

14 MAY, 2025

**The Grounds Glasnevin.**

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When I entered Glasnevin in the early 1950s, the official gardener was Mr Paddy Kerr.

He kept 2 flower beds filled with seasonal annuals in front of the convent. Everywhere else was full of evergreen trees.

The only implement he had was a shears. He cut the hedge right down to the end of the grounds. There were hedges also on either side of the path, leading to the end door and over to the 'Poor Man's' hut. Young lads used to light fires at the end of the grounds. The path down was too narrow for the fire brigade to reach the fire.

Mother Bernadette sold the end of the ground and soon blocks of apartments were built and occupied. Paddy married Mary, they didn't have any children, so they adopted one boy, and two girls. Paddy used to bring the little boy down to see the 'moo moos', the little girls remember him kneeling at the end of their beds and praying.

His hobby was a race to Belfast at the weekends and back again the same day. Paddy loved his family and was devoted to serving the sisters. He always emptied the Ashes in the community room and reset it again for the next evening. He was in hospital in his last illness. I visited him there when the priest gave him Holy Communion. His whole attention was on the Lord, so I left quietly. Sister Kathleen Power was the superior in Glasnevin at the time. She thought that his funeral should be in the convent chapel, so he was waked there, and his funeral took place the next day, a fitting end to a very devoted servant.

The next part of this account shifts to myself. I arrived here in 1988 and ended my teaching career in 1991. One day I was standing on the path leading to the cemetery, and one of the teachers came along and stood beside me, she said she was afraid to walk down the path. She feared someone was hiding behind the tall green trees that lined the whole way down to the cemetery. I thought to myself that it was a shame that the teacher could not visit the graves of the sisters who taught her.

At the time. We had two FAS workers, keeping the grounds, one of them was a copper roofer who was made redundant, and was glad of a job as a FAS worker. So I asked them to cut the tinner trees to make flower beds along the two walls of the cemetery and put wires along the two walls, so I could plant rose trees that would eventually cover the high walls.

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There were popular trees on the way down to the cemetery. We had a community meeting about removing them. Some sisters objected, even though the roots were buckling up the tarmacadam off the path. Later on, when Sister Vivienne Keely was the General Leader, she had them removed and the pathway flattened.

The next phase happened when Sister Rosemary Duffy was the General Leader. Marian house needed six more bedrooms to be added. The new six rooms interfered with Fr. Gowan's Grotto. Sister Rosemary chose the site for the new grotto. It has the very same statue of Our Lady as the original grotto, Sister Barbara Gunning repainted it. It is placed much lower down in the new grotto. Sister Maria Consilio tends to it now.

At one time, the front lawn was halved. Sister Mel mounted her motor lawn mower and cut the grass near the convent. The other path was railed off and Bourke's cattle grazed there. On one occasion, the cattle broke out, swam the Tolka and ran into the 'Botanic's' rose garden. All hands went to bring the cattle back. That was the end of the cattle in the convent front lawn.

I decided to plant a lot of flowers outside Marian House. Some I purchased, others I grew from seed. Sister, Mary Andrew (Sister Mary O'Sullivan), was generous in giving me a budget.

The centre on the front lawn, it took two years approximately to build. The flower beds in front of St. John's, Aylward House, and the convent, were 'no go' areas for that time.

The cemetery was renovated when Sister Vivienne Keely was General Leader. The crosses were removed and lower stone headstones replaced them. The flower beds had to be halved. During COVID, all the flowers outside Marian House were dug up and replaced with pebbles. The flowers were dumped on the rubbish heap, with not as by-your-leave.

The latest addition to the garden is a purple Magnolia tree bought by Sister Claire Clarke.

Trees planted for special occasions:

Before Marian House had the six extra bedrooms added, the lawn in front of it was leased to some Eco group who had various young samplings to give away.

When the century of Father Gowan's death came along, we planted three walnut trees on the front lawn, side of the wire between the centre and St Brigid's Garden.

On St Brigid's day 1999 we planted a thin tree on the grotto side of the front lawn.

On January 1st 2000, we planted a copper beech tree on the grotto side of the front lawn.

The Jubilarian's tree 2008, a white Prunus tree, 'Sirotae' on the grotto side of the front lawn.

On the 200th anniversary of the birth of Margaret Aylward, we planted a liquid amber, on the grotto side, front lawn 2010.

of the Sisters who taught her

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