



## A view from the Chairman.

John McCarthy

Having got away mostly with an easy winter, spring has not been kind. The protracted wet and cold weather is not helping gardeners. I hope however every effort will be made to get them into shape for the Association's annual garden competition. Our judges will be at work from late June. The presentation of prizes will take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July at the Rathgar Horticultural Show in Christ Church, Rathgar.

In the near term it is hoped, that the Rathgar Village Improvement Plan will deliver a range of improvements. New lighting standards in the village centre are expected to be in place by late July. The standardisation of bollards on Orwell Road should also be completed. Flower boxes are already in place and are being tended by the adjacent shop owner. They definitely enhance the appearance of the village. Other improvement work will continue later in the year and into next year.

The Association attended a Dublin City Council public consultative meeting on improvement plans for Hertzog Park. Garden architect Patrick McCabe presented varied ideas for improvement. There was considerable input from the floor. Further meetings to finalise improvement plans for the park are to take place later.

The Association has made a submission to the Dr Thornhill review group on local property tax; pointing out the inequity of the current system.

Following a suggestion made at the AGM that road reps should be regularly informed about Association matters so that they in turn can keep their local members informed, a briefing note is now sent to each road rep after the Committee's monthly meeting advising of significant issues. I believe that there is a distance between the Committee and the members, and this needs improvement. The first step in this process is feedback to

the road reps. I hope that this will become a two way process whereby road reps will directly raise issues with the Committee and become more involved in the direction the Association is taking. To this end also, I hope later in the year to arrange an informal social evening for all road reps and committee members.

Members input and suggestions –including criticism—are always welcomed. An easy way to make your views known is through our website [rathgarresidentsassociation.ie](http://rathgarresidentsassociation.ie)

I would also ask members to talk to and encourage neighbours who are not members of the Association to join. The more representative the Association is, the more influence it can bring to bear to have improvements made in the area.

We all, as residents of Rathgar need to keep the pressure on Dublin City Council to ensure that Rathgar continues as a pleasant place to live.

May I wish you all a pleasant Summer

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## Environment:

John McCarthy

Whilst the Association may have ready access to DCC and its services, the same old problems continue to haunt us:

- The lack of cleanliness. The area looks untidy
- The state of repair of roads and footpaths
- Dog fouling. We are unhappy with both the small number of irresponsible dog owners, and DCC's response to this problem.
- Graffiti
- Community charges, property taxes, water charges, car tax and parking charges

## Cleanliness

Dublin City Council has adopted a method, of street cleaning using trucks equipped with brushes and vacuums. While there may be a use for such vehicles in certain areas, they certainly are not suitable for an area like

Rathgar where parking and road access, leaves them totally unworkable. A small team, armed with shovels, brushes, and small mechanically propelled vacuuming vehicles would be a better option. DCC's current policy leads to footpaths not being cleaned properly.

### **Road Conditions**

There seems to be little policy of continuous road/footpath maintenance. While potholes will be repaired, a higher level of maintenance is needed. During the wet winter months, heavy rainfall often leads to potholes becoming less visible so that they pose a real threat of accident or injury to pedestrians, motorists and cyclists alike. As well, motorists can face major damage to their vehicles. For local pedestrians, the state of our footpaths discourages many from going out walking – an important health activity.

### **Litter**

The Association continues to complain about the great lack of rubbish bins in the area. This inadequacy of bins, contributes to the build up of rubbish on our streets and footpaths. Adding to this public nuisance is the minority of irresponsible dog owners who refuse to clean up their dogs' excrement. DCC stubbornly refuse to yield on the issue of providing more bins.

### **Graffiti**

Graffiti continues to be a problem out of control. When it occurs, please report it to DCC.

### **Local Property Tax and other Community Charges**

LPT is a significant new local charge. However, there is a disturbing lack of clarity on how this tax is being spent. We have no idea whether the money raised in our local area is being spent there. Also, it remains unclear what will happen as property prices continue to rise. One idea suggested is that the initial property valuation of 2013 will be kept as a base and the valuation will be increased annually in accordance with the consumer price index.

### **Dilapidated state of Rathgar Parks**

A small number of items on the lists of dilapidations which were sent to the officials in the DCC Parks' Division, have been attended to. Fairfield Park was unfortunately left off the original list but has now been added. The Association will continue to keep these items on our agenda with DCC

### **Real time information at Rathgar bus stops.**

It is good to see that a bus real time information panel is now operating at Terenure East.

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## **Some Notes and Comments**

### **AGM of the Association.**

The 2015 AGM of the Association took place on 19<sup>th</sup> March last. There was a good attendance of about 50 members. When the business of the meeting was concluded an open forum for questions took place.

### **Public Meeting.**

A public meeting organised by the Association took place on 24<sup>th</sup> April. The gardai, local councillors and local TDs were invited. The Gardai presented helpful advice on personal and property security. This was followed by a Question Time which allowed opportunity for local representatives to address matters of concern raised by those in attendance.

### **Annual Garden Competition 2015**

Following the great success of the extended Garden Competition last year, the RRA is preparing for the 2015 Competition. It will again be approaching businesses in the area to sponsor prizes which will be awarded at the Horticultural Show in Christ Church Rathgar **on 4th July 2015.**

The categories for which prizes will be awarded are:

*Best kept hedge. Best accommodation for bin in garden setting.*

*Garden with balance between hard surface and green surface.*

*Garden in bloom.*

*Low maintenance garden but aesthetically pleasing as a garden.*

*Specimen Tree in a front Garden. Best small front garden.*

*Best large front garden. Best flower pot/window box/container display.*

The **Dixon Cup** will be awarded for the best overall front garden.

Now is the ideal time to prepare your garden and we encourage everybody to put in a little effort into preparing for the competition. Not only will you have the opportunity to win a prize for your effort but also the residents of Rathgar will be able to enjoy your garden.

### **A Walking Guide to Rathgar**

The Association in conjunction with Dublin City Council are currently preparing a walking guide to the area which hopefully will provide some physical exercise mixed with a little bit of the area's history, architecture and literary associations. Unfortunately there has been a delay in its publication but it will be here soon.

### **Computer Training**

It is hoped to provide another training course in the use of computers for older people in the Autumn. These courses are run in conjunction with Stratford College transition year students.

The RRA is very appreciative of the involvement of the teachers and students who give freely of their time.

### **Summer in Rathgar.**

Bloomsday, 16<sup>th</sup> June, will be celebrated in Rathgar with a full programme of events.

### **Literary Rathgar.**

There are regular literary events in Rathgar Bookshop. Recent events in June were *Strolling through Ulysses: A One Man Show* and Doreen Finn reading from her novel *My Buried Life*.

### **The Walk and Talk programme of City walks continues.**

Contact DCC 2222148 (between 9-5pm),

email: [letswalkandtalk@dublincity.ie](mailto:letswalkandtalk@dublincity.ie)

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

[www.letswalkandtalk.ie](http://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 to a large range of specific discounts from the business sector.

Contact DCC: Tel 8450090

email: [info@passportforleisure.ie](mailto:info@passportforleisure.ie)

Community Development Section: DCC, Block 1. Dublin 8

[www.passportforleisure.ie](http://www.passportforleisure.ie)

### **The Rathmines, Ranelagh and Rathgar Historical Society**

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

Information: [Rathmineshistoricalsociety.com](http://Rathmineshistoricalsociety.com) or

email: [rathmineshistoricalsociety.ie](mailto:rathmineshistoricalsociety.ie)

### **Rathmines and Terenure Libraries**

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

A good example was a recent series of lectures in conjunction the Military Archives

*Women in military service 1916-1923*

*The importance of military service 1916-1923*

*Establishing the Free State 1922-1924*

There are reading groups in both our local 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](http://dodderactiondublin.com))

This group held a public meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March last to hear views on proposals to construct a greenway/ cycle way along the Dodder from Ringsend to the Dublin Hills. As three local councils are involved in this

project. South Dublin CC has been appointed lead Council. Some feasibility studies have been done but preliminary designs will be completed over next 12 months. A full public consultations will then follow.

Concerns were expressed on the following

Dividing cyclists from walkers at pinch points.

Anglers concerns about access and impact on wildlife.

In Knocklyon habitats in the sandbanks could be disturbed.

Interference with a place for relaxed enjoyment.

Ten local councilors were present, most of whom agreed to put forward motions to their respective Councils to have The Dodder Action group involved at the pre consultation stage.

### **Trace your Ancestors**

For those interested in genealogy and tracing their family history, a valuable resource is the IrishRoots.ie website. A recent addition to their data base are the church records for all religious denominations of Co Monaghan;. covered are periods in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in some cases earlier.

### **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.

### A Missing Swan

A reader of our January *Link* wrote as follows

“I read in the latest *Link* about two swans that were ever present above the weir at Rathfarnham Bridge and that one had disappeared. I was told that a couple of months ago one was found dead on the river bank Another report said that a dog attacked one and killed it near the footbridge at the arch on Dodder Park Road.”

The bereaved and lonely swan still appears, from time to time, near Rathfarnham Bridge

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## BUTTERFLIES IN RATHGAR

Malcolm Taylor.

In 2010 I noticed a short article in the Irish Times explaining the importance of butterflies as valuable environmental indicators, and the National Biodiversity Data Centre in Waterford were looking for monitors so I volunteered not only because of interest, but also it would get me out walking on a regular basis.

Monitoring butterflies involves a fixed route walk of about 1.5 km, with recordings taken on a weekly basis from April to September. I chose my route along the Dodder from the footbridge in Dodder Park to the weir below Rathfarnham Bridge. There are currently thirty three butterfly species, resident and regular migrant, in Ireland. This small number and the ease with which most can be identified make them an ideal indicator group.

Over the last few years I have observed twelve varieties along my defined walk. The other twenty-one species will be mainly found in other habitats, such as the Burren, meadows and coastal areas.

The thirteen varieties observed can be divided as follows:

1. The whites and yellows.

This is most abundant group and comprises the Small and Large Whites, the distinctive Orange Tip, and the delicate Green-veined and Wood Whites.

2. The Speckled Wood which can be mainly observed along the margins between Orwell Bridge and Dodder Park.

3. The Blues. The dainty little Holly and Common Blues.

4. The Migrants. The beautiful Red Admiral appears in May, along with the Painted Lady, having travelled from North Africa. I am continually amazed how such delicate creatures can make this long journey. Both these varieties can be seen on the flowering buddleia, the butterfly bush, which is abundant along the river beside the Lower Dodder Road.

5. The Hibernators. The Small Tortoiseshell and the beautiful Peacock. Sightings are highly dependent on the weather, with numbers varying from two in total over a six week period to a maximum for me of 27 on one walk. The ideal time is between noon and three, in prolonged sunshine and with little wind.

A relevant web site is [www.butterflies.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.butterflies.biodiversityireland.ie).

## Politics: still a dangerous business almost a decade after the Civil War

The Irish Times reported on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1930.

At about a quarter past eight o'clock last night residents of Brighton Square, Rathgar, were startled by the firing of shots, and many people left their houses to make inquiries.

Police soon were on the scene, and were followed by soldiers. It was learned afterwards that an armed guard of the house of Mr Michael Hayes, Speaker of the Dail, 20 Brighton Square, Rathgar, had been approached by two men.

The Guard challenged the men, and it is stated that they fired at him with revolvers, wounding him in the leg. He returned the fire and the men ran away.

Soon afterwards an ambulance arrived, and the injured man was taken to St. Bricin's Military Hospital.

The police this morning refused to give any information on the subject.

At two o'clock this morning Mr Hayes's house was guarded by police.

A resident of the locality, who was walking through Brighton square when the shooting took place, stated that he saw a man dressed in a brown suit of plus fours running away.

He stated also that three shots were first fired, and that they were immediately followed by two shots.

Mr Hayes's house is the last house on the east side of Brighton square, and is adjoined by a garage.

It is understood that the assailants approached the house by way of the garage.

The Guard was in civilian clothes, and was standing inside the railings in front of the house.

The injured man's name is stated to be O'Regan, and is understood to be a policeman connected with the plain clothes division of the Civic Guard.

Inquiries at St Bricin's Hospital this morning showed that he was resting comfortably, and that his injury is not serious.

Late last night policemen made inquiries at several of the Dublin hospitals, with a view to discovering whether a wounded man had been brought there.

Buses and trams in the Rathmines and Rathgar areas were stopped and their occupants searched after the outrages. Policemen in Baggot street detained a man a about midnight whose head was bleeding.

However, he was able to account for his movements, and it was

established that he had been injured in a squabble.

A young man told our reporter:--“I was standing on the pavement, about two hundred yards from the corner of the square, when I heard about five shots, apparently revolver shots. Everybody in the street stopped and looked up the road. I saw a young man dashing down the road citywards. “Four of the shots came in a burst, and there was a single report a few seconds afterwards. There was a ‘bus stopped on the road, and I thought at the first report that it was a backfire.”

The sound of the firing and the subsequent police activity gave rise to many alarming rumours.

This is the second attack of the kind within a few weeks. On the night of November 10 last a party of soldiers which had been acting as guard to President Cosgrave was fired upon when returning from his residence at Templeogue.

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## **The Dodder River mill races from Rathfarnham Bridge to Clonskeagh**

A story of local topography and industrial history

The Dodder River has a quick descent from its source on Kippure, the highest of the Dublin Hills. As a result, over the years there have been a series of disastrous floods; the latest being Hurricane Charlie in 1986. Over many years, people have lost their lives and property destroyed by its powerful floods. As early as 1628 it is recorded that Arthur Usher of Donnybrook was drowned when the river overflowed.

### **Industrial servant**

But while it has brought disaster and damage, it has also been a very useful servant: providing the water power to turn the wheels of many industries. There were 6 mill races with weirs and sluices to control the flow of water, between Rathfarnham Bridge and Ringsend. The first mill race started from the weir 250 metres downstream from Rathfarnham Bridge(Pearse Brothers Bridge). Because of the high bank, it travelled along the north side and close to the river. Then leaving a sluice relief crossed into the north side of the present High School playing pitches where there was a long mill pond. This served a saw mills owned by Locke and Woods near Orwell Road. The tail race turned southward back to the river Dodder upstream of

Orwell Bridge. Prior to the saw mills, a Patrick Waldron operated a substantial water driven calico mill which at one stage employed 300 men. This had ceased production by 1844. The nearby bridge over the Dodder was known as Waldron’s Bridge until recent times.

The next mill race started at the weir downstream of Orwell Bridge in Dartry Park. This race also stayed close to the northern bank of the river until the river turned away. The mill race continued under the high cliff of Dartry House lands(Mill Hill and later developments) to another long mill pond near Dartry Cottages. It then passed through the Willan’s cloth mill (later Dartry Dye Works),driving an enormous mill wheel, to discharge back into the river.

The third mill race began at the wide Dartry weir and took off in an open channel eastwards away from the weir on the north bank. It crossed the Dartry Road and continued along the boundary of Nullamore House lands to Richmond Avenue. There it was culverted under the Milltown Road into Moores cloth mills(subsequently the Milltown Laundry,of which only the tall brick chimney remains) and then back to the Dodder. This water course also supplied the power to James Classon’s saw mills at the Dropping Well. Other mills that flourished here were two corn mills, an iron mill and a paper factory.

At Milltown Weir a fourth mill race started on the Dodder’s south bank which powered a flour and saw mills near Packhorse Bridge. This race then passed under the Dundrum Road near Milltown bridge and after an easterly curve away from the Dodder flowed onwards to a large mill pond at Clonskeagh iron works. There the power of the water turned 4 large water wheels and produced ironmongery of various sorts. The antecedents of this foundry can be traced back to 1316 when Henry Jackson had a mill there.

Between Clonskeagh bridge and its discharge into the Liffey, the Dodder and its mill races turned many further waterwheels and was the servant of many and varied industries.

All of this industrious river’s mill races are long forgotten and all mostly erased, although here and there, one can still see some lasting vestiges of them to remind us of its busy past and the prudent use of a reusable energy source.

## Liquid Magic.

Mark Mc Dowell

(busheslane@yahoo.ie)

There's a lot of very dull talk about water these days; how to put it into pipes and how to pay for it, completely taking for granted or overlooking the astonishing nature of the substance itself and the uttermost dependence on it of all life on Earth.

Maybe that's because we all know all about water already and really the only interesting thing left to say about it is how to get it into our toilets and taps? Or maybe we don't need to know anything about it because it's here and there's any amount of it? None the less it is quite amazing.

At school we learn about the water cycle, rain to earth to sea to evaporation to clouds to rain ad infinitum, a spectacular process but am I wrong or is there a taking-for-grantedness operating here also? Anyway, what about new water? Whereabouts on Earth is new water being made? We are all familiar with the chemical compound H<sub>2</sub>O. Hydrogen and oxygen are two very commonly occurring gases on the planet, so where on Earth do hydrogen and oxygen combine naturally to produce new water? The answer, quite surprisingly, is that they don't combine, there isn't any new water being made, well hardly any.

Combining hydrogen and oxygen is a very dangerous process, witness the Hindenburg zeppelin disaster, a surprising by-product of which was about 160 metric tonnes of water in vapour form, but not an experiment that bears repetition. There is for the moment no solution to water shortages by simply making new stuff.

So where does all our water come from? That remains a bit of a mystery. Scientists used to believe that water arrived on a newly formed dry Earth in collisions with comets and possibly asteroids, both known to be very icy entities. However, National Geographic published research last year that suggested Earth in fact was formed wet, with much of the water we now have being part of the gas and dust that combined to form the planet, though more may have arrived on comets in later collisions. The jury is probably still out on the exact origins.

The water coming out of your tap is on an astonishing journey, it is in the region of 4.6 billion years old, it is still fresh and brings life wherever it goes. Awesome is a dreadfully over-used word these days, in my opinion, but it does apply to water. Quite simply liquid magic.

## Planning in Rathgar

June 2015

Philip O'Reilly

Planning activity in the Rathgar area has been on the increase for some time now.

After a major effort (which resulted in a successful outcome) to prevent Denmark Hill in the Leinster Road West area from being demolished, came an identical proposal for the demolition of a another detached house of character directly across the road at 30 Leinster Road West.

This house for years had been in the possession of the Old Alexandra Guild, a retirement home for elderly past pupils of Alexandra College. Many of these ladies would have lived here in their latter years. They would have in their younger days attended the school when it was located in an assortment of beautiful buildings on Earlsfort Terrace, before its move to Milltown. Alexandra Hall buildings have stood empty and vandalized for 10 years.

The Association together with local residents made a concerted effort to ensure that a proposal for 5 town houses to replace it, would be refused. The outcome was a success with a comprehensive refusal from Dublin City Council. No doubt the rebuff by An Bord Pleanala overturning DCC's earlier decision to permit the demolition of Denmark Hill, was fresh in mind this time round!

The Association is hopeful that earlier proposals for these two properties will now be implemented

It is notable that many refurbishment projects consist in the main of proposals to build large flat roofed rear and side extensions, often times compromising the setting of the original structure in terms of loss of light, its setting or materials used. One such development at 194/196 Upper Rathmines Road was refused outright by Dublin City Council. Many others were required to be modified before a revised permission was forthcoming.

The current Dublin City Development Plan also has comprehensive guidelines in respect of its objectives for the back lane or mews development. A recent proposal for a double 3 storey mews development on the site of a single two storey house at 74C Rathgar Road (Garville Mews) was refused by the Local Authority. The Association commented on the proposal. As yet it has not been appealed to the Planning Appeals Board.

**From time to time queries are raised about the Association's role in planning applications.**

Below are some of the principles that guide the Association in this area of its activities.

The Association since its foundation in 1971 has always sought to maintain the integrity and special character of the many roads in the area; with their fine brick built traditional structures. And have always advocated that new extensions show appropriate sensitivity to and acknowledgement of the main structure. In its submissions to the planning authorities on these issues, it has always argued the case for sensitivity and appropriateness. Because of the architectural attractiveness of the Rathgar area many people want to live there. Moving to a house in Rathgar does require a compromise between having Victorian/Edwardian features: red bricked houses, wrought iron boundary railings , intact original front gardens and the convenience of a modern 21<sup>st</sup> century house.

As well as respecting the integrity of the buildings, there is also a need to be aware of restrictions on off- street parking. In the current Dublin City Development Plan (2011-2017) there are clear and precise policies and objectives set out in respect of on-street and off - street parking. The council pursues a policy that actively maintains the existing on-street parking capacity of the area. Also it will refuse off-street parking in front gardens where it considers the result would have an adverse impact on the setting of the property or the area. There are also safety considerations to be taken on board. This policy is being applied rigidly by the council city wide and especially in conservation areas with a zoning of "Z2". "Z2" zoning applies to much of the Rathgar area.

The Association in embracing these principles believes that most residents of Rathgar, whether members or non members of the Association, would wish not to have the character of their area adversely and irrevocably changed.

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