Funerary Traditions and Commemorative Practices in Glasnevin Cemetery and Museum

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Abstract:

The space of commemoration is a busy space and with Ireland in the middle of the ‘Decade of Centenaries’- marking key historic events such as the centenary of the 1913 Dublin Lockout and 1916 Easter Rising- the practice of commemoration is transpiring on a regular basis as many sites, communities and collectives endeavour to mark these anniversaries in their own distinctive, yet appropriating way. In recent years, there have been many shifts in commemoration within Glasnevin Cemetery such as the exhuming of the bodies of ‘The Forgotten Ten’ from unconsecrated ground in Mountjoy Prison to a State funeral and repatriation in 2001, and the relocation of the Sigerson Memorial- a sculpture honouring the rebel dead of 1916- to a more prominent place in the cemetery. A significant factor in making the practice of commemoration more conspicuous and accessible to the public has been the establishment of a museum within the grounds of the cemetery in 2010. This has allowed for the commemoration of those interred within Glasnevin to become both visually engaging and educational whilst ensuring that the stories of those who rest in Glasnevin Cemetery transcends generations. Funerary traditions also contribute to the commemorative process in Glasnevin as the events of the funerals are celebrated as well as the people themselves. This opens up the site of Glasnevin Cemetery and Museum to having a distinct, intimate and sincere hold over constructing a national identity through commemorative practices.