



No 60 June 2017

A View from the Chairman.

It is with great pleasure that I take over the position of Chairman of the Rathgar Residents Association. Having grown up in Rathgar, gone to school in Rathmines, and spent several years abroad I now find myself back in familiar surroundings. Rathgar has not stood still in my absence. On the contrary, there has much progress in recent years: new businesses, new buildings, new homes, and most importantly, new residents. For those of you who have lived in Rathgar any length of time you may agree that it is a special place to live. Right on the city's doorstep, close to everything, yet its streets and parks provide an element of peace and calm. A pleasant paradox.

I would like to thank our outgoing Chairman, John McCarthy for his tireless work and dedication over the last five years at the helm. We are fortunate that John is staying on as Environment Officer offering us his deep knowledge of local issues. Also, special thanks to our outgoing Secretary Loughlin McSweeney. While stepping down from a committee role, Loughlin is continuing to volunteer his expert services managing the Association's website (<http://rathgarresidentsassociation.ie>). Thanks also to our outgoing committee who provided valuable service over the course of last year. Many thanks to those committee members who re-volunteered for the year ahead, and to our new members. We are lucky to have individuals so generous with their time and expertise working on our behalf.

My vision for the year ahead is the same as my motivation for joining the Committee: to help improve the quality of life for local residents. This will be done through an increased number of social events, continuing our planning

observations, lobbying for local improvements, and working with local authorities. Rathgar residents contribute solidly to the national purse. I would like to see a fair return of benefits to the locale.

Rathgar is a special place, a place we call home. With your support throughout the next year the Committee will be working to preserve and enhance its qualities. If you feel you would like to contribute in any way, e.g. event management, communications, writing articles, data analysis, database management, or anything else that would improve life in Rathgar, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you to all members who have already paid your annual subs for 2017. A reminder to those of you who have not yet had an opportunity to return your subs, your financial support is vital to enabling the Committee's work.

Thank you for your continued membership and support.

Kind regards,
Colman McMahan

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Environment:

John McCarthy

The main points of focus for the Association remain the same as in previous reports

- The state of repair of roads and footpaths
- Dog fouling.
- Graffiti
- Lack of general cleaning
- Community charges, property taxes, water charges, car tax, parking charges
- Implementation of the Rathgar Village Improvement Plan

Roads/ Footpaths Conditions

In my experience, there are two types of maintenance Preventative and On Going Preventative is where large road works are undertaken eg. dig up a major stretch of road surface and replace it with a new surface. This work is meant to last for a number of years.

On Going is where minor remedial works are carried out eg repair a pot hole. This is meant to be a temporary measure to make a damaged surface safe.

In and around Rathgar and other areas of Dublin I see very little of either sort. Since the replacement of the footpath on the eastern side of the Rathgar road, almost three years ago, little remedial work on either roads or footpaths has taken place. What surprises even more is that the general public are expected to report damaged footpaths and roads and they do. Is this not the role of certain council officials? If the Council don't have such a system, then they should have!

Dog Fouling

There is a publicity campaign under way at the moment highlighting this problem. We will have to wait and see how successful it is. The current advice to the Association from DCC is that where there is ongoing/persistent dog fouling problems call DCC 01-2222222 or e-mail southeast@dublincity.ie. If it is a persistent problem the dog warden will carry out an investigation.

Graffiti

The graffiti problem seems to be out of control at the moment. Continue to report it to DCC at 012222222 or e-mail southeast@dublincity.ie. Don't be tempted to paint over graffiti on public utilities cabinets such as traffic control and ESB boxes. Anybody getting paint on their clothes could claim compensation from you.

Litter

Litter is a nuisance. On busy streets and public parks, it is a serious problem. Dublin City Council is to try out a new type of litter bin. This is bigger than existing ones and has a solar powered electric compactor built in. When full, a message is sent to DCC who will empty it. We await with great expectations!

Community Charges

We all pay property tax. However, there is a disturbing lack of clarity on how this tax is being spent. There is no indication that the tax raised in this area is being spent in our area. Also, it remains unclear whether this tax will increase as property prices increase. One suggestion is that the initial property valuation of 2013 be kept as a base reference, and that, that valuation be increased annually in accordance with the consumer price index.

Herzog Park

While a definite plan, with some reservations, was agreed with local residents for the development of Hertzog Park, no work has as yet commenced. The plans can be viewed on Dublin City Council website.

Pedestrian Crossing in Rathgar.

Some preliminary work was done. But when will it be completed?

One of the last matters to be notified to the Association before the compilation of this report was the Grant of Permission by An Bord Pleanála for the second time for the destruction of nos 189 and 190 Rathgar Road. Two distinctive houses opposite the Esso petrol station, structurally sound though somewhat neglected and badly treated over many decades but none the less two very unique semi-detached houses which are the centre of a group of 4 houses (nos 188 and 191 being the others) single storey over garden level, the likes of which are not at all common. The Association fought to stop the destruction of these houses initially for a 3 storey development of 8 apartments and subsequently with the adoption of the new city development plan, a revised development of 14 apartments with a 4 storey element. But all to no avail. The permission includes the requirement for traffic light system to regulate the flow of traffic within the development.

The Legion of Mary, the occupants of no 191, the last house of the set of four, had some input into the first application but they didn't make a submission on the second.

The period saw the area lose two very significant specimen trees, both horse chestnut at 47 Rathgar Road and 1 Grosvenor Place, both of which were of the order of 150 years old. And while the tree at Grosvenor Place was having problems, appropriate surgery would have ensured its survival for the enjoyment of the community at large for a further number of years.

The members of the Association might consider what course of action should be taken to combat this loss of environmental and residential amenity, so important to the ethos of our area.

A subsequent proposal for development at 1 Grosvenor Place, especially relating to the proposed demolition of the unique Victorian glass house to the side, was appealed by us to An Bord Pleanála. Dublin City Council, having accepted and given permission for the planning application then decided that much of what had been applied for (and permissioned) was actually exempted development. *(Answers leading to a logical solution to this puzzle to: the Planning Officer please or to the Editor, for inclusion in the next issue of Link with a possibility of a submission of the solution to Dublin City Council)*

A final permission was given at Dartry Mills, Dartry Road where at one stage there were as many as three applications running concurrently and in parallel. The Association did not get heavily involved although it monitored the situation as best it could. It is not clear what development is now underway.

Another landmark development was an application to demolish a bin store and replace it with a three bed room house in the grounds of Dartry House, Orwell Park. A load of rubbish you might say. Well Dublin City Council thought so anyway!

And with Rathmines still seriously lagging behind Renelagh in the “haut cuisine steaks”, work is progressing apace to get Lenehan’s old hardware store up and running as a restaurant. Proposals have even spilled over into no 6, where up to recently you could have had a “musical haircut” (now moved 4 doors down). Soon you will be able to dine out on the terrace and watch the comings and goings at Rathmines Garda Station. Will it be Meadows and Byrne, (coming early 2017 as we are constantly being told in the Swan Centre), will it be McDonalds or even perhaps “Lenehan’s Hardware Restaurant”? Rathmines is starving to find out!

If nothing else the period threw up some bizarre and unique cases. Apart from all the foregoing, there is now an application in for 3 houses in the back garden of no 10 Grosvenor Road with access from Grosvenor Road via the existing private vehicle access. Local residents contacted the Association and a submission was made raising some interesting questions.

Inappropriate extensions to period houses continue to be an ongoing problem in our area. 31 Rathgar Ave. has given rise to considerable concern. The City Council was not happy with the proposal so it requested additional information. This has now been received, so it is expected that a permission will issue shortly. The Association is working with local residents with respect to further developments.

The population of Rathgar is shortly set to increase significantly with the development at Marianella. There have been many applications submitted in respect of the various developments on this site. Currently the Association has an appeal in respect of permission given for roof gardens on all the main blocks. If granted this would increase the heights of the buildings beyond the permitted heights of the City Development Plan. Another application has been submitted recently in relation to the northern part of the site. This submission is to build 24 houses on the part of the site where the Redemptorist Order had originally been given permission to build a new monastery. By way of additional information, Dublin City Council has asked them to scale back and change the layout and this information has now been received. Expect a permission to issue shortly. The developer has also sought to carry out changes to the gate lodge (a protected structure) and this is being examined. Also, a submission to extend one of the recently completed houses has been lodged.

Some Notes and Comments

2017 AGM

The AGM of the Association took place on Thursday 30th April.

Fifty five members of the Association were present. After the business of the Association was dealt with, Councillors Mc Ginley, Costello, Feeney and Kate O Connell TD participated in a question and answer session. Cllr McGinley’s advice was particularly helpful..

The RRA annual garden Competition and Dixon Cup

The judging for this annual event will commence in early July with presentation of prizes at the Rathgar Horticultural Annual show on Saturday 8th July at Christchurch Hall, Rathgar.

The Gourmet Shop closes its doors.

All of Rathgar were saddened when Sean and Gillian Cronin closed the doors of their iconic Gourmet Shop for the last time. The shop was operated by the Cronin brothers Tommy and Sean since 1966. With Tommy’s retirement, a number of years ago, Sean and his daughter Gillian carried on the wonderful tradition of high class grocery. Many of his customers who were also friends came to wish Sean and Gillian goodbye.

Sadly, Sean Cronin died in early June. The Association extends its sympathy to Gillian and her family May he rest in peace

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Dodder Spring Clean

Once again, congratulation and thanks to the **Dodder Action Group** for its great clean up of the river and its banks on 22nd of April.

For more information on this group go to www.dodderaction.com

Book reviews: Some recent publications of interest

Dublin in the 1950s and 1960s: Cars, Shops and Suburbs

Joseph Brady. Four Courts Press 2017 €29 paperback.

In the 1960s there was a rapid pick up in the economy of Dublin following the low point of the 1950s. Dublin like many European cities engaged in much soul searching about what kind of city was needed for a car owning population. This was the period when Dublin got its first statutory town plan. This is the seventh volume in the *Making of Dublin City* series.

Clontarf

Colm Lennon, Royal Irish Academy €30 paperback.

This is part of a series of atlases of Dublin suburbs produced by the Irish Historic Towns Atlas in collaboration with Dublin City Council. Further publications in this series will cover **Rathmines**, Drumcondra, Inchicore/Kilmainham and Ringsend/Sandymount. The publications will comprise numerous historic and modern maps as well as illustrations and photographs.

British Pathe News (Anyone remember the newsreel before “The Picture” began ?)

A large collection of newsreels with an Irish interest are now on line. One collection “The Revolutionary period” contains footage of Collins at Griffith’s funeral.

[Britishpathe.com/Ireland/Revolutionary period](http://Britishpathe.com/Ireland/Revolutionary_period)

Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, 63 Merrion Square host a series of lectures and talks

All at 7.30PM

Lectures

21 September 2017

The Lough Kinale Book-Shrine: conservation, techniques and style

Dr Paul Mullarkey, National Museum of Ireland

26 October 2017 – Frank Mitchell Lecture

Village life in prehistoric Ireland? New insights on/into the house clusters at

Mullaghfarna, Co. Sligo and Turlough Hill, Co. Clare

Dr Stefan Berg, National University of Ireland, Galway

23 November 2017

Settlement and architecture in Plantation Ireland: an archaeological perspective

Dr James Lyttleton, Archaeologist

14 December 2017

Hair hurling balls: review, research and scientific investigations

Ms Clodagh Doyle, National Museum of Ireland

Talks

4 September 2017

Experimental archaeology: making, understanding, story-telling

Prof Aidan O’Sullivan, University College Dublin

2 October 2017

Breaking the mould: Ireland’s replicas of cultural objects from the historic to the digital

Ms Michael Ann Bevivino, Honorary General Secretary

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6 November 2017

The medieval missal of Merrion Square – a fragile masterpiece revealed

Mr Timothy O'Neill, Member

Outings

Friday 20 October:

Mr Charles Duggan will show how the plans for the conservation, repair and reuse of 14 Henrietta Street as a museum have been implemented.

Meet at 14 Henrietta Street at 11am and the cost is €10 per person.

The Rathmines, Ranelagh and Rathgar Historical Society Lecture Series

Series of monthly meetings resumes in the Autumn

Information: Rathmineshistoricalsociety.com or
rathmineshistoricalsociety.ie

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There may be a nice cup of Irish(grown) tea awaiting, why not give it a go!

According to Mr Middleton - mrmiddleton.com, we have been missing out in growing our own tea.

Today in England there are small tea plantations from the south of England to Scotland.

Having heard about this, Mr Middleton has started a project to grow Irish tea

All tea, green or black enjoyed the world over, comes from the same plant *camelia sinensis*. It is a close relative of *camelia japonica* which grows so well in gardens all over Ireland.

Camelia Sinensis comes from the cool damp mountains of China. Far from a tropical plant, it actually grows in a climate similar to ours.

The tea grown in India is *camelia sinensis var. assamica* which does need a warmer climate

All that tea plant needs to grow and thrive is a bright sunny spot and slightly acidic soil.

So if you can grow camelia, rhododendron and azaleas, you can grow tea. If you are gardening on soil that is more alkaline you can replace the soil with ericaceous compost -better still grow the plants in pots.

Tea plants are totally hardy, relatively disease free and will survive down to -10C. When the new shoots appear, pick the first growth which is the two smallest leaves and the bud growing outside, you should get four crops each year. In a greenhouse or conservatory maybe 6 crops or more depending on sun or temperature.

Once you have picked your new growth you have tea whether it is green or black.

The actual process of leaf preparation for green or black is different and takes some time to master.

Support your local shops

Shop locally whenever you can. This will keep our local shops in business and retain the character of Rathgar as a living community

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A Swift bit of nature.

The global harmonies that comprise the natural world are at their most salient in the Spring. My Observers Book of Birds from 1968 says that Swifts will return at the end of April and that still holds good in 2017, though numbers have fallen by over a third in this millenium.

The Swift is a remarkable bird. You're probably familiar with its dark boomerang shape and shrill calls as it flies in small groups low and fast over our parks and rooftops here in Rathgar and across the towns and cities of Europe. It is more of an urban dweller than a countryside bird, finding our buildings very convenient nest sites and this might be the source of its difficulties.

Its arrival coincides, though no coincidence, with the hatching and return to activity of our insect populations. and it is on these insects the Swift entirely depends, catching them on the wing.

One of the many remarkable things about the Swift is that it never lands. Barring nest building and egg incubation the swift is on the wing, even when sleeping, which unattached birds do at night at altitudes around 10,000 ft, where it glides practically motionless on the wind. The Swifts hatched here are unlikely to land again once they leave the nest until they return to Ireland 10 months later even though they will have taken in a trip to Southern Africa in the meantime...impressive.

Swift numbers are declining and the main reason seems to be one that we can address. Modern buildings are providing fewer and fewer nest sites. When old sites are destroyed or blocked up the very site-faithful swifts may spend a couple of seasons looking for a new site and not breeding.

But there is a solution and one that would be lovely to see incorporated in our building regulations... the swift nest box. There is a lot of information available from Birdwatch Ireland and the RSPB. Would it not be brilliant if all our new buildings had to provide

for nature as well as people?...it makes so much sense and is very inexpensive. My favourite is the Swift Brick, a hollow brick put in place near the eaves at the construction stage.

Might you do your bit to assist this truly incredible bird?

www.swift-conservation.org ,
<http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/OurWork/ResearchSurveys/SwiftConservationProject/tabid/1389/Default.aspx>
©Mark McDowell 2017, macdubhghaill@hotmail.com

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The Death Hearse

“Some opinions held by folk in Rathfarnham”

The site of the Catholic Church Building has been changed several times in Rathfarnham. At first it was opposite the present main entrance to Castle College then it occupied a position in Willbrook Lane - now Willbrook Road - where now stands the residence of the Parish Priest - and now the present position is at the angle of the Willbrook and Grange Roads and immediately opposite that well known hostelry "The Yellow House".

But if the Church premises changed positions the Graveyards remain the same. That opposite Castle College gate was for the townspeople and gentry of Rathfarnham where may still be seen the last resting places of Lords Ladies and Baronets. The mountainy people had the churchyard or rather graveyard since there is no church nor the remains of one at Cruagh about two miles from Rathfarnham and just outside Edmondstown. This last mentioned village recalls the Legend "Eamon an Chnuic".

The Church yard at Cruagh is on the mountain side - apart from nearby houses and in a lonely and somewhat dreary spot. To the casual passerby there is nothing to be seen since a long rutty lane leads through some grazing land to it. But it is remarkable that it has what appears to be a dwarf round tower and this same tower was a pivotal point for many occurrences - violent deaths among them. The purpose of this tower was a "watch tower" used by the relatives of the recently interred corpses to frustrate the efforts of

"body snatchers". Many tales are told in the lonely houses of Rathfarnham to this day of the "Death Coach" which noiselessly moved about on secret errands. No one seemed to know whence it came or where it went, but all agreed that a dead body was its load and headless its horseman and sack-muffled feet on the steeds of death.

When local people and others who had right of burial in Cruagh had deposited their relatives in the grave they took it in turns to watch the grave for at least a week of nights to fend off the body snatchers if necessary by force of arms and as a shelter was necessary the small "Watch Tower" of Cruagh was built. The real origin of the Death Coach was for the purpose of providing "anatomical specimens" for the medical profession in and round Dublin.

Since Rathfarnham mountain side gave such health to its inhabitants it was also looked on as natural by the "medicoes", that very suitable cases for dissection would be found here. A hearse was chartered and commanded usually by medical men themselves to get the required "case". Many a scuffle and fight ending in death occurred here.

There is still in Cruagh a respected family who were ancient inhabitants two hundred years ago. As Catholic landowners of the farming class, their roots went deep into the soil beloved by them - their past generation are interred at Cruagh. A fine strong healthy sturdy type of peasant farmer - eminently suited for dissection. One of them about eighty years of age died in 183? and in due course was interred. He was one of four brothers. Each surviving brother took his turn to watch from the Tower in secret. On the second night, a silent coach moved up to the outer gate, a very small, broken down structure. Four figures clad in black – long capes drooping from shoulders and large flopping hats down on faces. They carried spades and shovels. It was early in November and the watcher in the tower huddled closely in his thick frieze coat must have dozed. However, a late moon shone out and showed him four figures busily engaged at uncovering his brother's grave. Had he been a young man he might have approached them and made an effort to force them off. But being elderly and well used to the shot gun now in his hand he fired and saw one of the figures tumble headlong into the half opened grave. The others quickly raised the figure and staggered away with it.

Next morning showed a trail of blood to the graveyard gate. On the following day, a notice appeared in the "Dublin Evening Post" intimating the sudden death in the Meath Hospital of a very bright medical student whose people gave generations of doctors to Dublin.

The above is taken from *The Schools' Collection The folklore of Ireland as recorded in 1937/38 by Irish school children Volume 0797 Rathfarnham Boys National School*

Collector: Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh, Teacher, Rathfarnham.. Informant ; Dr Edward Albert Croly aged over 80

Available on line at duchas.ie/rathfarnham

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Vladimir Lenin and the 'Rathmines accent'



It is said that **Vladimir Lenin**, the Russian revolutionary, spoke with a Dublin accent. According to Roddy Connolly, son of James Connolly, in a 1976 *Irish Times* feature that Lenin, more specifically, had a "Rathmines accent". This was due to the fact apparently that Lenin was taught English in London (c. 1902) by an "Irish tutor, who had lived in Leinster Road".

After this was repeated in *An Irishman's Diary* by Frank McNally in 2012, a letter was sent into the paper by Dalton O'Ceallaigh. In it he discussed attending, in the late 1970s, a Dublin meeting organised by the *Ireland-USSR Society* at which Roddy Connolly spoke about his visit to the infant Soviet Union in the early 1920s. After the speech, there was a short silent film in which Connolly was shown walking across the square in front of the Winter Palace in what was then Petrograd and conversing with Lenin.

O'Ceallaigh made the point in his letter that **"there was no interpreter, so they were obviously speaking in a mutually comprehensible language"**. After the film, Roddy himself stated that after Lenin's death, the Russians, on researching his life, believed

that when he was in London he had placed an advertisement in the London Times to the effect of **"if you help teach me English, I'll help teach you Russian"**, the person who replied being a "Mac" somebody or other was thus a Scot. But Roddy said that, on the contrary, it must have been an Irishman.

The memoirs of Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya offer some indirect support for Connolly's claim:

"When we arrived in London we found we could not understand a thing, nor could anybody understand us [...] It amused Vladimir Ilyich, but at the same time put him on his mettle. He tackled English in earnest. We started going to all kinds of meetings, getting as close as we could to the speaker and carefully watching his mouth. We went fairly often to Hyde Park at the beginning. We particularly liked one such speaker – he had an Irish accent, which we were better able to understand."

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The following obituary notice has recently appeared in the London Times

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come in out of the rain;
- Why the early bird gets the worm;
- Life isn't always fair;
- And maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge). His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual

harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children.

It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to a student.

Common Sense lost the will to live as criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death,
-by his parents, Truth and Trust,
-by his wife, Discretion,
-by his daughter, Responsibility,
-and by his son, Reason.

He is survived by his 5 stepbrothers;
- I Know My Rights
- I Want It Now
- Someone Else Is To Blame
- I'm A Victim
- Pay me for Doing Nothing

Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone

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