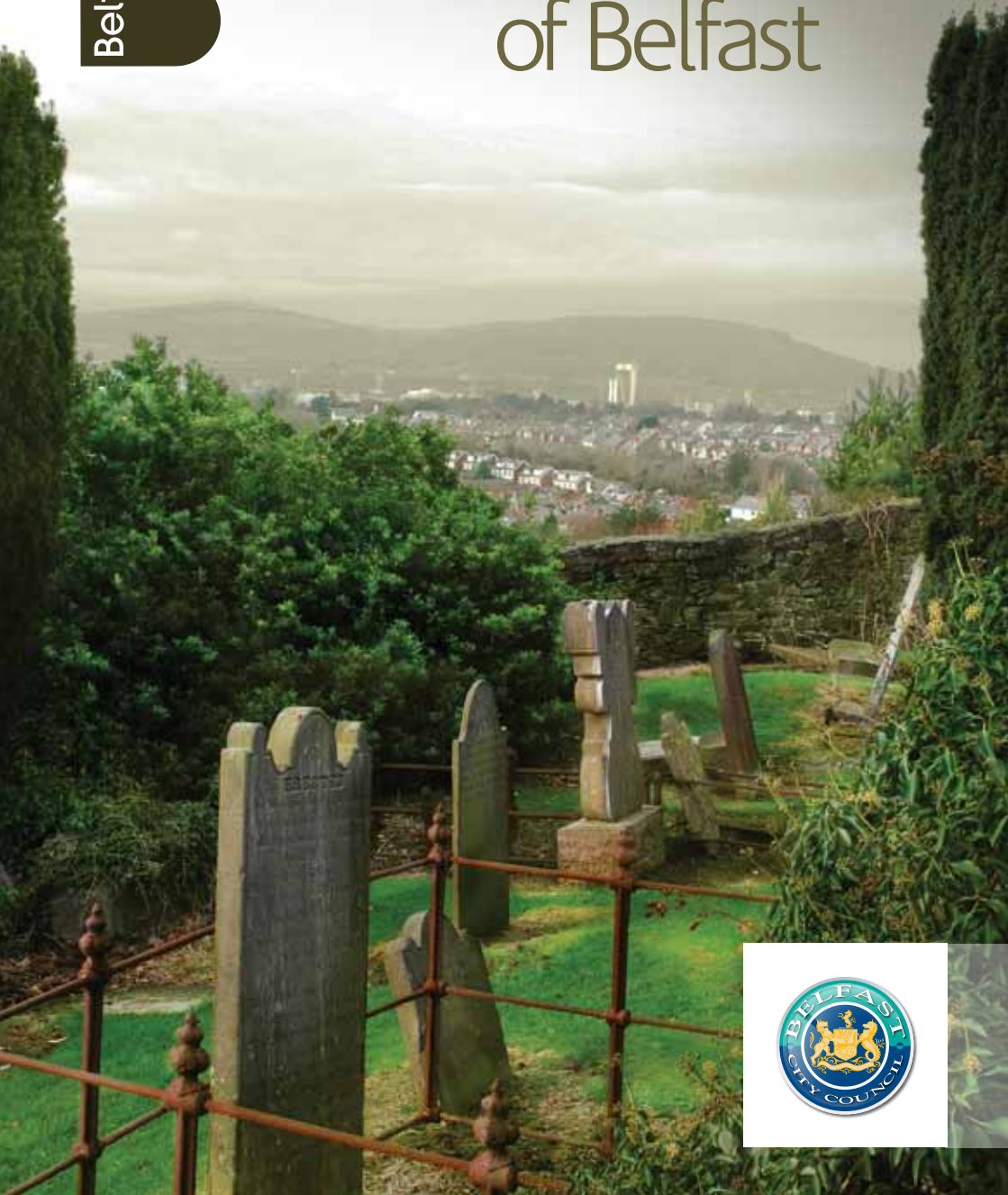




# Cemeteries of Belfast



# Cemeteries of Belfast

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## Additional Information

Dogs, with the exception of guide, hearing and other registered assistance dogs, are not allowed within the grounds of any cemetery.

For further information on burials etc, please contact the Cemeteries and Crematorium Central Office, 028 9027 0296 or the website: [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/cemeteries](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/cemeteries)



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Please be respectful during your visit to these cemeteries, remembering that graves and memorials are significant to relatives and visitors.



UPPER NEWTOWNARDS ROAD

A casual walk through Belfast's public cemeteries reveals much about the city's social history, its citizens, and in particular, the families that played a vital role in the political, cultural and professional life of Belfast over the last few centuries.

Until the mid 19th century, burial grounds in Belfast were controlled by religious denominations (for example, Friar's Bush – Roman Catholic; Shankill – Episcopalian; Balmoral – Presbyterian) or, as in the case of Clifton Street, the Belfast Charitable Society. As the town grew, so did pressure on burial space. In 1886 legislation allowed Belfast Corporation - now Belfast City Council - to set up a municipal cemetery, and so the City Cemetery on the Falls Road was established. Since then, Dundonald and Roselawn Cemeteries have been opened, and five of the historical graveyards in the city have come into public ownership.

This leaflet provides information on the history and features of Belfast's publicly-owned cemeteries. We hope it will encourage you to visit them and discover this fascinating aspect of the city's heritage.

# Balmoral Cemetery



## History

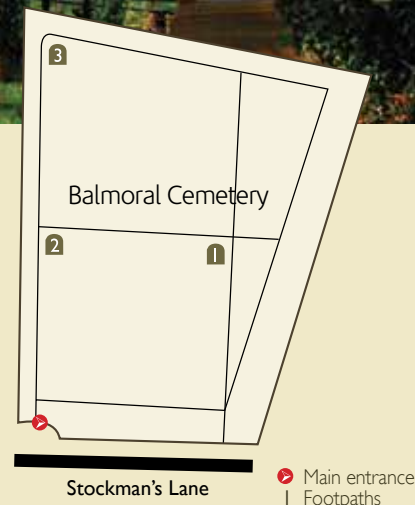
Balmoral Cemetery, (formerly called Belfast Cemetery, Malone) opened in 1855. Two Presbyterian ministers were refused permission to carry out a 'proper' Presbyterian funeral in another churchyard, and so they established their own cemetery on land beside Stockman's Lane.

The cemetery was controlled by a board of trustees that included three Presbyterian ministers. Burials were

predominantly Presbyterian, but did include other denominations and faiths. By the 1920s Balmoral was reported to be unkempt, a situation that continued until it was handed over to Belfast Corporation (now Belfast City Council) in 1953.



The cemetery also contains graves of several Presbyterian ministers and missionaries to India.



## Prominent burials

**1 William Batt**  
(c1840-1910)  
Architect, designer of the front gate lodge at Botanic Gardens.

**2 Rev. Henry Cooke**  
(1788-1868)  
Co-founder of the cemetery. His statue, which became known as the Black Man, was erected in College Square East in 1876.

**3 Dr Wilberforce Arnold**  
(1838-1891)  
Founder of the Presbyterian Orphan Society.

## Visitor information

- ➡ Main entrance:** Stockman's Lane, off Lisburn Road.
- ♿ Disabled access:** fairly good and level paths throughout
- 🚌 Bus routes:** Metro 9A-C to Upper Lisburn Road, 90, 92 via Stockman's Lane.
- ☎ Cemeteries and Crematorium Central Office** 028 9027 0296 (Mon – Thurs 8.30am – 5pm; Fri 8.30am – 4.30pm; Sat 8.30am – 12.30pm)
- 🕒 Opening hours:** 7.30am until dusk
- 🚗 Car parking:** none

## Wildlife in cemeteries



Graveyards are relatively quiet places and suffer little disturbance, and therefore support a range of birds, animals and plants.

Gravestones and memorials are ideal perches and song posts for birds, and mature trees such as the imposing pines at Dundonald and the broadleaves at Balmoral provide safe nesting sites. Smaller birds shelter during the winter in conifers such as the yew trees at Dundonald and Knock, and feed on the autumn berries on shrubs at Knock and Shankill. Sparrowhawks often hunt in cemeteries and have nested in Roselawn and Friar's Bush.

Mosses and lichens coat many headstones, while the walls of the older graveyards provide a foothold for ferns and ivy, and the fragrant rambling roses at Knock attract insects during the summer.

Mammals too roam our cemeteries: hedgehogs forage in natural growing areas of Balmoral, foxes regularly pass through Dundonald and grey squirrels have been seen in Clifton Street. Roselawn Cemetery, because of its rural position and more natural setting that includes native hedgerows, woodland, meadows and lakes, supports a greater range of wildlife than most cemeteries, including the occasional hare and buzzard.

# City Cemetery



## History

The first municipal cemetery in Belfast was the City Cemetery (originally known as Belfast Cemetery). The first burial took place in 1869.

The area allocated for Catholic burials was separated from that allocated for Protestant burials by a sunken wall at the behest of the Roman Catholic Church. Because of a dispute over burial rights no Catholic burials were carried out and instead the Catholic Church established Milltown Cemetery across the Falls Road. Belfast Corporation compensated the Catholic community to offset the cost of Milltown and to allow the Catholic ground at the City Cemetery to be used for Protestant burials.

A Jewish section was allocated in the City Cemetery in 1871. The cemetery doubled in size with the addition of the Glenalina Section, which was first used in 1915. The name Glenalina comes from the Irish Gleann Da Leana, meaning the glen of two low-lying grassy places or water meadows. There are two meadows in the cemetery separated by the Ballymurphy Stream.

In November 1951 a memorial to 154 unidentified victims of the 1941 air raids was unveiled (map 7).

From 1979, members of the Roman Catholic community increasingly used the City Cemetery for burials.

## Features

There are many fine monuments and memorials within the City Cemetery, some in excellent condition, while others, sadly, have been vandalised over the years. Many include symbols of the Victorian age such as urns, obelisks, broken columns and angels, which reveal the influence of Greek and Roman ideas of symmetry and proportion. The first memorial erected was for John Hopkins in 1870. There are currently eight monuments in the cemetery officially listed for their architectural and historical significance.

A mortuary chapel was constructed in 1874 at a cost of around £1000. It was destroyed by fire in 1980 and only the tower stands today to mark the site (map 8). A cast iron bell, rung to mark the closing of the gates, was transported from the old Linen Hall tower in the centre of Belfast (the site of the present City Hall) and erected in the cemetery. The cross of sacrifice that towers over the middle section of the cemetery (map 9) commemorates soldiers who died during World War I.

- ➔ Main entrance
- 🚻 Public toilets
- | Footpaths



### **i** Visitor information

- ➔ **Main entrance:**  
Falls Road, beside junction with Whiterock Road.
- 🕒 **Opening hours:**  
see table of cemetery opening hours on page 18.

- ♿ **Disabled access:** Good network of surfaced paths, some gradients.
- 🚗 **Car parking:** none
- 🚌 **Bus routes**  
Metro 10 A-F

- 🚻 **Toilet facilities:**  
Available at office near main entrance. Disabled toilet (office hours only – see below).

☎ City Cemetery Office 028 9032 3112  
(Mon to Thurs 8.30am – 5pm; Fri 8.30am – 4.30pm; Sat 8.30am – 12.30pm)

## Prominent burials

### **1** Vere Foster (1819-1933)

Champion of educating the poor in Ireland.

### **2** Margaret Byers (1832-1912)

Pioneer of women's education and founder of Victoria College.

### **3** Sir Edward Harland (1830-1895)

One of the founders of Belfast's shipbuilding company, and Mayor of Belfast in 1885-6.

### **4** Daniel Joseph Jaffe (1809-1871)

Prominent linen merchant, who built the first synagogue in Belfast. The fountain beside Victoria Square was built in his memory.

### **5** Viscount Pirrie (1874-1924)

Chairman of Harland and Wolff and associated with the building of S.S. Titanic. He was Lord Mayor of Belfast in 1896-7.

### **6** Sir William Whitla (1851-1933)

An eminent physician and former pro-Vice Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast.

# Clifton Street Graveyard



## History

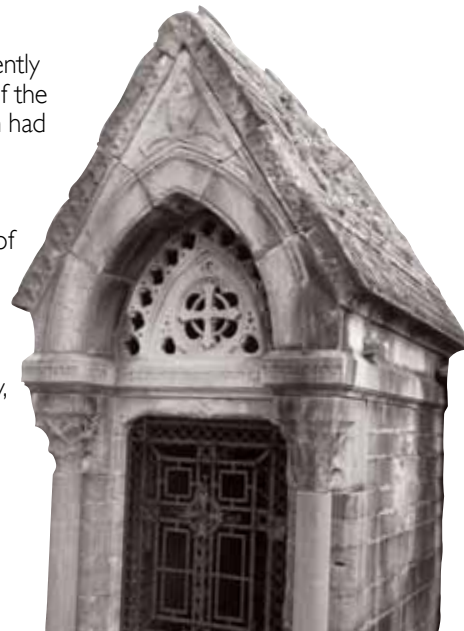
In the late 1700s the Marquis of Donegall provided a much needed new burial ground near Clifton House (formerly the Poor House, founded in 1774 for the relief of the aged poor and control of beggars). Both were administered by Belfast Charitable Society, which first put burial plots up for sale in 1797.

The graveyard contains an area where the poor were buried, and an unmarked mass grave used for the victims of the 1830s cholera epidemics and later outbreaks of infectious diseases such as typhus (map 7).

The original ground was full by 1819 and a second 'field', known as the lower

ground, was subsequently opened. By 1854 all of the plots in this extension had been sold.

For the Charitable Society, the upkeep of the graveyard was a financial burden and it made several appeals to relatives for money. Eventually, in 1984 Belfast City Council took over ownership of the grounds and a programme of restoration began.



## Features

One of the most striking mausoleums in the graveyard is that of the Dunville family (see left), famous for its whiskey production and for presenting Dunville Park to Belfast in 1891. The vault (map 8) once contained ceramic 'photographs' of the family.

The memorial to George C. Hyndman (map 9), one of the early members of the Belfast Botanical and Horticultural Society that established Belfast Botanic Gardens, was once topped with a statue of his pet dog. Also unusual is the grave of Thomas Ash (map 10), the four corners of which are marked by large ash trees (although one has been removed).

## Visitor information

- ➔ **Main entrance:** Henry Place, off Clifton Street.
- 🕒 **Opening hours:** Open on request.
- ♿ **Disabled access:** Good network of paths, level ground.
- 🅑 **Car parking:** None
- 🚌 **Bus routes:** Number 57, Metro 1A-H, 12A or 12B
- ☎ **Cemeteries and Crematorium Central Office** 028 9027 0296 (Mon – Thurs 8.30am – 5pm; Fri 8.30am – 4.30pm; Sat 8.30am – 12.30pm)

## Prominent burials

**1 Dr William Drennan** (1754-1820)  
A United Irishman, reputedly the first to refer to Ireland as the 'Emerald Isle'.

**2 Valentine Jones** (1712-1806)  
A West Indian merchant and one of the founder members of the Belfast Charitable Society.

**3 Robert Joy** (1722-1785) and **Henry Joy** (1720-1789)  
Early proprietors of the Newsletter, and owners of paper mills at Cromac.

**4 Mary Ann McCracken** (1770-1866)  
Sister of the famous Henry Joy McCracken. Mary Ann took a keen interest in Belfast Charitable Society and helping the poor.

**5 William Ritchie** (1756-1834)  
In 1791 established his shipyard where Corporation Square stands today.

**6 John Templeton** (1766-1825)  
Local naturalist, instrumental in forming the Belfast Botanic Gardens.

# Dundonald Cemetery



## History

Belfast Corporation acquired 45 acres of land at Ballymiscaw, Dundonald in 1897 and developed the land for what became known as Dundonald Cemetery. The first burial took place on 19 September 1905.

The County Down railway once ran along the rear boundary of the cemetery. On one occasion a horse pulling a coach containing relatives was startled by a passing train. The horse bolted and damaged three tomb railings before being brought under control. The railway line is now closed and has recently been made into a pedestrian and cycle route, known as the Comber Greenway.

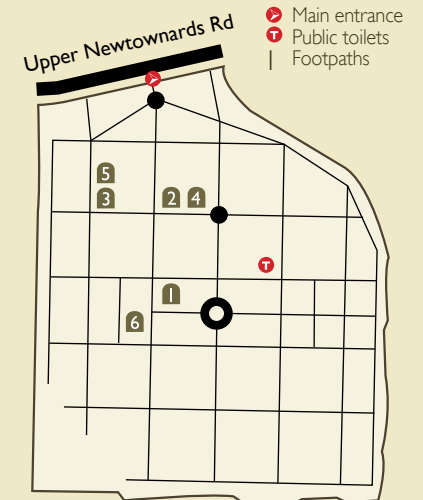
## Features

At the highest point of the cemetery is a five metre high, grey limestone war memorial, which honours the dead of World War I (see right). Two large bronze Excalibur-type swords are embedded on the top in the shape of a cross (map 6).



## Visitor information

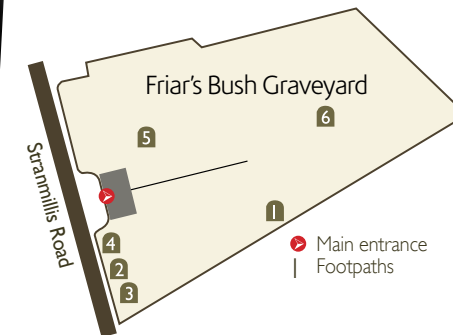
- ➔ **Main entrance:** Upper Newtownards Road.
- 🕒 **Opening hours:** see table of cemetery opening hours on page 18.
- 🚌 **Bus routes:** Metro 4, 20, 20A
- ♿ **Disabled access:** access to many of the graves is along very narrow uneven grass paths, so extreme care is needed. The office is accessible via a mobile ramp, although the current layout of the office is not suitable for wheelchairs.
- 🚻 **Toilet facilities:** Available office hours (no disabled facilities).
- 🅇 **Car parking:** Limited parking is available on cemetery roads. There is a 5mph speed limit throughout the cemetery.
- ☎ **Dundonald Cemetery Office** 028 9048 0193 (Mon – Thurs 8.30am – 4.30pm; Fri 8.30am – 4pm; Sat 8.30am – 12.30pm)



## Prominent burials

- |  |  |   |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>1 John Carey</b><br/>(1861-1943)<br/>Local landscape artist.</p> | <p><b>2 Sir Thomas Dixon</b><br/>(1868-1950)<br/>His Majesty's lieutenant for the county of the City of Belfast 1924-1950.</p> | <p><b>2 Lady Edith Stewart Dixon</b><br/>(c1871-1964)<br/>Dame of the British Empire in recognition of her work for the World War I forces. She gave Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park to Belfast.</p> | <p><b>3 Dr Thomas Fleming Stewart Fulton</b><br/>(died 1975)<br/>Founder of the Fleming Fulton School for children with special needs.</p> | <p><b>4 John McCandless</b><br/>(died 1913)<br/>Managing Director of Belfast Ropeworks Ltd.</p> | <p><b>5 Sir Frederick Ernest Rebbeck</b><br/>(1877-1964)<br/>Of Harland and Wolff shipyard, and who worked on improvements to the internal combustion engine.</p> |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|

# Friar's Bush Graveyard



## History

Friar's Bush Graveyard is considered to be Belfast's oldest Christian burial ground. It reputedly derives its name from the old hawthorn tree in the centre of the site, where, during the 18th century, Catholics gathered in secret to celebrate mass. The graveyard at that time was used for burials of all denominations and was little more than an unenclosed circular mound.

In 1828, the graveyard was extended and enclosed with a high wall, and from then used exclusively for Roman Catholic burials.

Friar's Bush contains the mass graves of hundreds of victims of the 1830s cholera epidemics, under a mound known as 'Plaguey Hill' (map 5). Over 5,000 famine victims were also buried there between 1845 and 1849. Shortly

afterwards the graveyard was deemed to be overcrowded and subsequently burials were restricted to those families with rights to graves. The Roman Catholic Church maintained the graveyard until 2001 when it was taken over by Belfast City Council.

## Features

Entrance into the graveyard is through an arched gothic gate lodge, built around the 1820s. Just inside the graveyard on the left is a plaque from the Irish government in 1995 in recognition of Friar's Bush as Belfast's official famine site. Beside the old hawthorn tree is a circular stone with three crudely cut crosses and a date A.D.485 (although there is some doubt as to the authenticity of this), and a worn pillar-stone with a hollow near the top which may have been used by friars celebrating mass (map 6).



## Visitor information

- ➔ **Main entrance:** Stranmillis Road.
- 🕒 **Opening hours:** Open on request
- 🚗 **Car parking:** None
- ♿ **Disabled access:** Some level paths, but some areas inaccessible to wheelchair users
- 🚌 **Bus routes:** 8A and 8B alighting at Botanic Gardens
- 📞 **Cemeteries and Crematorium Central Office** 028 9027 0296 (Mon – Thurs 8.30am – 5pm; Fri 8.30am – 4.30pm; Sat 8.30am – 12.30pm)

## Prominent burials

- 1 Kevin T. Buggy** (died 1843)  
Editor of *The Vindicator*, Belfast's first Catholic newspaper which ran between 1839-1852.
- 2 Barney Hughes** (1808-1878)  
Master baker, who introduced Barney's 'bap' to customers.
- 3 Andrew Joseph McKenna** (died 1872)  
Launched the *Northern Star* newspaper in 1868.
- 4 Robert Read** (died 1881)  
Co-founder and proprietor of the *Belfast Morning News*, launched in 1855 as Ireland's first penny news sheet.



There is a great view of Friar's Bush Graveyard from the Discover Nature Zone in the Ulster Museum. The Museum is open Tuesday-Sunday (closed Mondays) and entrance is free. [www.nmni.com](http://www.nmni.com)

# Knock Burial Ground



## Body-snatchers

Graveyards in the 1800s attracted body-snatchers, who sold newly interred bodies to anatomists and medical students for profit. Walls were constructed around graveyards to make them more secure and a watch tower was built at Shankill Graveyard in 1834, so that relatives could guard fresh graves at night until the risk of theft had decreased. Watchmen were employed at Clifton Street as sentries, which relieved families of this onerous task. Sometimes a cage of stout iron known as a coffin guard was placed around the coffin to deter would-be thieves. Despite all of these precautions some bodies were stolen from Belfast graveyards.



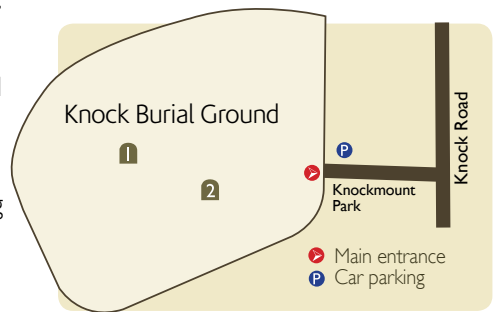
### History

The name Knock comes from the Gaelic word Cnoc, which means 'a hill' – and the burial ground at Knock indeed stands on a hilltop overlooking Belfast. An early 13th century church on this ancient site had, by 1622, been transformed for Anglican worship but was abandoned in 1737 in favour of a new parish church at Knockbreda. There are no remains of any church at Knock today.

The extension of the city boundary in 1896 brought Knock Burial Ground under the jurisdiction of Belfast Corporation, which took it over in 1900. At that time all of the ground was allocated and only the re-opening of some graves was permitted.

### Features

Knock Burial Ground is encircled by a high stone wall. It contains 18th century headstones of people from local townlands such as Ballyhackamore, Ballymacarrett, Bloomfield, Castlereagh, Gilnahirk and Tullycarnet. The oldest legible gravestone (map 2) is dated 1644. Other more recent headstones make reference to those killed in World War I.



### Visitor information

- ➔ **Main entrance:** Knockmount Park, off A55 Outer Ring.
- 🕒 **Opening hours:** Open on request
- 🚗 **Car parking:** Limited parking in lay-by beside gates.
- 🚌 **Bus routes:** Metro 18 passes end of Knockmount Park.
- ♿ **Disabled access:** There are four steep steps into the graveyard. Due to very uneven ground within the graveyard, access is unfortunately not possible for wheelchair users or those with walking difficulties.
- ☎ **Cemeteries and Crematorium Central Office**  
028 9027 0296  
(Mon – Thurs 8.30am – 5pm; Fri 8.30am – 4.30pm; Sat 8.30am – 12.30pm)

### Prominent burials

**1 William Nicholl**  
(1794-1840)  
Belfast born ship's chandler and flax merchant, and local watercolour artist.

# Roselawn Cemetery



## History

After World War II, Belfast Corporation (now Belfast City Council) realised that the City Cemetery and Dundonald Cemetery were running out of space. Steps were thus taken to provide additional burial space.

Roselawn was laid out in 1952 as a 'lawn' cemetery with roses planted along the main driveway. The ground was formally consecrated in 1954.

The red brick City of Belfast Crematorium (map 3), the first of its kind in Ireland, opened in 1961, and the first cremation, that of a County Tyrone farmer, took place in July of that year.

Roselawn has been extended several times over the years and has been landscaped with informal grass areas and lakes.

## Features

A small river flows through the grounds of Roselawn Cemetery and the three lakes were constructed around the river's natural course. They are home to a variety of water fowl.

The remains of an ancient rath or ringfort (map 4) can be identified in the cemetery. This was a fortified settlement made of earth during the Iron Age or early Christian period.

An additional 28 acres of ground was purchased in 2009 to extend the capacity of the cemetery.

## Prominent burials

**1 George Best**  
(1946-2005)  
Northern Ireland  
footballer.

**2 James Kilfedder**  
(1928- 1995)  
Unionist MP for  
over 30 years.

The cemetery contains graves linked to 'The Troubles', such as RUC Officers, prison officers, soldiers, and victims of some of the worst bombing atrocities including the Abercorn Restaurant, Oxford Street and La Mon House Hotel.

## Visitor information

➤ **Main entrance:** Ballygowan Road

🕒 **Opening hours:** see table of cemetery opening hours on page 18.

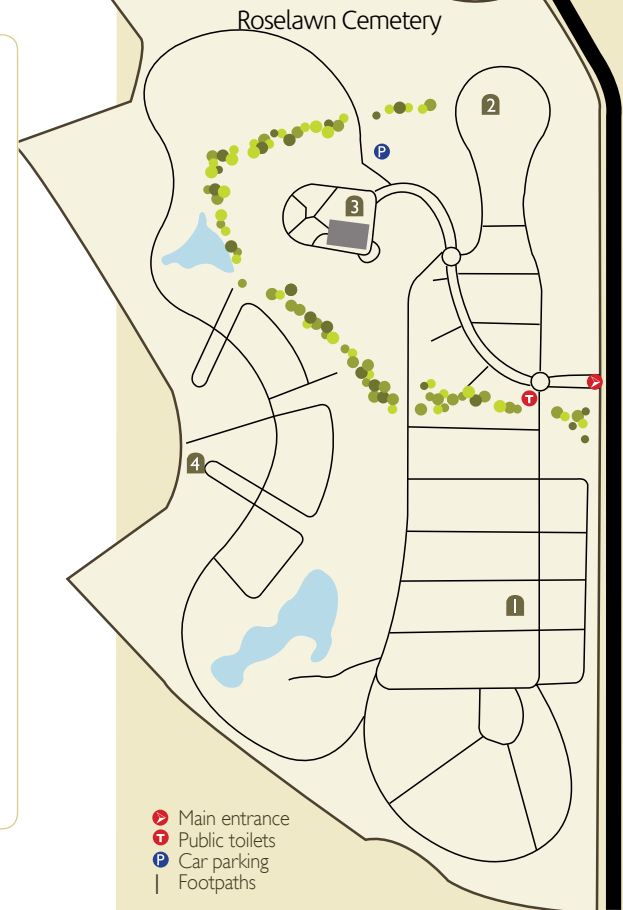
♿ **Disabled access:** Good network of roads and on-road parking. Access to graves in the older sections and to many of the memorial trees is restricted. There is a ramp into the Cemetery office which has a low level enquiries counter.

🚻 **Public toilets:** Toilet block near main entrance, with disabled facilities

🚗 **Car parking:** Parking is permitted on most roads within the cemetery. There is a 5mph speed limit throughout the cemetery. There is ample car parking with designated disabled car parking spaces for those attending Crematorium services.

🚌 **Bus routes:** Ulsterbus No 12 from Laganside bus station to Ballygowan.

☎ **Roselawn Cemetery Office**  
028 9044 8288.  
Mon – Thurs 8.30am – 4.30pm;  
Fri 8.30am – 4pm; Sat 8.30am – 12.30pm; Sunday – Closed





## History

The name Shankill, which came into use in the 17th century, means 'old church'. The earliest church on the site of today's graveyard was the white church of 1306, but burials had been taking place some 300 years earlier.

Burials were mainly of local people, and residents of linen settlements from Glenalina, Ligoniel, Oldpark and Springfield. Paupers and victims of plague and disease were buried in unmarked graves. After the opening of the City Cemetery, only a few interments continued at Shankill, the last being in the 1930s.

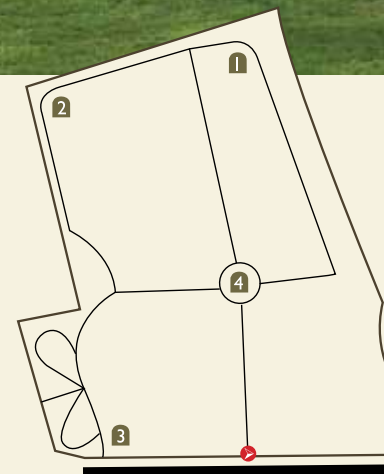
Shankill Graveyard came into public ownership in 1958, at which time the area was heavily vandalised and overgrown. After renovation and tidying, the graveyard was re-opened in 1964 as a rest garden.

Although the graveyard is closed for burials, a memorial area was established in 2010 for the scattering of cremated remains.

## Features

One of the oldest legible gravestones at Shankill is of George McAuley (map 3) who died in 1685, but many of the earliest stones are unreadable or are missing. During restoration in the 1960s some headstones were retrieved and arranged around the perimeter wall along with memorials already there. The gates and railings of the graveyard are listed because of their historical significance.

One prominent feature is the sculpture of Queen Victoria (map 4) by sculptor John Cassidy. This originally stood in the Royal Jubilee Schools in Durham Street and was placed into Shankill Graveyard in 2003. It was carved from Portland stone in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee and depicts her wearing a lace dress.



● Main entrance  
| Footpaths  
Shankill Road

## Prominent burials

- 1 **William S. Baird JP**  
(1824-1886)  
Founder of the Belfast Evening Telegraph.
- 2 **Rev. Isaac Nelson**  
(died 1888)  
Irish patriot, nationalist MP and minister of Donegall Street Presbyterian Church.

## Visitor information

- ➔ **Main entrance:** Shankill Road.
- 🕒 **Opening hours:** 7.30am until dusk
- ♿ **Disabled access:** good network of even paths.
- 🅇 **Car parking:** None, on-street parking only
- 🚌 **Bus routes:** 11A-D
- 📞 **Cemeteries and Crematorium**  
Central Office 028 9027 0296 (Mon – Thurs 8.30am – 5pm; Fri 8.30am – 4.30pm; Sat 8.30am – 12.30pm)



## Genealogy

Anyone interested in Belfast burial records or tracing their family tree should contact the Cemeteries and Crematorium Central Office 028 9027 0296

For information on births, deaths and marriages please contact NI General Registry Office, Chichester Street, Belfast. Tel 028 9025 2000

## Online burial records

You can now look up burial records online using our search facility at

[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/burialrecords](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/burialrecords)

The service allows you to search for burial records in Belfast from 1869 onwards. Around 360,000 records are available relating to Belfast City Cemetery, Roselawn Cemetery and Dundonald Cemetery.



## Opening hours

City Cemetery, Dundonald and Roselawn

### 1 March – 31 March

Monday – Saturday	8am – 6pm
Sunday	10am – 6pm

### 1 April – 30 September

Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday	8am – 6pm
Tuesday and Thursday	8am – 8pm
Sunday	10am – 6pm

### 1 October – 31 October

Monday – Saturday	8am – 6pm
Sunday	10am – 6pm

### 1 November – 28 February

Monday – Saturday	8am – 4pm
Sunday	10am – 4pm

The offices at Roselawn, Dundonald and the City Cemetery are open on some Public and Bank Holidays. Please ring prior to travelling if you wish to visit the office.

## Further information from:

[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/cemeteries](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/cemeteries)

## And from the following books:

Tom Hartley, *Written in Stone: the Story of Belfast City Cemetery*, 2006.

Eamon Phoenix, *Two Acres of Irish History – a study through time of Friar's Bush and Belfast 1570 -1918*, Ulster History Foundation 1988.

Robert Scott, *A Breath of Fresh Air – the Story of Belfast's Parks*, Blackstaff Press, 2000.

R.M.W. Strain, *Belfast and its Charitable Society*, London 1961.