

MAYNOOTH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



**FR. EUGENE O'GROWNEY (an tAthair Eoghan Ó'Gramhnaigh)(1863-1899)**

The Mausoleum of Fr. Eugene O'Growney is a single-user one located in the Cemetery of St. Patrick's College Maynooth. It was built to a design by the Architect William Alphonsus Scott, between 1903 and 1905, and modelled on a primitive Irish Church design, reputedly that of St. Kevin's Kitchen in Glendalough.

Eugene O'Growney was born near Athboy, Co. Meath and was ignorant of the existence of the Irish Language until he was a student at St. Finian's Seminary in Navan. His interest in the language began there and continued at St. Patrick's College Maynooth from his entrance in 1882 and he devoted himself to the study of the Irish language, antiquities and history. Following his ordination in 1888 and a curacy at Ballynacargy, Co. Westmeath, he was appointed Professor of Irish at Maynooth in 1891 and became Editor of the "Gaelic Journal" and a co-founder of the Gaelic League in 1893.

At the suggestion of the Archbishop of Dublin he began his series of "Simple Lessons in Irish" , first published in the *Weekly Freeman* which was hugely successful in establishing a sense of pride in both the language, culture and history among a literate population. *O'Growney's Grammar* had a huge influence on the growing cultural and political movement and was recognised by Padraic Pearse in his famous 1915 Oration at the graveside of O'Donovan Rossa. Due to tuberculosis O'Growney spent from 1894 until his death in 1899 in Arizona and California.

In 1903, at the insistence of the Gaelic League in America his body was disinterred and removed to Ireland for burial at Maynooth. His funeral became a huge Nationalist Demonstration. James Joyce in *Ulysses* was not as gushing as P.H.Pearse regarding O'Growney as a Mock Hero of the Nation with his reference "*the Sogorth Eoghan O'Growney*". It is a unique mausoleum and the door is surmounted by four lines of inscriptions two being in the old Irish script and the other two in Latin. "*Pray for Eoghan O'Growney who revived the courage of the Irish. Born 1866 Died 1899*". The glass panels in the door and two side windows are no longer transparent.