



A view from the Chairman.

John McCarthy

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and welcomed in the New Year with hope in your hearts. December has been very wet, windy and mild and January started not much different. But let us think how fortunate we are in comparison to those who have flood waters in their homes.

Rathgar Village Improvement Plan

It is worth recapping on progress of the village improvement plan:

Almost two years ago Dublin City Council, the Association and local people came together to identify ways to improve Rathgar. A list of items to improve the village were drawn up. The list was then set out for delivery under short, medium and longer term.

The short term plan was to deliver:

A pedestrian crossing from the 108 to The Deli.

New street lights for the village

Standardisation of the road bollards

The Association has been informed that work will take place in first quarter of 2016 on the pedestrian crossing ---but we will wait and see---

Impending General Election

Sometime soon canvassers will appear on your doorstep. This is an opportunity to question them on their policies on Local Government: what can be done to empower people to seek and secure better services for their local area. The Rathgar Village Improvement Plan is a case in point where securing what was agreed has been tediously slow in delivery. Another case in point is the continuing problem with road flooding where gullies are inadequately serviced.

Finally, I intend to step down as chairman of the Association at the next AGM. I feel I have done my bit for the RRA and also for family reasons. I would like to thank the Committee of the Association for their total support throughout my time as chairman and also thanks to my family for their patience.

Wishing all members a successful 2016

Environment:

John McCarthy

The public environment in Rathgar is in a less than satisfactory state. There are many litter blackspots, insufficient rubbish bins both on streets and in parks, broken footpaths, potholed roads, gullies not working and streets not cleaned. Our public parks are not well maintained. There is still a lot of dog fouling and graffiti. And so the list goes on. What is the solution?

The DCC say they have in place a regular programme of street cleaning; using trucks with mechanical brushes and vacuums. These drive up and down streets cleaning as they go, this is fine on clearways where the trucks can get to the kerbs. But what about the streets that are not clearways? The majority in Rathgar are lined with parked cars where the trucks are ineffective. Much of the litter and street debris remains uncollected after the road sweeper has been.

There are two possible solutions to the street cleansing problem

- Establish a rota of streets to be cleaned on particular days. Give advance notice to the residents of these dates, so that cars can be moved and parked on alternative streets. This may be a challenging solution initially but with time and determination, it could be done.
- or
- Re-establish street cleaning staff with brushes and shovels and handcarts. Such a team could work in conjunction with a gully cleaning team

The state of our footpaths is a matter of grave concern. Recently Marian Finucane, had Fionnula Sherry, professional musician, telling her story of how she tripped on a footpath in Shelbourne Road; breaking both her shoulders. Locally, there were two such incidents recently, one on Frankfort Ave and the other on Dartry Road resulting in both being hospitalised. One wonders can DCC be aware of these incidents.

Recently the footpath on the east side of Rathgar Road was totally replaced (and for that thanks, DCC!) but what about other footpaths in the area, many in worse condition. Can we expect action on these any time soon.? Many roads and streets are in a dreadful state with potholes, subsidence and cracked ramps. Why is DCC not on top of this problem?

Why, do we the citizens, have to keep badgering before any action is taken and then only a minimal and delayed response. Here are issues to confront politicians and would be politicians when they call to your door over the coming weeks

The trend in recent times from both the Local Authority and that of An Bord Pleanala seems to be towards a more relaxed approach to inappropriate extensions to the unique Victorian architecture of our area.

Allied with that was the publication of DCC's draft city development plan which was available until recently for comment by the public. This draft has many undesirable proposals especially in the proposed dumbing down of minimum standards in respect of residential apartments unit sizes, their orientation and private open space amenity requirements.

Members have expressed concern and amazement at some developments which have emerged over recent months from Grosvenor Road, to Highfield Road and Orwell Park in spite of the efforts by the Association to defend the unique character and heritage of the area.

There have been many applications for off-street parking during the period but where this results in loss of existing on-street parking facilities, neither Dublin City Council nor An Bord Pleanala will accede to such applications. Such public facilities are now at a premium and are marked for protection as a policy in the current City Development Plan. Leicester Ave., York Road and Maxwell Road all featured in refusals for off street parking during the year.

The Association supported the Harold's Cross residents in their opposition to an unacceptable development for the Rosie O'Grady pub in Harold's Cross village. The first party appeal after a comprehensive refusal by the Local Authority was not successful. A scaled down proposal is now before the Local Authority since early December.

The Association also commented on developments at Denmark Hill, La Bas Terrace, Leinster Road West. The Council then looked for modifications and the modified plans were granted permission in November.

The Association's comments on a proposed development at 157 Rathgar Road (a villa type house, well set back from the road, not far from the Frankfort Ave junction) resulted in a much better outcome than that originally proposed. The council had sought additional modifications which mirrored many of our concerns.

Local residents contacted us about developments at 73 Highfield Road (for a new large house in back garden fronting on to Neville Road) and in respect of developments at 4 Fairfield park (proposal to split the site of the house and granny flat into two independent entities). The former was refused and is now on

1st party appeal. The latter awaits a Dublin City Council decision.

More recently a development to the rear of no 12 Highfield Road has been brought to our attention (mews development).

Another retention proposal at 122, 123 and 124 Rathgar Road for the removal of site boundary walls was opposed by the Association and refused by the Local Authority. A first party appeal has now been commented on. Such a development immediately adjacent to the access to Auburn Villas, if approved, would set a most undesirable precedent for the area. It is hoped that as other unsatisfactory proposals nearby, have in the past been refused, this will also be turned down.

A plan to demolish two 19th century villa type houses at 189 and 190 Rathgar Road and replace them with a 3 storey apartment development has been appealed by us to An Bord Pleanala. The Association maintains that preference should be given to restoration and rejuvenation of the existing intact and structurally sound 19th century building stock and should take priority over unnecessary demolition and rebuilding. The existing character and setting for the area should be protected and maintained.

An application to develop a further two houses to the existing seven that have already been developed at the rear of 1930's houses on Grosvenor Place, near Leinster Road, was refused by the Local Authority. The Association has asked An Bord Pleanala to uphold the DCC decision. A similar proposal, some two years ago, was excluded in the approval at that time.

The Association saw fit to comment on proposals on a development at 40, 42, 44 and 46 Lower Rathmines Road which while not in our area, would have ramifications for developments in the greater area including our own.

In recent months there has been a considerable increase in the Rathgar area of applications for rear or side extensions. Proposals for demolition and rebuild are also re-appearing.

There is an onus on all of us to ensure that the character and setting of Rathgar that we all love so well, is protected and maintained.

Some Notes and Comments

Annual Garden Competition 2015

Following the introduction of the extended Garden Competition in 2014, it was repeated in 2015 with great success.

Winners were:-

Best Kept Hedge Colin O'Mahony, Highfield Road, Paul & Liz Duggan, Highfield Road

Best accommodation for bin in garden setting Fionnuala Price, Orwell Park

Garden balancing soft and hard surfaces Therese O'Sullivan, St. Kevin's Park, Orla Murray, Maxwell Road

Garden in bloom Michael McGarry, Frankfort Avenue

Low Maintenance Garden, aesthetically pleasing: Donal & Joan O'Sullivan, Villiers Road, Alan Judge & Sheena McAfee, Dartry Park

Specimen Tree in a front Garden Noreen Guiry, Bushy Park Road, Karl McCabe, Upr Rathmines Rd

Best small front garden: Duncan Cole, Victoria Road, Anne Talbot, Rostrevor Road

Best large front garden Paul Carroll + Anne Heraty, Highfield Road

Best flower pot/window box/container display: Ciara & Roberto Fonseca, Highfield Gove, Mary O'Connor, Garville Avenue

Overall Best Garden (Dixon Cup) Suzanne McCauley & Liz O'Sullivan, Upr Rathmines Rd

The Association would like to express its sincere appreciation to all those local businesses who were generous in their support with prizes for the competition.

Bijou, Butler's Pantry, Comans, Fothergills, Gourmet Shop, Howard's Way, Iconic Beauty, Kuts & Kurls, Lawlors Butcher, Lloyd's Pharmacy, MacDonald Cycles, I Monelli Restaurant, Morgans Gift Shop, O'Brien's Wines, Quality Dry Cleaners, Rathgar Pharmacy, Roche's Chemist, Tesco Express

A Walking Guide to Rathgar

On Saturday the 26th September in brilliant sunshine, some 100/120 adults and children gathered in the car park at Herzog Park for the launch of a Walking Guide to Rathgar. Pat Liddy, local historian and historical walks guide providing a commentary on the history, archaeology, geology, architecture and on the notables and characters who have lived in our area, led the way for an enjoyable 90 minute stroll around the roads of Rathgar. The Guide has been published by the Association in conjunction with Dublin City Council. Ronan O'Donnell of DCC was of great help in moving it along to publication. If you haven't as yet picked up a copy, they are available in your local library also local shops or drop the Association an email and a copy will be sent out.

Christmas in Rathgar.

On the 7th December Christmas came to Rathga, with the arrival of Santa Claus and the switching on of the Christmas lights.

Literary Rathgar.

There are regular literary events in Rathgar Bookshop. December saw the book launch by Councillor Mary Freehill of *Rathgar A History* by Maurice Curtis

The Walk and Talk programme of City walks continues.

Contact DCC 2222148 (between 9-5pm),

email: letswalkandtalk@dublincity.ie

Address: Community Development Section, Dublin City Council, Block 4, Floor 1, Dublin 8. www.letswalkandtalk.ie

Passport for Leisure

Dublin City Council operates a discount card scheme specifically tailored to the leisure and recreational needs of persons over fifty five. The scheme entitles members to avail of a range of special discounts from free access and use of DCC's sport, leisure and recreational facilities and to a large range of specific discounts from the business sector.

Contact DCC: Tel 8450090

email: info@passportforleisure.ie

Community Development Section: DCC, Block 1. Dublin 8

www.passportforleisure.ie

The Rathmines, Ranelagh and Rathgar Historical Society

There is always something of interest. A new series of lectures will start in in the Spring

Information: Rathmineshistoricalsociety.com or

email: rathmineshistoricalsociety.ie

Rathmines and Terenure Libraries

There is always a lot going on in your local library. So keep a watching eye.

There are reading groups in both libraries.

Rathmines 4973539. Two groups: Group I meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 3pm and Group II meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7pm. Shakespeare Reading Group - reads scenes from Shakespeare aloud followed by a viewing of relevant video clips and some guided discussion. You can just listen and watch as well. This group meets on the second Monday of every month from 6:15pm.

Terenure 4907035 Two groups: Group I meets on the first Monday of each month, 7pm. Group II meets on the first Wednesday at 7pm

For the historian the **Dublin City Archive and Library Reading Room** in Pearse Street is the place to be.

Dodder Action Group. (dodderactiondublin.com) and the **Dodder Greenway Plans**

Plans for the Dodder Greenway which will run from the Liffey to the mountains will soon be available for public consultation
Have your say!

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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RRA Children's Literary Festival

Rathgar Bookshop : 21st November 2015

Local children were welcomed to the lovely Rathgar Bookshop by owner Liz --- on Saturday 21st November. Liz and her team created a cosy space for some 20 children in the children's section and everyone settled in for a fun afternoon. First to speak was author/illustrator Alan Nolan: a funny and entertaining speaker, he soon had everyone laughing as he chatted

about his family growing up and favourite reading when he was young. He shared that he was producing hand drawn comics for his classmates from about 11 years old and how thrilled he is that he does the same thing for a living now that he is grown up. Alan's books are loved by his young fans for the outrageous plotting as well as for the highly entertaining 'gross' factor depicted in his illustrations. To end the fun all present had a go at drawing Alan's character 'Ogg' from his latest book *Conor's Caveman*.

Next to speak was Nicola Pierce also published by O'Brien Press. Nicola has written several historical novels for 10+ year olds on subjects as varied as the Titanic, the Siege of Stalingrad and the Siege of Derry. She showed pictures of where she writes – at a desk in her home – and described how she does the research for her work; using books, websites, libraries, art galleries and of course visiting the locations in which her stories are set. Reading from her most recent book *Behind the Walls* about the Siege of Derry, she told us how pleased she is by the cover which is a picture of the wooden gates of the walled city of Derry. Nicola's writing is gripping and atmospheric and she left her audience enthusiastic to read more of her books.

Alan and Nicola signed copies of their books for those present and their work is available to buy in Rathgar Bookshop. The RRA Committee would like to thank local businesses O'Brien Press and Rathgar Bookshop for sponsoring the event and send a special thanks to Geraldine from O'Brien and Liz in Rathgar Bookshop for their enthusiastic support and to Loughlin and Sue from the RRA for organising the event.

AGM of the Association.

The 2016 AGM of the Association will take place on 8th March next at the usual venue, St Patrick's Hall, Leicester Avenue.

Notice will be issued shortly.

Please come along. It is important that as many members as possible take an interest in the Association. There is an urgent need to have members volunteer to join the Committee and bring fresh thinking and energy to the Association.

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Book Review

Rathgar A History Maurice Curtis The History Press Ireland €18

Maurice Curtis is a well known author of local histories and has published extensively on Dublin's suburban villages. To date he has written histories of Rathmines, To Hell or Monto, Glasnevin, Portobello, The Liberties-a History, Rathfarnham and Terenure.

In Rathgar -A History, the author takes us through a journey in time, covering the history of Rathgar's early settlement as a farm belonging to the Augustinian nuns of the Abbey of St Mary at College Green and its subsequent passing on the dissolution of the monasteries- through many hands- until the beginning of its development around the 1750s. From the 1840s onwards many of the roads and streets we know today began to take shape. The architectural heritage is a rich one.

Curtis also recounts the lives and achievements of many notables and public figures who lived in the area. He recalls business men Wm Martin Murphy, and Hugh Brown of Brown Thomas, Angela Mc Namara popular columnist and youth counsellor, husband and wife actors Denis O'Dea and Siobhan McKenna and politicians President Erskine Childers and Taoiseach Jack Lynch and many, many, more besides.

This is a fascinating book which can be used either as a handy reference for historical places or people or for the avid rathgarophil to read from cover to cover.

You will find, well described in this book, something of the mood, style and hauteur of Rathgar's past which was artfully lampooned in Jimmy O'Deas famous ditty:-

There are some quite decent suburbs, I am sure.

O Rathmines is not so bad or Terenure.

In Dartry they are almost civilised.

O we have heard of spots like Inchicore,

But really don't know where they are

For, thank heavens, we are living in Rathgar

Francis Johnston and the GPO

Over the coming months much will be written on the role the GPO played in the history of modern Ireland. This article looks back to its design and construction in the early 19th century.

In 1784 the Irish Parliament established an independent postal service for Ireland. However, in 1831 following concerns over its management, control passed back to the postmaster general in London.

The first housing of the GPO was in College Green opposite the Bank of Ireland (the old Houses of Parliament) This building became inadequate in the following years and heated discussions took place on whether it should remain on an expanded site on College Green or whether a site on Sackville Street (O'Connell Street) would be more appropriate. Finally, the decision was made in 1814 by the Lord Lieutenant that it would be built on Sackville Street. Upper Sackville Street had been designed by Luke Gardener in the mid 18th century. The lower part did not exist and the view across the Liffey was closed off. The Wide Streets Commission wished to open it up and favoured an imposing building for this part. A Catholic cathedral was put forward for consideration but such a building was deemed unacceptable. Finally, it was decided that an edifice such as an imposing GPO would be suitable. In the considerations for the selection of the site and in the choice of architecture for the new GPO there is no doubt that nearby Nelsons Pillar, the imposing Doric column built in 1808 was influential. The GPO and the Pillar became complementary structures.

Francis Johnston, was chosen as architect and designer. Born in Armagh, he was already noted for his work, amongst many others, on Townley Hall, near Drogheda, St Georges Church in Hardwicke Place and the Chapel Royal in Dublin Castle. The Lord Lieutenant, Lord Whitworth laid the foundation stone on 12th August 1814, with £60 spent on official entertainment. The building was completed at a cost of £80,000 and was open for business four years later. In its general proportions and frontage, it may have been influenced by the hall and offices of Kings College, Cambridge. Both buildings have a long three storey façade, a central pedimented portico and a similarly distributed window and door pattern. The angle of the pediment is more acute and hardly rises above the roof.

Built of Wicklow granite with a portico of Portland stone, the building is

The Association made a number of important submissions during 2015

Thornhill Committee on Local Property Tax A submission in April pointed out the fundamental inequity of the current situation which is based on market .This means that currently houses in Dublin are forging ahead whilst in other parts house prices are still in the doldrums.

Although the basic inequity still remains the recent Budget has frozen values until 2018.

It is hoped that a fairer system will emerge before then.

Dublin City Council Development Plan :2016-2022 The draft of this plan has been open for public consultation. The Association made a submission before the closing date 12th December 2015.

The submission pointed out the Association's concern at the following issues:

1. Proposals in the plan to allow a great number of high rise developments throughout the city and in particular proposals to allow developments in the city centre up to 28m and to encourage developments along rail hubs/Dart/Luas up to 24 metres. Also to allow up to 5 storey development in suburbs (such as Rathgar) These proposals are in contradiction to DCC's own declaration "*DCC acknowledges the intrinsic quality of Dublin as a low rise city and considers that it should remain predominantly so*".
2. The serious rowing back on apartment standards.
3. That conservation areas do not have enough protection against inappropriate development.
4. That rules relating to side garden, infill and mews developments particularly in conservation areas, should be more categoric.
5. The proposal to rezone a large part of the Church of Ireland Training College lands in Rathmines for housing. Without a public consultation, this would be premature.

223 feet long, 150 feet deep and rises 50 feet to the cornice. The frontage is defined by the 80 feet long portico. The ground floor and the corner stones are rusticated. Six Ionic column, each 4 feet 4 inches in diameter, support the portico which spans the pavement. Within the building the central hallway gave way on left and right to the offices of the Penny and General Post. A bay at the back of this hall led to the mail coach courtyard. Railings, set back a few feet from the façade, allowed light to enter the basement. Two fluted cast iron lampstand pillars are all that remain of the ironwork today. Above the cornice are three statues carved by John Smyth who also carved the river heads on the Customs House. The statues represent the qualities of the postal service: Hibernia in the centre with Fidelity on her left and Mercury the messenger of the gods to the right. Two bells were installed which were rung each evening when the letter boxes closed at six o'clock. Today, Dublin's GPO remains one of the oldest, still functioning, General Post Offices in the world.

For further reading:

S. Ferguson: *GPO 200 years of History*; M Craig: *Dublin 1660-1860*
C Casey: *The buildings of Ireland -Dublin*

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A tale of two parks, Bushy Park, London and Bushy Park, Dublin

The pleasant tree lined walks, ornamental lake and playing fields of Bushy Park are well known to residents of the Rathgar area. Whether it was named for Bushy Park, a royal park in London is a matter of conjecture, but both can be compared.

Bushy Park, London is located on the banks of the Thames adjacent to the better known Hampton Court Palace and is surrounded by the districts of Hampton, Teddington and Twickenham. It extends to 445 ha or 1099 acres and is smaller than the Phoenix Park, Dublin, which covers 707 ha or 1752 acres. The Park became a Royal park in 1529 when Cardinal Wolsey gave the land to King Henry VII who established deer parks on the site. Today some 320 deer roam open parkland with large specimens of oak and smaller trees of Hawthorn. Extensive woodland walks by streams and ponds provide shelter for birds and mammals

and contribute to a sense of being in the countryside.

In contrast avenues of Lime and Chestnut announce a formal designed landscape. In the early 1700's Sir Christopher Wren laid out two formal avenues and placed a large pond with the Diana fountain with a statue of her nymph Arethusa where the avenues meet. These avenues created a grand entrance to Hampton Court Palace, which at that time he was rebuilding for King William III and Queen Mary. They are breath taking in their size and scale, the Chestnut avenue being five trees deep on either side and the Lime avenue two trees deep on either side.

The restored Water Garden is located to one side of the Park. In 1638 King Charles 1, requiring water for fountains in Hampton Court had a 16 mile canal, known as the Longford River constructed. In 1710 Lord Halifax who was Park Ranger built a residence, Upper Lodge, and developed a Water Garden. Using the Longford River as a source of water he constructed an octagonal basin from where water spilled onto a cascade into a three lobed lower pool. While the Water Garden was known from maps and some drawings little evidence of the garden remained. A painting Figures in a Garden provided valuable information when restoration of the Water Garden began in 2009. The story of the restoration is shown on display panels in the Garden. While the attire of the figures in the painting differ from those who visit the Garden today both view a fine example of an early 18th century formal water garden with associated alcoves and paths. Nearby a large dome shaped Brew house dating from 1710 or earlier has been restored and can be visited by the public.

During the First World War, Upper Lodge became a hospital for Canadian soldiers. In World War Two, Bushy House was used by General Dwight Eisenhower as he planned D-Day in 1944. This large white house had been built in 1664 and for a period was the residence of the future King William VI. Now surrounded by large trees it is part of the National Physical Laboratory, the National Measurement Institute in the U.K.

Bushy Park which is managed by The Royal Parks caters for active and passive recreation with cricket pitches, sports grounds, a visitor centre and tea rooms.

Provision for active and passive recreation by Dublin City Council is also obvious in the local Bushy Park. The Park covers 20.5 ha or 51 acres and is bounded on one side by the River Dodder. The City Council website provides a history of the Park. Bushes House as it was then called was built by Arthur Bushe of Kilkenny in 1700. In 1772 John Hodson changed the name to Bushy Park. John Wilkinson became the owner in 1791 and added 100 acres to the

property. On the occasion of her marriage to Robert Shaw in 1796 he gave the estate to his daughter, Maria.

From 1796 – 1953 it was owned by the Shaw family. They laid out ornamental gardens and planted trees. One visitor in the early 20th century, the Hon Emily Lawless of Lyons House, Newcastle, described seeing ‘vistas of seemingly endless flowers borders, ... converging towards an ancient stone tank’ which was ‘hidden in alpine plants and overhung with climbing roses’. The Shaws also planted parkland trees and their estate was one of the many surveyed by the forester H.M. Fitzpatrick in 1932. He noted specimens of Walnut, Purple Beech, Evergreen oak and False Acacia. In 1951 the land was purchased by Dublin Corporation and became a public park. Bushy Park House became a school and is now in apartments. Like its larger namesake woodland walks and lakes and sports fields comprise much of the Park. The ‘Bushy Parks’ have one other feature in common, both have received the Green Flag award for Parks.

Mary Forrest
School of Agriculture and Food Science UCD.

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From Links of the past

September 1995

An introduction to Victorian Furniture, porcelain and glass

Report on Lecture given to the RRA on 27th April 1995 by Roxane Moorhead, antique dealer and lecturer

“Roxane focused on the period from 1851 when the series of Great Exhibitions began with the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London of that year. If industrialisation led to mass production of furniture, it also created a nostalgia for the past. Walnut, mahogany, satinwood and ash were firm favourites..... The rococo taste in furniture was in vogue. Roxane treated us to an inside view of a typical Victorian family room, where every surface had to be busy. Rooms with carved chimneys and patterned curtains and carpets were further livened by walls full of prints with not an inch of space unadorned. Sometimes the walls were hung all round with plates, often blue and white of Japanese origin, imported by Heals of London. Paintings tended towards the nostalgic, usually farewells reflecting the “harking back” tendency of the time.”

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