

Buried Deep but not lost forever

Discovering your ancestor's final resting place

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Why look for gravestones ?

- May give more information
- Clues to other family members
- Early graves and died young
- Life stories
- Military details

Information you may find

- Full name of deceased
- Date of birth
- Date of death
- Occupation
- Life story
- Any spouses
- Any children
- Military rank/unit
- Can show 2 or 3 generations of information
- Sometimes shows place of abode

Where to look

- Where they lived/died
- Where their family lived – may have lived with children at end
- Religious/Military association

Types of Records

- Death certificates
- Will & probate records
- Newspapers – obituaries & death/funeral announcements
- Coroners' reports
- Mass/prayer cards

Types of cemeteries

- Town cemeteries
- Memorial Parks
- Military cemeteries
- Church graveyards
- Family or institutional burial ground (Asylum, homes, hospitals, prisons)

Locating the cemetery/graveyard

- Website
- Old OS maps and county histories
- FH Societies, Local archives

Has it already been indexed!

- Vicar of the church
- Local FHS
- Local History society
- Country archives office
- Google!

Searching online

- FindAGrave
- BillionGraves
- Ancestry
- Interment.net
- Jewish Gen Online Worldwide Burial Registry
- Family Search (has findagrave and billiongraves also)
- Deceasedonline.com
- Irishgraveyards.ie
- Commonwealth war graves commission

When you find it

- Is there a graveyard plan?
- Look around for relatives nearby
- Remember dates/ages are all secondary sources so need verifying
- Check back and sides of stones for other carvings
- Remember to check around the perimeter of the graveyard
- Grave may no longer exist.

Graveyard Rules

- Be careful walking round, often hidden stones or holes.
- Be respectful and don't walk over people's graves.
- Never lift fallen stones, they are heavy! And never right a fallen stone.
- Don't want to damage the stone!
- Watch that they aren't wobbly and insecure, could fall or break.
- Use digital camera
- Use soft brush or natural sponge and water -gently!

What not to use on gravestones

- Good site: <https://cemeteryconservatorsunitedstandards.org/>
- Some stones are porous and fragile, especially older ones. Don't want to damage it for future generations.
- Don't use detergents, soaps, vinegar, bleach or any other type of cleaning solutions no matter how mild.
- Don't use: Shaving cream, chalk, graphite, mud, charcoal or flour.
- Tools not to use: wire brush, putty knife, nail file, anything metallic.
- If you have to remove lichen, soak it in plain water and loosen with a wooden lollipop stick or eraser. If it doesn't come off easily, stop
- Don't pull ivy off a headstone as it can cause more damage to the stone.

How to read and record gravestones

- Take photos of stone – close ups and in its surroundings
- Try and locate a map to plot it on, if not do a sketch
- If other gravestones of family note positions
- Ideally photograph in bright sunlight with light at an angle to the stone.
- Enhancing the inscription: water spray can make inscription stand out.
- Mirror – reflect sunlight across the shadowy tombstones. The deeper the shadows the easier it is to read.
- Wrap aluminium foil around inscription and use soft brush to “press” into inscription.

What to take with you

- Paper, several pencils
- Camera, preferably digital
- Extra batteries for anything that needs it
- Water, rags, soft brush,
- Scissors/shears for cutting back grass
- Secateurs for cutting brambles
- Mirror and torch
- Aluminium foil (lightest and cheapest is best) and clean makeup brush.

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