

LARRY BREEN & COLM LIDDY



Killeen (Un-consecrated Burial Place) Ballycar, County Clare

On the side of the main road to Ballycar, County Clare, one comes across a small Killeen which lies quietly under the shelter of some ancient sycamore trees. For hundreds of years this was an unconsecrated burial place. A *Killeen* was an area of ground used for unconsecrated burial which came under various categories. This included executed criminals, truce breakers, suicides, mothers who died in childbirth but hadn't been churched, strangers whose religion might not have been known, and, by far the largest category, unbaptised babies. Although considered remnants of repressive Catholicism, the origins of Killeens date back to an era when folk tradition and Christianity were intertwined. Now towns and villages are reclaiming these lonely and forgotten burial places and bringing them back into the local community. With the cessation of its use as a burial place the Ballycar Killeen was let go wild for a time. In the year 2000 it was tidied up, blessed and a cross now stands for all the souls buried there.