

5 February 2025

Historic Hospital Burials

Regarding our research to find our relatives burials in Milltown cemetery. We really appreciate any help with information that will assist us and our Independent Forensic Archaeologist.

As we discussed I have listed questions that Claire may be able to meet with Toni and I and help our research if possible.

- **When did unification of Mortuary Records begin and how were they brought together? Are they accessible now?**
- **Who would hold the Historic Mortuary / Death / Burial Records for individual Hospital Burials, Institution Cadaver Donations prior to unification of records?**
- **What was the arrangement with local Undertakers in relation to Hospital Burials, Cadaver and Anatomical remains?**
- **Was there and is there currently a financial arrangement / contract with local undertakers for all of the above types of burials?**
- **Were any payments made from the Government or Hospital Trusts towards any Hospital Burials? If so, are records held of the breakdown of such payments, i.e. grave, gravediggers and so on?**
- **Were any graves purchased under a lease for Hospital Burials in cemeteries including Milltown?**
- **What onus, if any, was placed on the contracted undertaker to keep records of any transaction, i.e. was any information on a burial to be returned to the Trust or any other body involved?**
- **The ethnographic evidence from cemetery staff was that there was and still is a Burial Order, which travelled with the corpse and had to be returned to the Belfast City Council and Trusts. This paperwork is also referred to by past and present gravediggers, alongside past managers of Milltown as a "Blue Slip".**

This paperwork was accessible at Belfast City Hall as recently as the 1990's. Where would that information be held now for Hospital Burials?

- **Is it possible to give an estimate for the number of Infants / children / adults sent for burial to Milltown Cemetery? One year's records for every five years from 1935 to 1995? With this information, we could correlate the estimated number who have been buried in mass graves in Milltown at the Bog Meadows.**

Information pertaining to Milltown Cemetery should be requested from the Catholic Church who own and maintain the cemetery.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has written Mortuary Records dating back to 1953 in a variety of formats from hardback notebooks, Mortuary Register and the Mortuary Day Book. This will record babies for hospital burial only.

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Records for cadaver and anatomical remains are not within the jurisdiction of Belfast Trust.

Information required to address the estimate of number of infants / children / adults sent for burial to Milltown Cemetery for every 5 years from 1935 to 1995 would require more than 18 hours work to locate, retrieve and extract.

Belfast Trust considers that the cost of retrieving the information would be above the 'Appropriate Limit', as defined by the Freedom of Information Act under Section 12. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified as £450 for public authorities such as Belfast Trust. This represents the cost of one or more persons spending 18 hours in determining whether we hold the information, locating, retrieving and extracting this information.