

Knockfierna Hill

There are no mountains in Limerick. There are some hills – the highest is Knockfierna – 950 ft (50 ft short of a mountain)

In olden days, the hill was inhabited between $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ of the hill. People cultivated portion of the hill and grew potatoes and other vegetables. Fairly flattened drills can be seen to this day.

Below this, there is still a cottage on site known as the Rambling House, which has been renovated and now used for occasional entertainment, with refreshments provided.

During the second world war, (1939 - 1945), on the southern slopes of the hill there was a rifle range used for the army to practice. The soldiers camped on the left side of the long passageway leading from the farm residents to the road. Mass was offered every Sunday on the field on the other side of the passage by an Army Chaplain. The neighbors, including my Gran's family attended that mass, as the nearest Church was 2 miles away.

While the soldiers were here, the Magasin – storing ammunition, which was situated in Croom, – 3 miles away, was blown up causing the Church windows and other windows to be shattered. This occurred while the Army Colonels and Captains etc. attended an Army Dance in the nearby city of Limerick.

As World War II ended, peace was restored and the area gradually returned to normal.

The Yew Tree

You will find a yew tree in every old cemetery in Ireland, but not in the new ones.

The reason being, in Ireland long ago families were very large – 10 to 12 children. Every man liked to have a cow to provide milk for his growing children but not every man could afford a patch of land to graze the cow. It was quite commonplace to see cows grazing on the grass margins of country roads – the cow didn't bother anybody and nobody bothered the cow because there was no motorized vehicles in those days, just ponies and traps and donkeys and carts.

Given the opportunity, the owners of the cows would have opened the cemetery gates to let them in to graze where the grass was high and lush but the yew tree was the deterrent because that tree is deadly poisonous to cattle. That is why it was strategically planted in old cemeteries to keep wandering cattle out of sacred ground.

You will not find yew trees in new cemeteries because (a) the grazing of a cow does not occur on public roads anymore and (b) milk can now be purchased in the Local Supermarket.

Today, the branch of the yew tree is used in the manufacture of "Tamoxofan" which is a maintenance treatment for Breast Cancer.