



Lord Limerick's cylindrical gate pillars near Newcastle and (right) before and after shots of the Greg Mausoleum at Knockbreda churchyard in Belfast; below, the hexagonal tower outside Newcastle

The Follies Trust was formed in 2006 by a group of people who share a passion for a motley collection of unusual buildings which enhance and enrich our landscapes, towns and cities. These structures – or 'follies' – are part of the intricate fabric of our history but, because they serve no obvious useful purpose, are too often regarded as expendable.

As a body which has all-island interests, the Follies Trust exists to encourage the appreciation and conservation of Irish follies, to promote traditional construction and building skills and to encourage knowledge and appreciation of Ireland's artistic and cultural heritage.

But what are follies? They can be grottoes, garden buildings, ruins, bridges, hermitages, shell houses, towers, mausolea or monuments and much else besides.

Follies have been described as statements of style, a passion, eye-catchers and buildings to delight.

This somehow suggests that they are merely frivolous structures but this is not so. They were often built to provide employment in times of famine and hardship.

After its formation the Trust decided to tackle three listed mausolea in Knockbreda churchyard, Belfast. They are amazing structures, well written up by architectural historian James Stevens Curl, and described by him as 'sumptuous, yet refined; ostentatious, yet delicate'.

Early success with applications to Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Pilgrim Trust for funding reinforced the view that fundraising would be straightforward. Then in late 2007 the trouble started.

Major funders we had applied to pointed out that we did not own the structures, it was not a regenerative project and the final insult was when a trust with monuments in its name told us 'We don't like mausolea'.


We were rejected by 10 major funders inside 12 months and were in despair.

The Trust was fortunate to have an excellent professional adviser, Chris McCollum of McCollum Building Surveying, who kept revising the figures for the project and encouraging the Trust to keep going.

In May 2008 it had its first stroke of luck – the NI Environment Agency revised its grant aid policy and offered 35% grant aid for eligible projects (previously 20%); they also funded 75% of professional fees.

The Follies Trust's first project to restore the Greg and Rainey mausolea is now complete and, in June 2009, the Trust celebrated its first success with the launch of a publication entitled

# MONUMENTAL LABOUR OF LOVE

 Primrose Wilson, chairman of the Follies Trust explains the passion behind the restoration of our historic structures

'Knockbreda – its monuments and people'.

The mausolea are now transformed from ivy-covered structures with plants growing out of them and broken urns lying nearby to fine architectural set pieces.

In May this year the Trust will begin the restoration of the third mausoleum in Knockbreda graveyard – to Waddell Cunningham.

Recently a vigilant researcher in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland found Waddell Cunningham's will of 1797 (just before he died). In it he requests that his executors 'lay out two hundred pounds in erecting a family vault and burying place in Newtown Breda churchyard under the di-

rection of Roger Mulholland.' Until now the architect of these mausolea was unknown; now it is clear that they were the work of Belfast's foremost eighteenth century architect.

At almost the same time the Trust will embark on a project on two structures, known as Lord Limerick's follies, near Newcastle, Co. Down. There the scheme is to restore two roadside follies on the Bryansford-Hilltown road.

One is a hexagonal tower with sides of alternating blind gothic arches and quatrefoil loopholes and a conical spire. The other is a pair of cylindrical gate pillars with conical spires and bapstone decorations.

Both were erected c.1780 and are attributed to the astronomer and garden building designer, Thomas Wright. This scheme is being undertaken as a memorial project to the late Dick Oram. Dick was a conservation architect who devoted a large part of his life in government departments to showing people how to restore and care for their old buildings.

As a result of his knowledge, commitment and persuasive powers he left behind a legacy of historic buildings large and small for future generations to enjoy. It is appropriate somehow that in his memory two more follies will be added to that list.



The Rainey Mausoleum at Knockbreda

For more information log onto: [www.follies-trust.org](http://www.follies-trust.org)

