in Mr. McIlheaney's public-house, Old Lodge Road, on the bodies of Jane and Mary McClement, aged respectively 82 and 77.

The deceased persons were unmarried, and resided at 100, Crumlin Place, Crumlin Road, the only other occupant of the house being a servant girl.

They slept together in the attic of the house for some days previous to this occurrence, and on Friday night went to bed at the usual time. About four o'clock the following morning the servant, who slept in an adjoining apartment, heard one of the deceased moaning. She went to the bedroom door and asked what was wrong, and the younger sister replied, "Jane won't speak to me." She then attempted to open the door, but was unable to do so, it being locked according to the habit of the ladies. She again retired to bed, and at six o'clock got up to admit some workmen who were painting and papering the premises. About half an hour afterwards she went to the deceaseds' room to awaken Miss Mary, who usually arose at seven o'clock. The other sister was in the habit of sleeping till eleven o'clock. The servant knocked at the door for some time, and failing to get admission of any answer, she endeavoured again to force the door, but her efforts were fruitless. Fearing that something was wrong, she at once went to the Landscape Terrace Police Barracks, and there gave information to the matter. Sub Constable O'Brien proceeded to the house, and on forcing an entrance into the deceaseds' bed-room found them both dead. They were lying together in the bed, one body was cold and the other quite warm, as if death had taken place within a few minutes. It was also given in evidence that a gas-light in the front room had been removed a day of two previous by one of the workmen, and on putting it up again the pipe had not been properly connected, thus allowing a considerable escape. Dr. John Moore deposed that he had examined the bodies of the deceased. He belived that they had suffocated by an escape of gas, accelrated by a want of ventilation and the closeness of the atmosphere in the bed-room. The jury returned a verdict to that effect. The deceased ladies were old inhabitants of Belfast, and were greatly respected and esteemed.

18 - Micheal Andrews began business in 1810 as a linen manufacturer in York Street. As he prospered he secured land in the townland of Edenderry, and later he built a large mill on the site with houses for those who worked in it. Soon after he bought a large house from Edward Smith, in the same area which he named 'Ardoyne', in remembrance of a townland near his native Comber, and it was from this house that the area around his mill got its name. After his death the mill was taken over by his son, Thomas. Thomas died in 1875, and his brother George then took over the running of the mill.

The mill continued work until around 1923, and in 1934 the mill and the buildings around it were demolished to make room for the building of a new housing estate which today is known as 'Ardoyne'.

19 - ***Erected***
by the shipwrights of [ ]
In memory of
Robert Morrison, shipwright
who was assasinated by a Portuguise sailor
22nd of April 1810 in the 23rd year of his age

The name of the sailor who murdered Robert Morrison was Antonio De Silva, who was later hanged for his crime. The following report on his hanging is taken from George Benn's History of Belfast which was published in 1880:

"A trial, followed by a conviction for murder, caused much commotion in Belfast in 1810. A ship carpenter called Morrison had a dispute with a Portuguese sailor, one of the crew of an American ship in the habour. The Portuguese, whose name was Antonio de Silva, stabbed him to the heart with a dagger near Prince's Street. He was tried and condemned for the crime at the Summer Assizes. He was conveyed to the place of execution, which was at that period about a mile from Carrickfergus, attended by an immense concourse of spectators. So great was the crowd, as was the custom of the time, that though the distance was so short, it required an hour to reach it. The apparatus then consisted of three tall columns, with a cross beam to which the rope was attached. They stood on the bare sea-shore, and were familiary known by the name of the Three Sisters. The criminal was dressed in a white surplice, by his own particular desire, and accompanied by two Roman Catholic priests. Through Mr. Redfern, of Belfast, who spoke his language, and who had been interpreter for him at his trial, he denied his guilt."

20 - William Courtney was born in Belfast in 1809. He later left Ireland and settled in America, where he became a leading merchant in New Orleans. He died in England on the 1st of November, 1848, and the following is recorded in the registry book on his cause of death: 'Came from America to England for the benefit of his health and died there'.

21 - Edward Benn lived in 'Glenravel House' which stood in Glenravel, in the Glens of Antrim. Over the years he had developed an iron ore workings as well as a brewing business. In Belfast he was responsible for a lot of charitable work which included the building of two extensions to the poor-house (which remain to this day at Clifton House) as well as the building of the Samaritan Hospital on the Lisburn Road, the Ear, Eye and Throat Hospital on Clifton Street and the skin hospital on Glenravel Street (a street named after his home). Born in Co Armagh in 1798, he died at Glenravel on the 3rd of August, 1874.

His brother, George Benn (1801-1882), was a well-known Belfast historian who wrote a number of books on Belfast history; books which are still being used to this day.

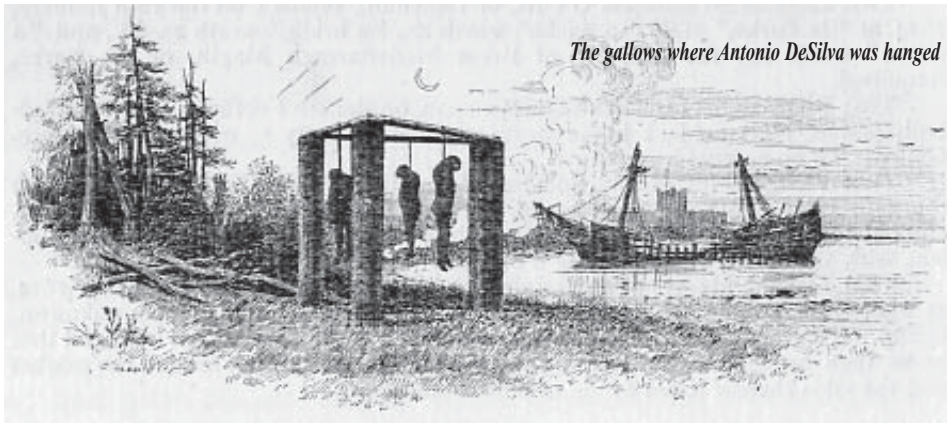
The following report on the funeral of Edward Benn is taken from the Belfast Newsletter 0f August 8th, 1874:

FUNERAL OF THE LATE EDWARD BENN, ESQ.

The remains of this much-respected and deeply lamented gentleman were conveyed from his late residence; Glenravel House, Ballymena, and interred in the New Burying Ground, Clifton Street, yesterday morning. At about half past ten o'clock, the coffin, which was of very fine French-polished oak, with massive brass enrichments, bearing the following inscription:-

EDWARD BENN
Died 3rd August 1874,
Aged 76 years.

arrived at the Northern Counties Railway Terminus, York Road, and was conveyed to a hearse in waiting. Shortly after eleven o'clock the funeral cortege started from the station for the place of interment. The hearse,which was drawn by four horses, was followed by a large number of mourning coaches and private carriages. In the foremost of the former sat the chief mourners, George Benn, Esq, brother of the deceased, John F. Hodges, Esq, M.D. brother-in-law of the deceased; and Frederick Hodges, Esq. The attendance was very large and highly influential, and represented the committees of the several charities to which the deceased had so generously contributed-namely, the Committee of the Ulster Eye and Ear Hospital, which was built entirely at his expense; the Committee of the Hospital for the Treatment of Skin Diseases, at present being built at his expense; the Committee of the Charitable Institution, to which has been added two new wings, the cost of one of which was defrayed by Mr. Benn; the Committee of the Belfast General Hospital, to which he



The gallows where Antonio DeSilva was hanged

bequeathed £1,000; the Committee of the Samaritan Hospital for Women and Children, now being erected on the Lisburn Road at his sole expense; and the Committee of the Royal Academical Institution, to which he left a collection of antiquities said to be the best private collection in the North of Ireland, together with £1,000 to erect a suitable building for their reception. Other charities which had shared his benevolence in the same uncatentatious but truly practical manner showed their appreciation of the more than ordinary ( ) they had sustained in the person of Mr. Benn by following his remains to their last resting place. The town and Corporation were represented by the Mayor (James Alexander Henderson, Esq, J.P.) and several members of the Council. Sir James Hamilton represented the Harbour Board. There was also present a large number of the leading merchants and clergymen of the town to pay the last tribute of respect to the memory of the departed gentleman. The funeral cortege passed through York Street, Donegall Street, and Clifton Street. On arriving at the burying ground the coffin was borne to the grave. The remains of the departed gentleman having been consigned to their last resting place.

22 - ***Here lieth***
the body of Nicholas Bourdot
of Chaumont in Bossegne in
Champagne who departed this life
on the 12th December 1816 aged
78 years

Nicholas Bourdot was captured during Thurot's attack made on Carrickfergus castle in 1760, and interned with fellow French prisoners in the Barracks in Belfast. Following his release in 1773, he remained in Belfast where he became a barber.

23 - Capt Wood of the Waterford Regt. Three beloved children died of the hooping cough in Belfast Jany 1804 Henertta 6 years old, Eward 3, Mary Ann 9.

Each opening sweet of early bloom
shall blush upon this infant tomb
where three lovely babbies lye
who can refuse a tear and sigh.
The redbreast aft at evening hours
shall scather moss and sweetest flowers
to deck the ground where they are laid.
The parents feel afflictions deepest Lord
the Christians yeild their children up to God
secure to meet again in bliss above
and join their angles in the realmes of love.

(The words 'hooping', 'lye' and 'angles', are spelt this way on the tombstone inscription)

24 - POOR-HOUSE DIVISION.

This is a large stretch of ground at the top section of the Upper Ground. As the name suggests, this ground was used for the burial of paupers who had died within the poor-house as well as the poor who had died elsewhere, which would have included hospitals, the work-house and jails. Like the Strangers Ground, at the other end of the Upper Ground, it was also used for the burial of those who had died in the various epidemics which struck Belfast during the last century. Also used as a poor grave was the unseen gap between the cemetery and the Antrim Road (No 25)

THE REGISTRY BOOKS

One of the most historically intresting facets of any burying ground are, without doubt, its registry books. Although the New Burying Ground was opened in 1797, it was not until 1831 that the Belfast Charitable Society began to keep a registry of all interments. It is unknown why they did not keep a registry from the begining, but one reason may be that they were more intrested in making money to finance the poor-house through the selling of the graves, than to worry about recording who was being buried in them.

However at a meeting held in the poor-house on the 18th of December 1830 it was:

Resolved -that a registry of all the interments in the Burying Ground of the Charitable Society be kept from the commencement of the next year, and that the Rev. Messrs Macartney and Hicks be requested to have a suitable book prepared for the purpose.

The first burial recorded was on the 4th of January, 1831. However, the exact number of people buried in the burying ground before that will never be known. At a rough estimate it could be guessed that around 3,600 burials could have taken place before 1831. That is if up to 100 people had been buried per year, which was below the average amount of burials taking place throughout the 1830s. The figures shown in the three volumes of the registry books are approximately:

Volume one	1831-1841,	2,640
Volume two	1841-1864,	5,489
Volume three	1865-1984,	3,109

Add on the pre-1831 figures and the number of those buried in the New Burying Ground would be as high as 14,000.

The information contained in these books is, to any historian or genealogical researcher, a historical goldmine, and to the curious, a fantastic insight to the life of Belfast over the past 160 years.

The books themselves are lined up into eight different sections which are:

1 Date of burial
2 Name of deceased
3 Profession
4 Age
5 Address
6 Grave number
7 Place of birth
8 Cost to open grave

As could be expected, there are many intresting and odd entries recorded in these books, and the following are just a few:

Sarah McNally is recorded as being a prostitute

Ann McGain who was buried on the 2nd of March, 1831. She was buried in the poor ground, and her age is recorded as 109, an amazing feat in the 1830s, especially for a pauper.

William Brown was buried on the 17th of November, 1831. His death is recorded in the normal way, but his entry adds that, 'his wife and children are in slavery in America'. How William Brown escaped from that life and became a labourer in Belfast is, without doubt, a story in itself.

Three-year-old William McKee was buried from the poor-house on the 4th of January, 1832. He died while his mother and father were locked in their cells at Armagh Gaol.

Another interesting point in the registry books is the recording of the causes of death. One such case is that of Andrew Maguire who was buried on the 12th of September, 1832. His cause of death is recorded as 'sore leg'. Others are recorded as 'sore arm', 'sore head' and one is even recorded as 'the bite of a cat'.

On the 12th of August, 1833, the first recorded murder victim was buried in the New Burying Ground. He was a 24-year-old coach helper who lived in Black's Court of Hercules Street (now Royal Avenue). However this murder must have been of no interest as none of the local newspapers carried a report on the tragedy.

The same can be said of 17-year-old Jane Gageby who was buried on the 20th of August, 1833. She worked as a servant, and lived in Mill Street. Her death is recorded as 'died from a gunshot wound received 12 days ago'. How she got this wound, whether through an accident or in a more sinister way, appears to have been overlooked by the press of the time.

A burial which took place on the 12th of January 1837 was a death which, without doubt, occured in sinister circumstances. A man named John Dalton who was a 69 year old tailor in the poor house. His death is recorded as 'harsh treatment in the House of Correction', this being the Belfast jail before the prison was built on the Crumlin Road.

On the 14th of February, 1837, the first 'unknowns' were buried in the Poor Ground. On the above date two unknown children were found dead on a Belfast Street. The amount of unknown people buried after this date was rising at an alarming rate, reaching its peak during the cholera and fever epidemics when the bodies of the victims were found in various parts of Belfast. Soon after, children's bodies were often found at the graveyard gate, left there by poor parents for burial.

On the 12th of April, 1837, Matilda Moreton was buried. She is recorded as being a widow and a beggar, aged nineteen.

Catherine Orr, aged 66, was buried on the 8th of December, 1842. The registry records her profession as 'carried a basket'.

Sarah McNally was buried on the 27th of December, 1842, after being found drowned, her profession is recorded as 'prostitute'.

On the 22nd and 23rd of August, 1842, two people who committed suicide were buried in the poor ground of the graveyard. The first was a Bangor school, teacher named John Huston. He died after taking laudnum (Tincture of Opium), and died a short time later. The second was 19-year-old Private Thompson who killed himself in the Belfast Garrison. The registry books list a large number of other people who committed suicide in various ways.

One of the most intresting entries recorded in the registry is that of the 17th of October, 1847, when 60-year-old Mary Gumming was buried. She lived in May's lane (North Queen Street) and her profession is recorded as 'mistress of a house of ill fame'.

Without doubt, a look at these books will interest any reader. In them they will find sadness and humour and at times frightening accounts of how people were in fact buried; such as those buried during the fever outbreaks of the 1830's and 1840s, when four, five and sometimes up to six people were buried in one coffin, and of others who were buried with no coffin at all.

The original copies of the registry books are kept in the Linenhall Library. Access to these books is limited however, mircrofilm copies are kept in the Public Record Office at 66 Balmoral Avenue, Belfast.

THE GATE LODGE

After the enlargement of the burying ground in the early part of the last century, a new gate was erected on what was known as Hill Hamilton's Avenue (now Henry Place) With this new gate there was also built the burying ground's first gate lodge. (No 26)

Not much is known about the first gate lodge other than that it was used by the guards who were hired to prevent the 'body snatchers' up to the early 1830s. This lodge was demolished in the 1840s to clear the way for a new gate lodge, and like the former, not much is known about it other than the fact that the burying ground caretaker, a man named John Nelson, lived in it.

A third gate lodge was built during the 1870s and this house had all the requirements of a modern house of the time: two bedrooms, inside bathroom, living room, kitchen and a parlour. It also had a large rear yard with a gateway leading into the burying ground, this was used to store the various tools used for the upkeep of the ground. The following is a list of the burying ground caretakers who lived in this house:

Alexander Johnston 1871-1894
William Brown 1895-1902
James Martin 1902-1939
David Megrath 1940-1967

From 1967 onwards, the lodge was occupied by Mrs Margaret Growney, who was one of the catering staff in Clifton House. She stayed here until 1977 when she moved into Clifton House itself.

After Mrs Growney left, the house was blocked up and soon after it was vandalised. It lay in a state of disrepair for a number of years until it was demolished in February 1991 to clear way for a building project in the grounds of St Enoch's Church.

THE DECLINE AND RESTORATION OF THE NEW BURYING GROUND

At the begining of the last century the number of burials taking place at the burying ground were falling dramatically. Because of this the Belfast Charitable Society was no longer making enough profit to uphold its duties within the graveyard. The family plots (which belonged to the famlies and not the Society) were no longer being maintained by relatives, and began to fall into a state of decline despite numerous appeals made by the Charitable Society for assistance in various renovation projects.

In 1907 a 'tidy up' scheme began on the burying ground and much of the overgrowth was cut back. At the same time a full record of the tombstone inscriptions was taken. But once all the work was completed maintenance was impossible for the one caretaker. Within a few years the place was completly overgrown again, and this growth was to continue for the next sixty years despite numerous attempts to prevent it.

In 1969, with the outbreak of the present 'troubles' the British Army moved into the nearby Glenravel Street barracks and secured the area around it. This included the Burying Ground, and here they took over the holding of the keys and placed within the ground hundreds of metres of barbed wire and built a number of observation posts to prevent any attack.

In the early part of the 1970s the Glenravel Street barracks moved to a new site on North Queen Street, and soon after the keys were handed back to the Charitable Society. From this point onwards maintenance of the burying ground was a bigger problem that it was at any other time in the graveyard's history.

Apart from the ivy, weeds and bramble all being overgrown, the amount of barbed wire made the use of machinery impossible, so any work being done had to be carried out entirely with the use of hand tools; and there was also the added problem of vandalism occuring mainly between the years 1972-1975.

In 1975 the Charitable Society employed Messrs Duff Ltd, to clear the ground at a cost of of £1,750. This was followed by help from Enterprise Ulster. Unfortunately, the overgrowth was growing back almost as soon as it was being cut. Preservation was going to be a major undertaking, one for which the Charitable Society funds were not available.

On the 21st of July, 1978, the Society wrote a letter to the Belfast City Council asking them to consider taking over the burying ground. The letter was passed to the Parks Department, and they agreed. In 1979 a full-time caretaker was placed there to try and keep the ground in order.

In 1985 the Parks Department, with the aid of a Belfast Action Team grant of £100,000, began a major scheme to restore the burying ground. This scheme was simple, though expensive. The idea was to clear out the whole ground, except the tombstones, and to landscape it. At the same time all the tomestones were cleaned and the surrounding walls restored. All was completed by 1990.

Old or Upper Ground. Platforms—Numbers.
New or Lower Ground. Platforms—Letters.

Belfast Charitable Society.

To the Caretaker of Clifton Street Graveyard.

Prepare a Grave for

Christian Name,

Surname,

Age,

Occupation,

Residence,

Cause of Death,

Native of

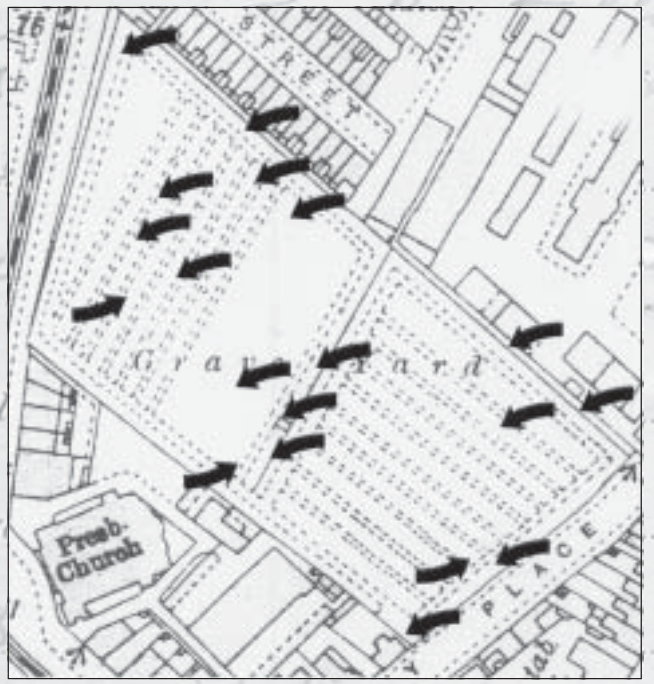
Full Description of

Upper or Lower Gr

Date of Death,

There is no doubt that Clifton Street Cemetery is one of the most historically important sites in the whole of Ireland. It is here that thousands of paupers lie next to the extremely wealthy and where those who established massive factories and mansions lie next to those who actually built them by putting one brick on top of the other. It is also here that great vaults are situated next to massive poor grounds. In this burying ground there is no better example that, in death, we are all indeed equal.

The Glenravel Local History Project was established out of an interest in this graveyard and we are in fact named after an old historic street which once stood facing it. The Project has carried out quite a few schemes relating to the cemetery and have played a massive part in the condition the cemetery is in today. However, we feel that a lot more needs to be done and one scheme which we are currently working on is to place information tablets on selected graves throughout the cemetery. The map below shows those which are already in place and we would ask those who come along on the tours to seek them out and learn a little bit more about some of those who lie buried in this unique burying ground.



Above was interred this 10 day of Dec 1943.