



STREET PEW

Contact Details:

Keith o'Faolain, keith@vool.ie

Executive Summary:

You don't have to travel very far anywhere in Ireland before you encounter a Marian shrine or grotto of some variety. These often merge so seamlessly into the urban/rural fabric that we often don't even notice them nor question who owns and maintains them, or even question their place in contemporary Ireland. Street Pew is a crowd-sourced interactive map of roadside Shrines and Grottos in Ireland as captured by Google Street View. <http://streetpew.vool.ie/>

Solution:

This project originated with the realisation that as the majority of the shrines and grottos in Ireland are 'road side' by their nature, their locations and images would have been captured on Google's Street View platform. Given this, it was decided that this resource could be put to good use in both visualising these structures and also mapping their locations. A web based tool was created which would leverage Google Street View API to allow the addition and display of grottos and shrines on an online map. The data displayed as part of this project was crowd sourced and open to additions from the general public. In addition to Google's Street View service the other technologies which were used as part of the project were open source software tools. The mapping and location clustering was enabled by using the interactive map library leaflet.js (<http://leafletjs.com/>). The site was mainly implemented in JavaScript with a server-side processing written in PHP and the data stored in a MySQL database. Street Pew is a web based map in which the location of shrine and grottos are plotted and which allow the user to view images (3D panoramas) of the sites. The platform also invites users to contribute locations which they know of which are not currently registered on the map.

In order to add a location the user clicks the 'Add Shrine' button and is prompted to drop a marker where the shrine is located, utilising Google's Street View API, the nearest panorama view for that point is requested and returned to the user and they are prompted to focus the view on the shrine or grotto they wish to add, in order to do this they can pan tilt and zoom the view as well as move along the road. When the user is satisfied with the selection they can submit the location. Each new addition to the site goes live on the site immediately but in order to ensure quality of the additions an email notification including a static image of the new location is sent. If it is not a shrine or a grotto, this location can be removed using a simple administration portal. Thankfully, to date there have only been a handful of questionable additions. For further information please see this blog post about the project: <http://www.vool.ie/street-pew/>.



Business Challenge:

Shines and grottos come in all shapes and sizes, pop up in the most random places and their design is evolved by the community in which they are sited. Although these are distributed nationwide each one is firmly rooted in the community in which it is located, often with its own unique story. While the majority of Marian shrines were built during the Marian Year of Devotion in 1954, many shrines origins have ancient roots, being tied to older sites: holy wells, graves, raths, or burial or other religious sites. Some have links to the local saint or are the focus for annual mass or patterns festivities. These often merge so seamless into the urban/rural fabric that we often don't even notice them nor question who owns and maintains them [I have yet to see a run down or derelict shrine] and question their place in contemporary Ireland, especially in light of recent religious scandals and even removals by state agencies. The idea for this site was sown when I went in search of a map of these roadside shrine and grottos in Ireland and none could be found. The idea behind Street Pew was to create a microsite which could be used to both display and allow others to map these locations and sites.

Benefits/Results:

Without any advertisement over 333 sites have been added to date. Although this number may not seem large, due to the niche nature of the subject, it is quite significant.

An overview of the distribution of the additions can be seen on this heat map:

<http://streetpew.vool.ie/heatmap>. The map to date displays the range and diversity of the sites and it is hoped that it will ultimately grow into an extensive collection of all the sites in Ireland.

Final Considerations:

This is a crowd-sourced interactive map of roadside Shines and Grottos in Ireland which allows viewers not only to view these locations (as well as images) but also to allow them to add data in a user friendly way.