Hidden Gems and Forgotten People

CARRICKFERGUS AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE WATCH HOUSE

This Graveyard is situated on the Shankhill Road. The wall depicted in the photograph once formed part of a small building known as "Watch House" which was erected about the year of 1830 by William Sayers and Israel Milliken following the Burke and Hare grave robbing sensation in Edinburgh. Here relatives of the newly-buried kept watch to protect their dead from the unwelcome attention of body snatchers who disinterred corpses and sold them for medical research as well as the chance of securing articles of value that might have been buried with them.

For seven hundred years people of all denominations were buried on this site and where the Church known as the "White Church " was situated; the actual sit is presently unknown. It was the Parish Church and was dedicated to Saint Patrick. Here it stood for some centuries before the modern Belfast was founded. Eventually it fell into disuse. In 1958 the Belfast Corporation acquired the old graveyard that no longer served its purpose and transformed the area into a Garden of Rest.

John Hulme