Archaeological Survey, Brosna Church and Graveyard, Brosna, Co. Kerry

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Client: The Heritage Office,

Kerry County Council,

County Buildings,

Ratass, Tralee, Co. Kerry

RMP No.: KE032-008

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1 Introduction

Brosna West graveyard was surveyed using a Trimble Pro X-H GPS (Figure 1). The survey is linked to GPS and tied into the National Grid. The graveyard plan was produced using Adobe Illustrator. Reference numbers mentioned in the main body of the report relate to the ID point given when the survey was undertaken. These numbers are illustrated on the attached A1 plan. A digital photographic record and surname database was also compiled to complement the cartographic survey (Appendices 1-5). Photographs of the features within the graveyard are referenced in the appendices and all photographs are provided on the attached disc.

The survey was undertaken in July 2007.

Townland:	Brosna West
Parish:	Brosna
Barony:	Trughanacmy
Local name of graveyard:	Brosna West
NGR:	113680, 118450
RMP No.:	KE032-008
No. of named tombs:	5
No. of unnamed tombs:	3
No. of inscribed headstones:	329
No. of unnamed headstones:	22
No. of unnamed grave-markers:	32
No. of architectural fragments:	1
No. of cross slabs:	1

2 Site Location & Description

Brosna village is situated 1.3km south of the R576 and is c. 8km southeast of Abbeyfeale town (Figure 2).

Brosna West graveyard is located at the centre of Brosna village (Plate 1), immediately south of the square and southeast of the existing church, St Moling's Catholic Church.

Brosna West church and graveyard are recorded in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as KE032-008 classified as 'ecclesiastical remains' with sub-categories of KE032-008:01 'church site of', KE032-008:02 'graveyard', and KE032-008:003 'enclosure' (Figure 3).

There are extensive views to the west, south and southeast of the graveyard while views to the north are restricted by existing buildings.

The interior of the graveyard slopes gently from north to south.

The graveyard is well maintained. The grass is cut with a strimmer as there is little space to manoeuvre a lawnmower between the grave settings. Several yew trees grow within the graveyard.

Full capacity has almost been reached within the existing graveyard and there is very little scope for new burial plots. Any proposed extension can only be located to the west within the large enclosure which is evident on the 1^{st} and 2^{nd} edition OS maps and which is most likely associated with one of the early churches at Brosna.

The 1st edition OS map 1842 (Figure 4) illustrates the site of a ruined church while also denoting the location of the RC Church existing at the time. The latter church was replaced St. Moling's Catholic Church c. 1868 which is the existing church in Brosna today.

The existing church and graveyard are associated with St. Moling's Well which is situated to the southeast.

3 Boundaries

The boundary walls of the graveyard reflect the circularity of the original boundary KE032-008:03 which is evident on the 1st edition OS map 1842 (Figure 4, Plate 2).

The graveyard is bounded by a sandstone and shale wall with irregular coping.

The boundary wall is generally in good condition but several phases of repair are evident along the northwestern section which faces onto the Square (Plate 3).

The southeastern and eastern sides of the wall display evidence of additional courses as the interior of the graveyard has been raised considerably over time. This is very obvious in the southern area where the height of the original wall can be identified through the presence of coping, on top of which several layers of stone have been laid.

Immediately outside the boundary wall on the southern corner, a large mound of rubble stone has been dumped close to where the architectural fragment was recorded within the boundary wall. The majority of this seems to be associated with the recent repairs to the wall along this side.

4 Entrance

Access and egress to the graveyard is gained through two sandstone piers with forward pointed render (Plate 4).

A modern cast iron gate is set between the piers while a modern turnstile gate is located to the immediate west of the entrance.

5 Pathways

A formal perimeter gravel pathway extends from immediately inside the entrance for the full length of the eastern side of the graveyard but only to halfway on the western side.

The eastern pathway is almost overgrown with grass towards the southern extent.

5.1 Desire lines:

The graveyard is adequately serviced by the existing pathways and the interior area is too clustered with graves and tombs to facilitate additional pathways. The graveyard is easily negotiable.

6 Named Tombs (Appendix 1)

All were in a good state of preservation.

All except one had modern commemorative plaques. The exception was tomb ref.no 101 which had its inscription on the southern side panel of the tomb. It commemorates the death of William Curtayne in 1856 (Plate 5), (the death of his sister Johanna is also recorded) and the modern grave setting for the Curtin family plot partially encloses this tomb.

Any inscription that may have existed on the covering slab has long since eroded though it can be deducted from the surviving inscription mentioned above that the father of William Curtayne is also buried in the tomb.

Five named tombs were recorded.

7 Unnamed tombs (Appendix 2)

Four unnamed tombs were recorded.

The unnamed tombs are in varying states of preservation.

The best surviving unnamed tomb (ref. no. 99) is situated atop a large mound which may represent a grass covered extended length tomb (Plate 6). Although being the best preserved unnamed tomb, its side panels especially on the eastern side, are loose as the mortar has weathered away.

A very simple tomb is located close to the yew trees in the graveyard (Plate 7). It is almost overgrown with grass and is barely noticeable. It is unrendered and is constructed of sandstone rubble stone with a large slate slab forming its roof.

7.1 Recommendation:

The side panels on the best surviving unnamed tomb above should be repointed to prevent further erosion and damage.

8 Inscribed headstones (Appendix 3)

While the majority of inscribed headstones are of a modern construct, the 18th and 19th centuries are also well represented in the graveyard.

The earliest date was 1771 and recorded the death of Mai Lean (Plate 8). The inscription is in a very good sate of preservation.

Two further headstones, no. 499 and no. 427 can be attributed to the 1700's though the remaining two digits for determining the exact year were illegible on the former headstone. The latter dates to 1795 and commemorates the death of Richard Roche (Plate 9).

Inscribed headstones (ref. no's. 531 and no. 557) with surnames of Sheehy and Daly respectively, are tilting dangerously eastwards and it is necessary to support these large headstones from totally collapsing. It is most likely caused by the burial plot subsiding.

Inscribed headstone no. 617 which records the death of Denis Murphy in 1917 is badly fractured and is in need of urgent repair to prevent its collapse. The render is also disintegrating and is no longer remaining on the rear of the headstone (Plate 10).

Another inscribed headstone, (ref. no. 22) that of Margaret Guiney dates to the 19th century displays evidence of a poor attempt at cleaning the headstone, the consequence of which has badly eroded the inscription on one side of the headstone so that it no longer survives (Plate 11).

A modern cultivated plant has taken hold in the northwestern corner of the graveyard and is spreading eastwards and southwards along the boundary wall. The grave plot in the corner is also completely overgrown (Plate 12).

8.1 Recommendations:

The headstones (ref. no's 531, 557 and 617) need to be reinforced and repaired to prevent them from collapsing.

329 inscribed headstones were recorded.

An informative notice should be erected in the graveyard or on the notice board of the existing church stating that cleaning of 18th and 19th century headstones should not be attempted within professional consultation.

The cultivated plant which has taken hold in the northwestern corner of the graveyard should be cut back and removed.

9 Unnamed headstones (Appendix 4)

The unnamed graves are composed of 18th and 19th century headstones from which the engraving has eroded, and recent graves which are without a headstone or the information card on the temporary metal cross has faded over time and is no longer legible.

Twenty-two unnamed headstones were recorded.

Unnamed headstones are grouped together with the unnamed gravemarkers on the plan of the graveyard (Figure 1).

10 Unnamed gravemarkers (Appendix 4)

The unhewn grave-markers are identifiable as a rubble stone completely devoid of any inscription or decoration.

They are generally low set and rise above the ground surface for an average 0.3m. Occasionally, a distinguishing feature of these stones is a semi-circular concave shape depression or spall notched into the top of the stone.

Thirty-two gravemarkers were recorded.

11 Cross Slab (Appendix 5)

A single cross slab was recorded (Plate 13).

A simple cross is engraved on a piece of worked sandstone.

This was located in the northeastern area of the graveyard and may be related to the early phases of the Brosna Church and Graveyard.

12 Architectural fragment (Appendix 5)

One architectural fragment was recorded.

This was identified on the exterior of the southern boundary wall (Plate 14).

It comprises of a punch dressed, rectangular shaped fragment of sandstone.

13 Dangerous areas of ground or collapse

There are no dangerous areas of ground or collapse but several headstones are in need or repair to prevent them from either fracturing further or collapsing (see above).

14 Description of buildings within Brosna West graveyard

The remains of the church does not survive above ground today.

However, evidence of two other structures was recorded within the boundary wall. At the northwestern corner of the graveyard, behind the Walsh grave plot, the remains of an inwardly splayed window embrasure can be seen (Plate 15). It is partially obscured by another much smaller heart-shaped headstone which originally served the Walsh burial plot.

The window embrasure measures 0.9m in width and survives in height to 0.45m.

The window ope has been blocked up on the exterior.

This building is evident on the 2nd edition OS map 1897 as partially extending into the northwestern corner of the graveyard from the adjoining field to the west.

A gable wall survives within the boundary at the southwestern corner of the graveyard (Plate 16).

This area has become a dumping ground for plant cuttings and other debris associated with the grave plots.

The wall is partially overgrown with ivy and the existence of window opes could not be determined.

The wall survives in height to 2m on the interior of the graveyard and to over 3m when

viewed on the exterior.

A batter is evident on the southern side of the gable wall.

No building is indicated in this location on the 1st edition OS map 1842 or the subsequent editions (Figure 3).

15 Summary of recommendations for Brosna West Graveyard

- The cultivated plant which has taken hold in the northwestern corner of the graveyard should be cut back and removed.
- The side panels on the best surviving unnamed tomb above should be repointed to prevent further erosion and damage.
- An informative notice should be erected in the graveyard or on the notice board of the existing church stating that cleaning of 18th and 19th century headstones should not be attempted within professional consultation.
- The headstones 531, 557 and 617 need to be reinforced and repaired to prevent them from collapsing.
- It is most likely that local information will be able to furnish the names for the unnamed tombs and this information should be recorded.
- Construction of new tombs should not be allowed and others requiring repair should be undertaken using best practice. An information booklet should be provided on this.
- Refuse disposal facilities, which do not currently exist at the graveyard, should be provided as soon as possible.
- A water tap should also be installed.
- The use of broad spectrum weedkillers, used for maintaining the grounds of the graveyards, is not deemed acceptable and should be discouraged.
- The Care and Conservation of Graveyards, a publication from The Office of Public Works (OPW) is recommended reading for future maintenance of the church and graveyard.
- An informative booklet on Brosna West graveyard should be compiled by Kerry County Council and supplied to the relevant parish church. It should include helpful tips for parishioners on caring for the graveyard, and the individual plots, as well as giving advice about works which may professional services such as the cleaning of old headstones etc.
- An information board similar to one already existing at Killury graveyard, in Lissycurrig townland near Causeway, should be established at a suitable location within the graveyard, most likely to the east of the entrance gate on its interior.
- The Care and Conservation of Graveyards, a publication from The Office of Public Works
 (OPW) is recommended reading for future maintenance of the church and graveyard.
- All primary ground works should be archaeologically monitored and all features recorded and protected.
- Professional consultation and advice should be sought prior to undertaking any maintenance and conservation works at Brosna West church and graveyard.

 No conservation restoration works should be undertaken without an additional comprehensive individual report based on the results of invasive archaeological and architectural investigation specific to Brosna Graveyard.

Note on Recommendations

All recommendations as set out above are recommendations only based on visual site fieldwork undertaken by the writer. No invasive or other intervention work was undertaken in the course of producing this report. Ultimately, no responsibility will be accepted by the writer with regard to the undertaking of the conservation work as recommended in this report and based only on visual inspection. The ultimate decision on recommendations etc rests with Kerry County Council.

16 References

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O' Hare, P. 1996. 'Holy Wells & Other Sites of Pilgrimage within a Portion of East Kerry' in *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society* 1996 **No. 29**.

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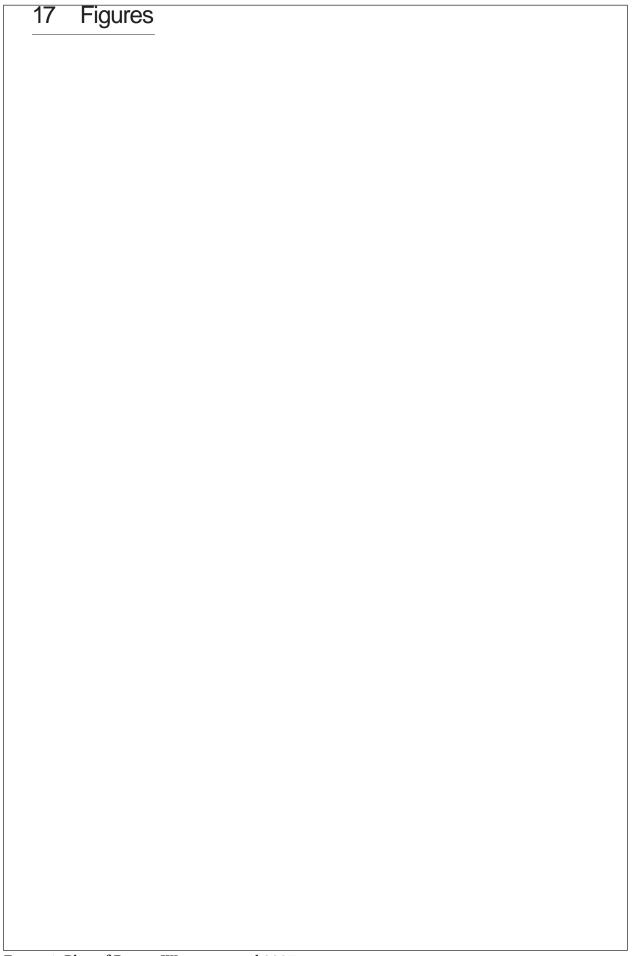


Figure 1: Plan of Brosna West graveyard 2007.

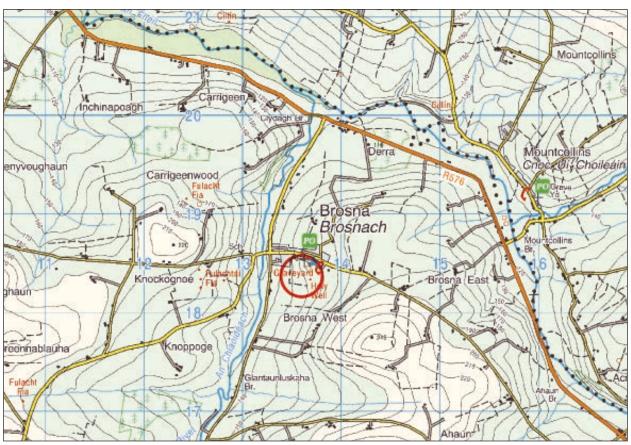


Figure 2: Extract from Discovery Series with location of Brosna West graveyard highlighted in red.

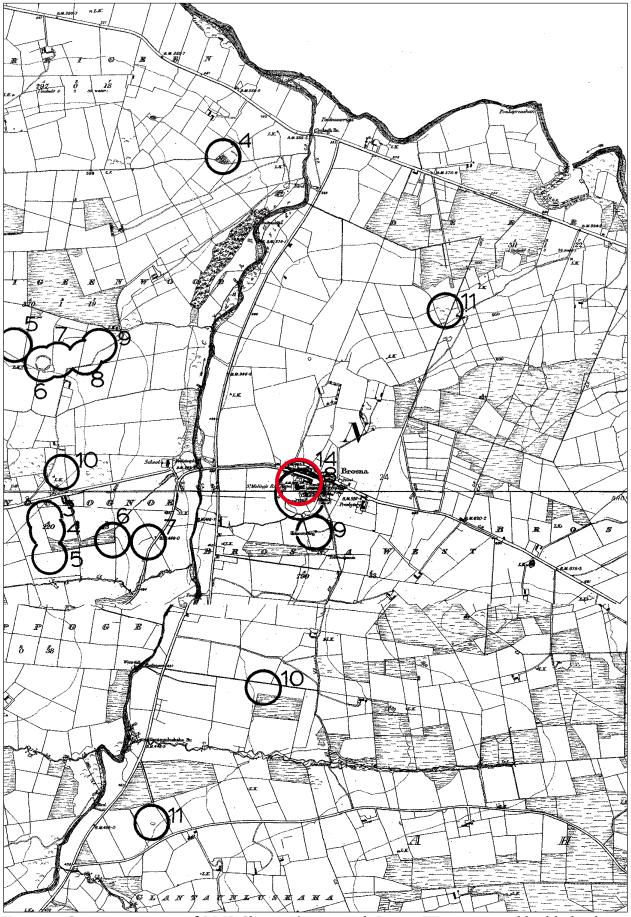


Figure 3: Composite extract of RMP Sheets 24 & 32 with Brosna West graveyard highlighted in red.

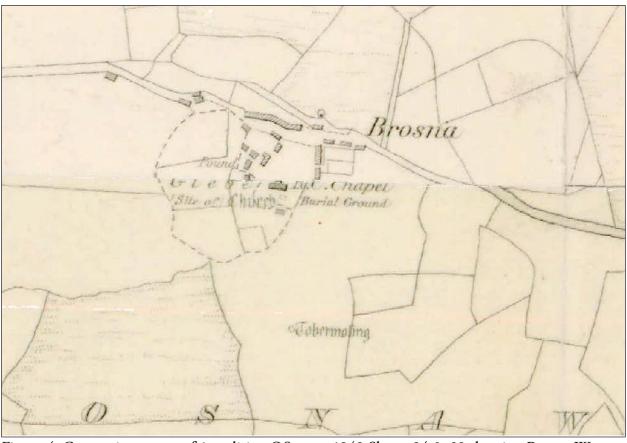


Figure 4: Composite extract of 1st edition OS maps 1842 Sheets 24 & 32 showing Brosna West graveyard.

18 Plates



Plate 1: View of Brosna West graveyard, taken from north



Plate 2: View of northeastern and eastern boundary wall which reflects the curvilinear nature of the original boundary, taken from northeast



Plate 3: View of phases of repair in northern boundary wall, taken from northeast



Plate 4: View of entrance to graveyard in northern boundary wall, taken from north



Plate 5: View of tomb for William Curtayne 1856, taken from southeast



Plate 6: View of best surviving unnamed tomb which seems to be situated atop a tomb of extended length



Plate 7: View of small unnamed tomb, taken from east



Plate 8: View of earliest named headstone, dated to 1771 and recording the death of Mai Lean



Plate 9: View of headstone dating to 1795 and recording the death of Richard Boyle



Plate 10: View of dangerous headstone (ref. no. 617) close to collapse, taken from south



Plate 11: View of damage caused by recent attempts at cleaning the headstone



Plate 12: View of overgrowth in northwestern corner of graveyard, taken from southeast



Plate 13: View of cross slab, taken from east



Plate 14: View of architectural fragment in southern boundary wall, taken from east

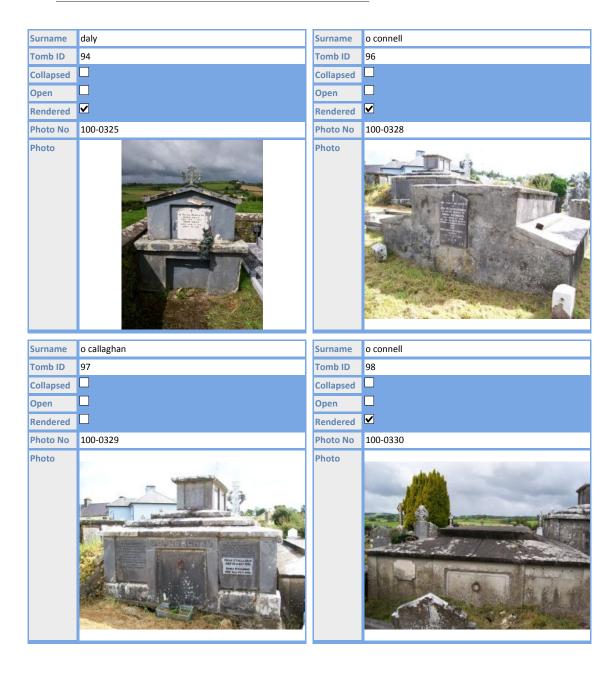


Plate 15: View of window ope in northwestern corner of boundary wall, taken from south



Plate 16: View of gable wall within boundary wall at southwestern corner of graveyard. Architectural fragment also visible. Note evidence of repair of boundary wall and mound of associated rubble stone

19 Appendix 1 Named Tombs



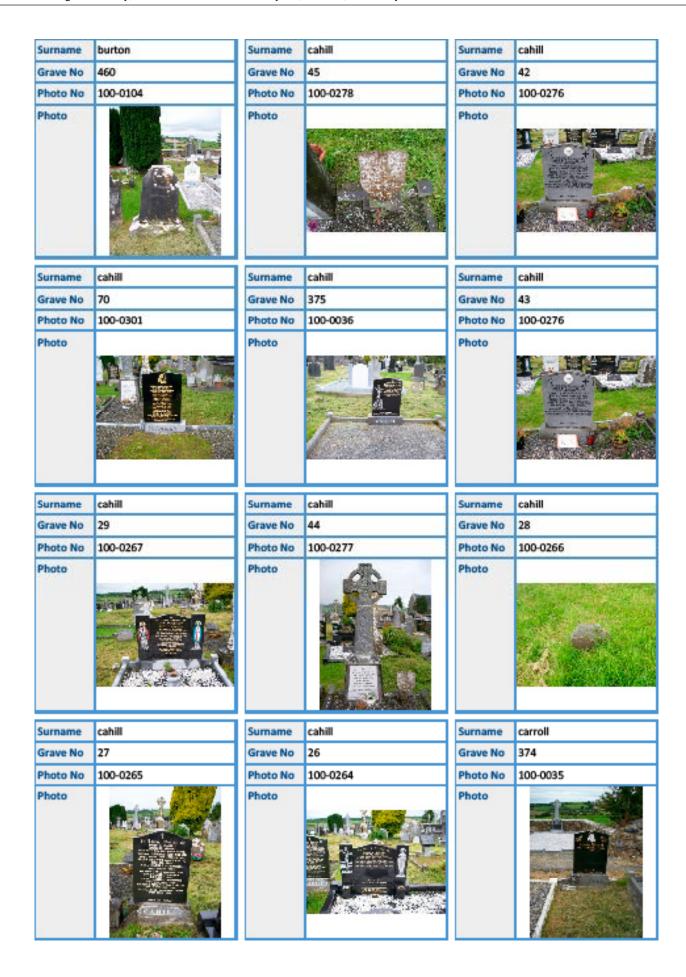


20 Appendix 2 Unnamed Tombs

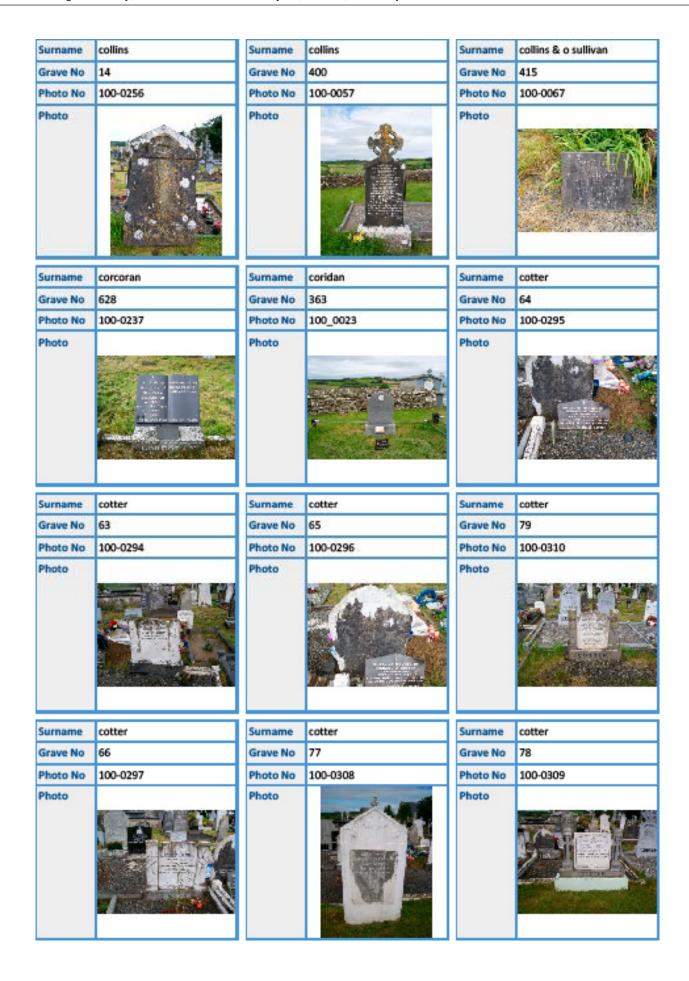


21 Appendix 3 Inscribed Headstones









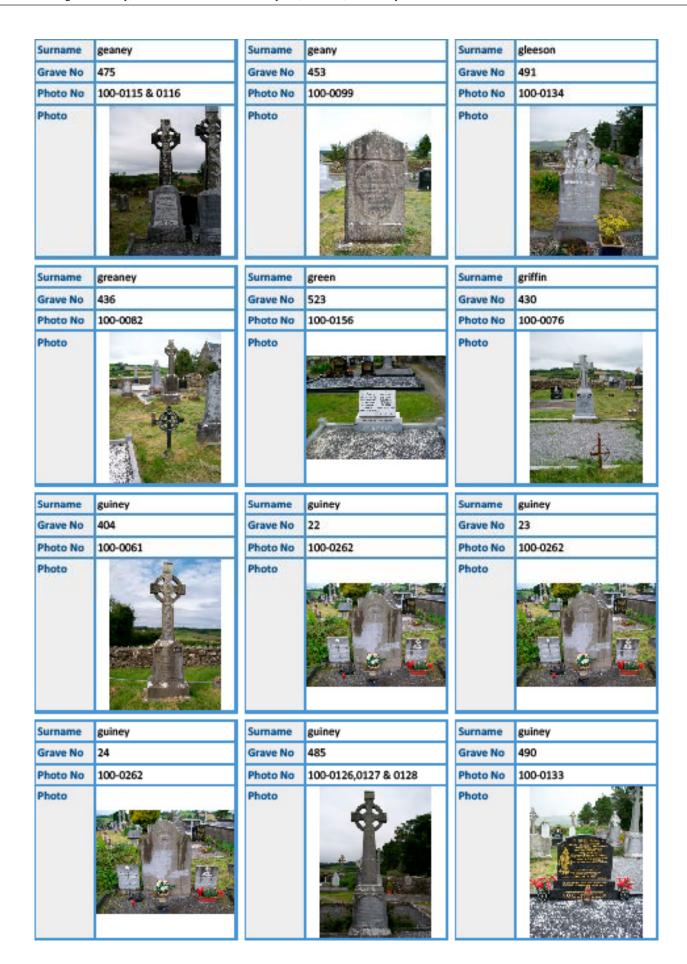


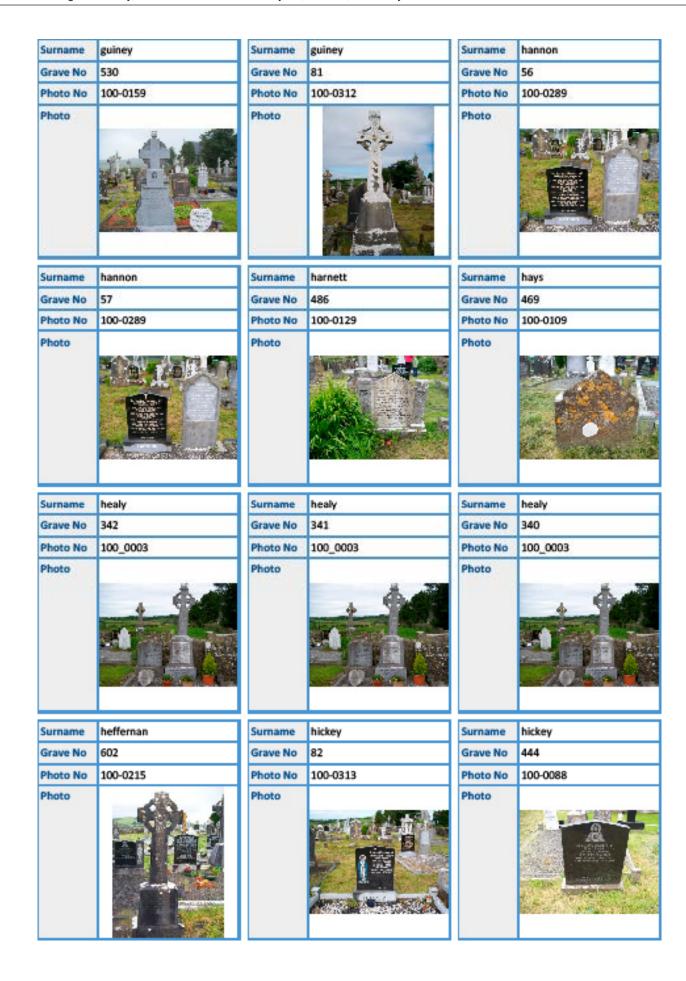








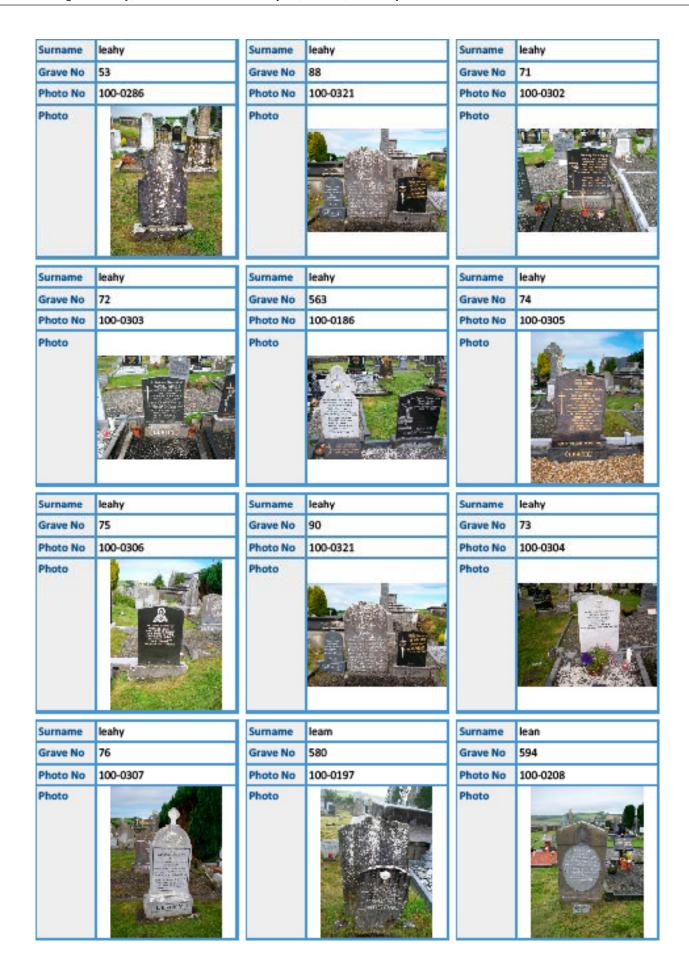


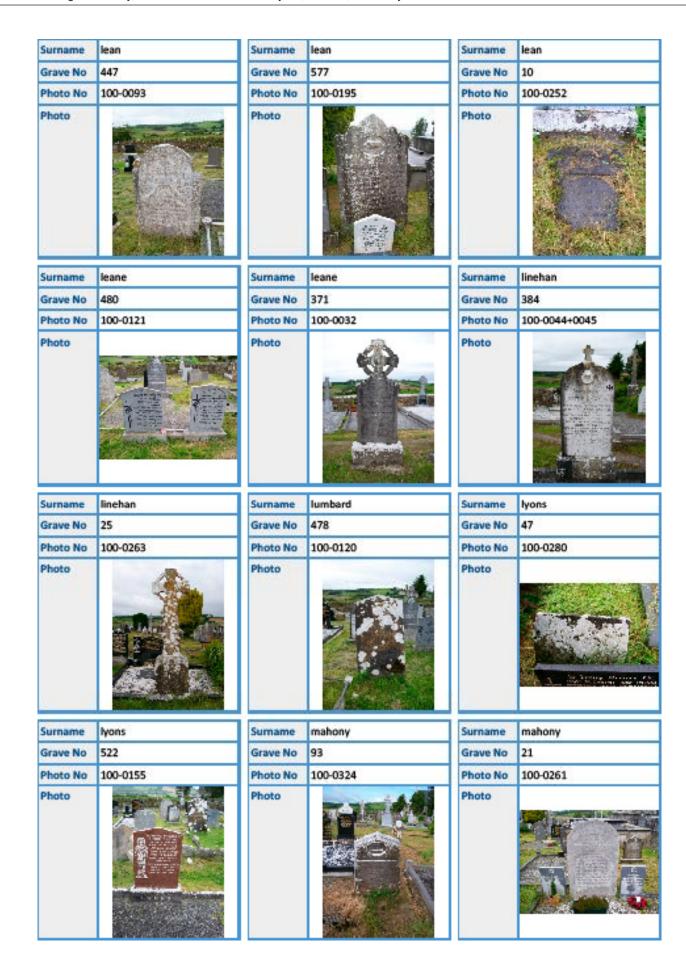


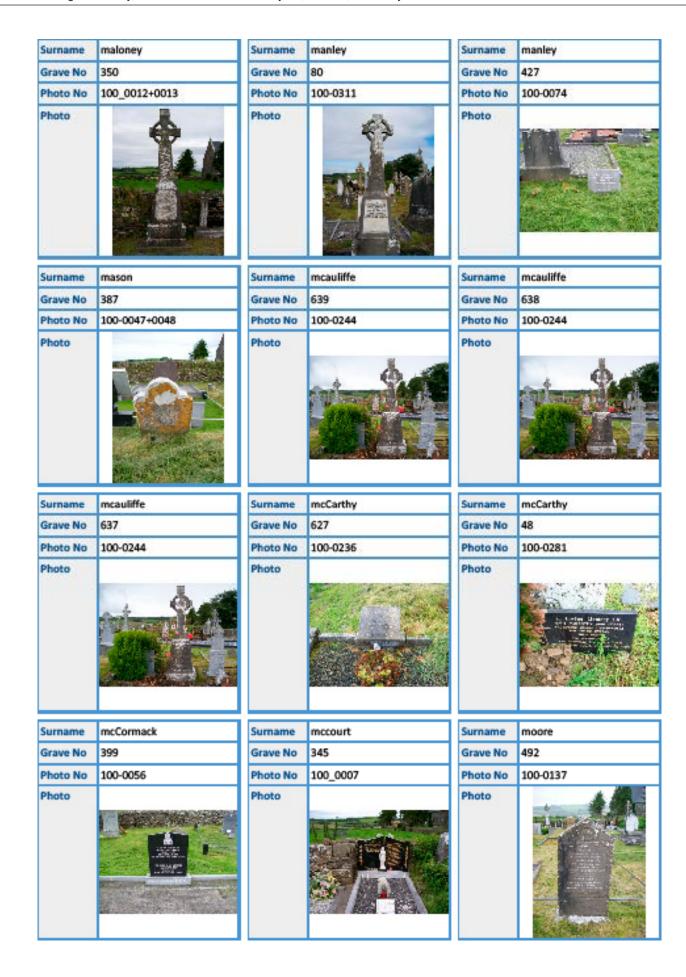








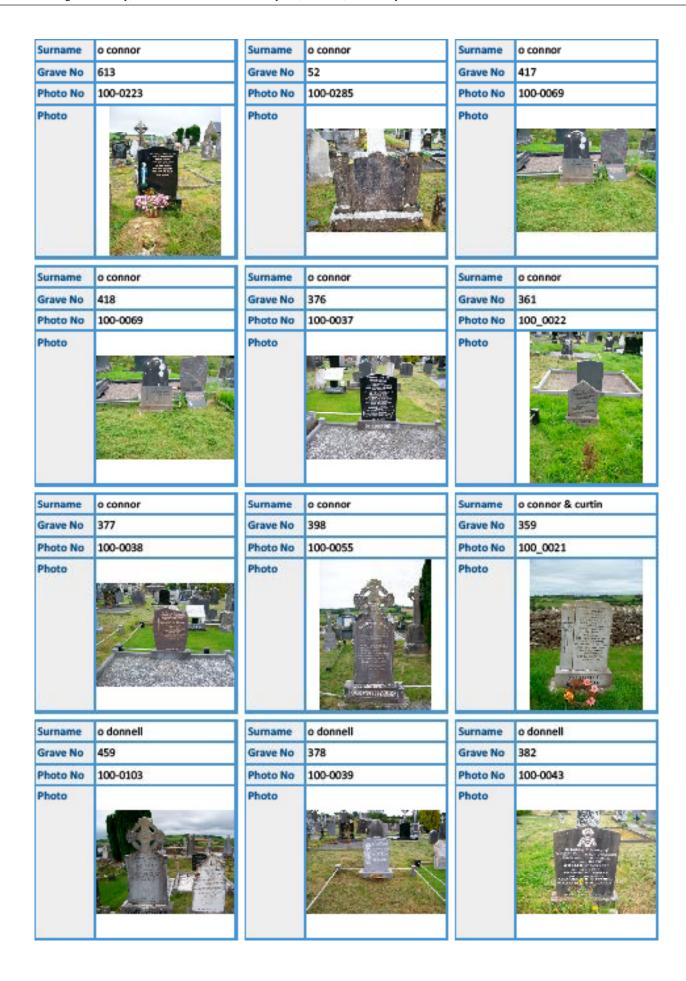










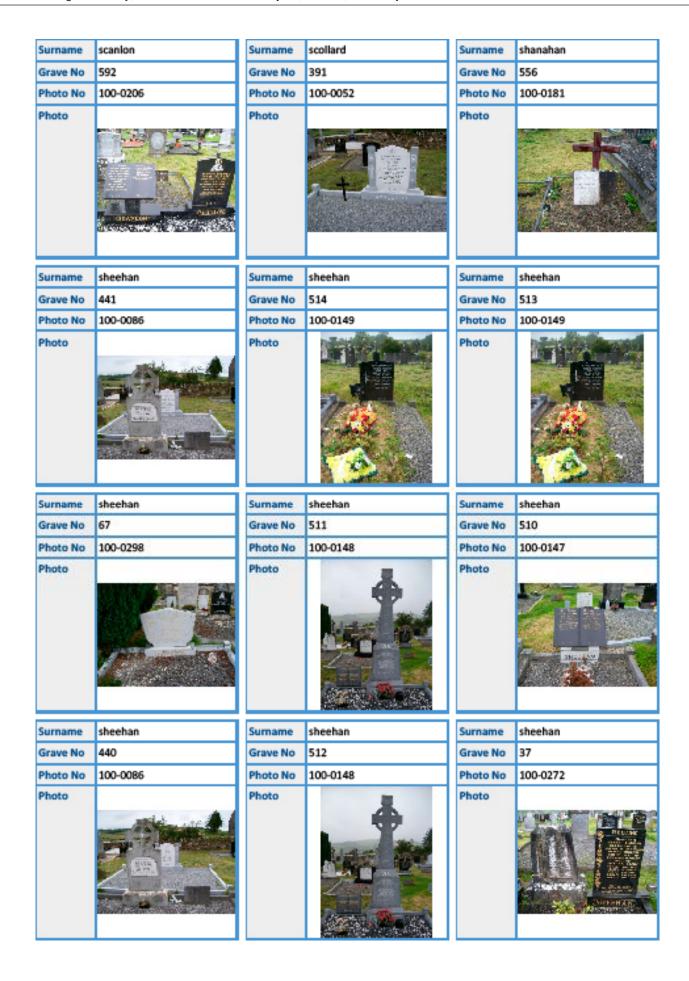




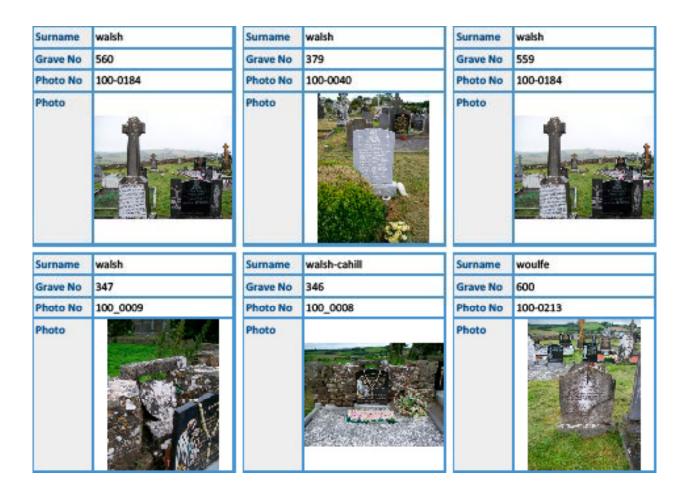












22 Appendix 4 Unnamed Headstones and Gravemarkers

Grave No.	Notes	Photo No.
5		100-0247
11	Associated with grave 10	100-0253
15		100-0257
58		100-0290
392		100-0053
393		100-0054
394		100-0054
429	metal cross	100-0076
439		100-0085
456		100-0101
471		100-0111
495		100-0139
496		100-0140
497		100-0140
505		100-0143
521		100-0154
525		100-0157
540		100-0168
570		100-0192
571		100-0193
619		

23 Appendix 5 Cross Slabs and Architectural Fragments



