

North Mayo Heritage Centre

# NEWSLETTER

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The  
North Mayo  
Heritage  
Centre

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## Locating the Grave of your Ancestor

**Trace your roots**  
Let us help you research  
your Mayo Ancestors

Feature Article

**Cillíní**

*Unconsecrated burial grounds*

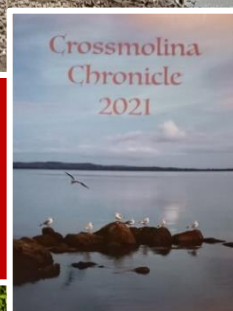
**BOOK OF THE WEEK**

**Crossmolina Chronicle 2021**

Buy it now from our eBay  
bookstore

€12 (+postage)

Crossmolina  
Chronicle  
2021



Cover images: Kildownet Old Cemetery, Achill Island (Fáilte Ireland)

The North Mayo Heritage Centre is dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich heritage of the region



## Cillíní – Unconsecrated Burial Grounds

**E**arly Church law stated that ‘*without baptism...nobody can be saved*’, and the Church did not allow the unbaptised to be buried in consecrated ground. The tradition therefore, was for infants to be baptised on the day of their birth. It would not always be possible for the priest to attend each birth, however. Infant mortality was high, with many children dying within the first one or two days of birth.

A Cillín (pronounced KILL-eeen) was an unconsecrated burial ground, used primarily for the burial of unbaptised infants. The earliest historical reference to the use of Cillíní in Ireland dates to 1619, although excavations of several Cillíní revealed use dating from the 1500’s to the 1800’s.

Cillíní were often located at former religious sites, such as an old abbey, cemetery or ruined church. They have also been located in neolithic sites, against boundary walls, on the shores of lakes or oceans, and on the north side of Catholic churchyards.

The burial of stillborn babies, and those for whom life was too short for baptism, were typically undertaken by a male family member, usually the father, and under the cover of night. They were not to be mourned or acknowledged, as people believed that they could be malevolent, holding ill will, or bringing bad luck.

These unconsecrated graves obviously held significance for the families in spite of the Church’s ruling, however, with graves sometimes being outlined with stones, and the children laid carefully, on their backs or sides, within the grave.

Cillíní were often located close to rural settlements, and would be visited by mothers and other family members, in secret.

There is also evidence that these grounds were used for the burial of others not allowed in consecrated land, such as suicides, beggars and executed criminals. New mothers who died during childbirth, or before being ‘churched’, and illegitimate children would also have been buried in Cillíní.

Cillíní were scattered throughout Ireland, with one or more being associated with most communities in rural Ireland, and much larger, mass ‘graves’ found in, or on the outskirts of larger towns.

These sites are now being restored, with the Church active in blessing them, or even transferring the remains to consecrated ground.



**Are you interested in professional help to**

### RESEARCH YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

If you have a query or would like to get started on your family history, why not contact us today. Our friendly staff will be glad to assist.

*We work with clients all over the world.*

**Tel: 096 31809**

**Email: northmayo@gmail.com**

### LOCATING THE GRAVE OF AN ANCESTOR

*An integral part of genealogical research is locating the grave of an ancestor.*

*We find that this part of ancestral research can be most revealing, as it can confirm family relationships and information not available from other sources.*

*We have a number of valuable resources at our disposal to enable us to locate the grave of an ancestor, including burial records and headstone transcripts from 116 graveyards in Co. Mayo. The majority of inscribed headstones in Co. Mayo date from the 1930s onwards. Prior to this, headstones were very expensive to commission, and earlier headstones were either the preserve of wealthier families or were paid for by family members overseas. In the vast majority of cases where an inscription exists, it will be found.*

*In the absence of a headstone, it can be very difficult to locate an individual grave. However, it is usually possible to be fairly certain of the correct graveyard.*

*Once a grave is located, maps, directions, and possibly an image of the headstone are furnished to the client.*

*It is worth noting that all correspondence with our researchers can be done remotely and is especially beneficial if attempting to locate the grave of an ancestor from abroad.*

*Our clients admit that finding the grave of an ancestor is a fulfilling part of their family history journey, however .....there is always more to be discovered!*

### Exciting Business Opportunity

Licence to operate the Cafe at the North Mayo Heritage Centre, Enniscoe, Castlehill, Ballina. F26FR94

All equipment in place for immediate start, with mixed indoor and outdoor seating areas.

Recognised destination within the North Mayo region  
Annual footfall; 25,000

Established Green Flag & Heritage Flag site  
Established annual Cultural programme of events & exhibitions  
Established annual Training programme  
Established links with hotels and tour operators  
Access to Looped Walks and gardens  
Close proximity to Enniscoe House, Castlehill



Close to population centers  
Crossmolina; 4km, Ballina; 16km  
Castlebar; 31km, Westport; 43k

Attractive conditions and licence arrangements for 2022 - 2024

For more information please email: [nmhmanager@gmail.com](mailto:nmhmanager@gmail.com)

