

Rathgar Residents Association



Official Newsletter of the Rathgar Residents Association

No 54 June 2014

A view from the Chairman

John McCarthy

After enduring a windy and wet Winter and early Spring, warmer and drier days are on hand. So let us get into our gardens and knock them into shape. This year the Association's gardening competition is changing its format. The Dixon cup will still be awarded for the best overall garden, with prizes for nine other categories. For all information concerning the Garden Competition please visit our web site.

www.rathgarresidentsassociation.ie.

The new web site is up and running. I would like to thank Loughlin McSweeney for his work in developing it. It is a very useful method of communication. I feel that it will help members communicate with the Committee and allow the Committee to communicate with the membership. Please take some time to log on and explore its various pages. Members can use it to inform the Association of events in the locality that they may wish to be publicised.

Our new councillors are now in office. I encourage every member of the Association to get to know their local councillors. As citizens we pay more and more taxes and charges. We need to know that it is being spent to our benefit. The Local Property Tax is not making its way to Dublin City Council, despite being told by Minister Hogan that 80% of LPT would go to local councils. It has instead been taken to central funds. The result is there are no improvements in local amenities. Cleaning and maintenance are at an all time low.

The introduction of water charges, we hope will improve our water supply and drainage system. Both services need a drastic overhaul. In recent years we have had major failures in water supply and an antiquated drainage system caused major house flooding in the Rathmines and Harold's Cross areas. As well, many roads and streets in Rathgar flood in heavy rainfall. Officially 40 to 60% of drinking water is being lost in the supply network.

It is accepted that Rathmines/Pembroke drainage system is no longer fit for purpose. We are told that the drainage system will be surveyed as a priority by the new water board (Bord Uisce). To improve both water supply and drainage is going to take many years. The Association will continue to keep pressure on local representatives on progress. I invite all members to do the same

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Environment:

John McCarthy

Following discussions between the Association, DCC and local councillors over the last number of months, two improvement schemes are mooted for the Rathgar area:

A Village Improvement Plan

Advance notice of Street and Gully Cleaning

Village Improvement Plan

The brief will be to establish and propose actions around:-

Enhancements to the public realm, including condition of footpaths, tree planting, removal of signage clutter, provision of cycle stands, quality street furniture, public lighting enhancements.

Good quality streetscapes and streetscapes with potential for shop front or building enhancements.

Opportunities for new or improved pedestrian routes/cycle routes and for traffic calming measures.

Enhancements to particular features of interest in the village that contribute to its identity.

Local Initiatives which will promote and enhance local participation in village improvements.

Opportunities to co-ordinate with other agencies to improve local environment.

Street interviews have taken place to ascertain what improvements people would like to see within the Rathgar, in areas such as traffic, pedestrian crossings, public parks, walks, street furniture, the aesthetic features of the village and how Rathgar can it be made a more pleasant place to live in. Consultations will also take place with the Association, Business Association and churches and schools. A workshop is planned for 26th June in the Rathgar Tennis Club 3-5 pm. Information is also available at dublincity.ie/YOURCOUNCIL/LOCALAREASERVICES/SOUTHEASTAREA/SOUTHEASTAREA/Pages/RathgarVillageImprovementPlan.aspx

Advance Notice of Street and Gully Cleaning.

At a recent meeting between the Association and DCC, the Association advanced the idea that if house occupiers were advised in advance, then cars could be moved to facilitate street and gully cleaning. A recent trial on Kenilworth Sq East and Kenilworth Road proved somewhat successful. Residents moved their cars from one side of the road to the other to facilitate a thorough cleaning. It is realised that these measures are not possible on all roads but where feasible, it will lead to a more efficient and better quality of road and gully cleaning. This in turn, hopefully, will lead to reduced road and footpath flooding.

Real time information at Rathgar bus stops.

Dublin Bus have informed the Association that a real time information panel at the bus stops in Rathgar village will be provided from the next tranche of funding for this project.

Reserved wheel chair parking in the village.

The lack of wheel chair parking in the centre of the village is being taken up with the new councillors.

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Some Notes and Comments

AGM of the Association.

The 2014 AGM of the Association took place in St Patricks Hall, Leicester Avenue on 20th March 2014. The chairman's and officers' reports were presented and accepted. The new committee for the coming year were elected.

Public Meeting 20th February 2014.

A public meeting took place on the 20th February. The local gardai made a presentation on home and personal security. Also attending were a good representation of local councillors, Eoghan Murphy TD and candidates who are going forward in the coming local elections. Some 70 members of the public and the Association kept them on their toes for 2 1/2 hours

Annual Garden Competition.

The prizes for the RRA Garden Competition will be awarded at the Horticultural Show in Christ Church Rathgar on **Saturday 12 July.**

In addition to the award of the **Dixon Cup** for the best overall front garden, the RRA have extended the number of categories for which prizes will be awarded. These include: best kept hedge, best accommodation for bin in garden setting, garden in bloom, garden with balance between hard surface and green surface and a number of others.

We encourage everybody to put in a little effort into preparing for the competition so when you see someone looking at your garden in **late June or early July** with a smile on his or her face, it may be one of the judges of the competition considering your garden for a prize or simply a Rathgar resident enjoying your garden.

Rathgar helps St Lukes

On St Patricks weekend, the Business Association organised a fund raising run/walk from Christchurch to St Lukes hospital and back by way of the entrance on Orwell Park. As well, a tennis tournament and cake sale was organised at the Tennis Club. The events were successful in raising €3000 for Friends of St Lukes.

The Walk and Talk programme of City walks continues.

Contact DCC **2222148** (between 9-5pm),

email at 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 DCCs sport ,leisure and recreational facilities, to a large range of specific discounts from the business sector.

Contact DCC: Tel 8450090

Email: info@passportforleisure

Community Development Section: DCC, Block 1.Dublin8

www.passportforleisure.ie

Terenure Village market

A new village market has been established in Terenure. It is held on the first and third Sunday of each month on the plaza of the Lidl Store.

The Rathmines, Ranelagh and Rathgar Historical Society

A new programme of talks will commence in the Autumn.

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.

Once again the city Libraries participated in the Bealtaine Festival in May.

With an art exhibition in Terenure Library, Film screening in Rathmines and

Terenure and performance of songs from Finnegans Wake in Rathmines

There are reading groups in both our local libraries. For those interested in

Trace Your Ancestors then the Dublin City Archive and Library Reading

Room is the place to be.

Home and Personal Security: With the brighter evenings, better weather and more time spent in your garden, don't neglect your personal and home security.

Garda Siochana Information leaflets. There is a series of useful information leaflets obtainable from your local garda station. They cover such topics as **Personal Safety and Security for the Older Person**, **Home Security Check List** and **Bicycles Security**.

On home security the garda advice is try **The Home Security 3 minute** check "Burglars like easy opportunities. If they have to make a lot of noise, spend a lot of time or risk being seen, they probably won't bother. If you can deny entry for more than 3 minutes-chances are the burglars will go elsewhere"

Obituaries

The deaths have occurred recently, of Oliver Nugent and Tom O'Hanlon. Oliver was for a number of years a member of the Committee of the Association and Tom was a long time road rep for Rathgar Avenue. Our sympathies are extended to both families.

May they rest in peace.

Trees in Rathgar

Mary Forrest UCD

At first sight the term 'urban forest' might appear incongruous. A forest with many trees covering a large tract of land is found in the countryside, while in urban areas there is little space to grow trees. In the 1960's a Canadian postgraduate student coined the phrase 'urban forest' to denote trees growing in cities and towns. This includes trees growing in parks and open spaces, in gardens, street planting, shopping centres and car parks. In the intervening years much scientific work has highlighted the benefits of trees in urban areas. Some less apparent benefits are a reduction of air pollution, provision of shade and shelter and storm water control, as trees intercept heavy rain as it falls to the ground. Other more obvious benefits are habitat creation as they provide food and shelter for birds and insects and as well the pleasure which trees, whatever the time of the year, give to local residents.

Does the phrase 'urban forest' apply in the Rathgar area? The wooded areas by the banks of the Dodder and the fine trees in Bushy Park readily come to mind. Street trees and trees in gardens and grounds are a feature of the district as well. Nor are the trees the same and a walk from Orwell Park to Rathfarnham Road provides an opportunity to see some examples of broadleaved trees commonly found in urban areas.

London Plane (*Platanus x hispanica*) with their mottled peeling bark and five lobed leaves line Orwell Park. In recent years this tree has begun to produce round seed in pendulous clusters in Autumn. The sheer size of these trees is matched by parkland trees in the small park by Rostrevor Terrace. The periphery of the park is lined with Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), with rough five lobed leaves; Beech and Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* and *F. sylvatica* var *purpurea*) with shiny green or purple leaves and a smooth grey coloured trunk and Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) with a very large palmate leaf or hand shaped leaf, with a candelabra of white flower in April and May followed by 'conkers' or chestnuts in Autumn.

Evergreen Oak or Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*), while native to the Mediterranean region grow very well in this country. There is a fine example in the grounds Zion Church, from Zion Road the broad domed outline of the tree is striking. Also noticeable in the grounds is another European tree, Lime, (*Tilia x europaea*). Unlike many other deciduous trees Lime leaves come out in April and May and then flower in June and

July. Their small exquisite yellow flowers hang hidden within the foliage, their delicate scent or the sound of bees working the flowers alert the passer-by that the tree is in flower.

Perhaps a vestige from a previous garden, a large Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) stands sentinel by the entrance to Mayfield. Ash leaves are distinctive with pinnate leaves, a leaf composed of many small leaflets. While the flowers are not noticeable, Ash produces large clusters of green and then brown seed in autumn.

In recent years Dublin City Council has planted many trees on suburban road. Turkish Hazel (*Corylus columna*) has been planted extensively on Bushy Park Road. Leaves triangular in outline, bark rough to the touch and hazel nuts with large husks distinguish this tree from the native Hazel (*Corylus avellana*).

One large tree stands sentinel at the entrance to Bushy Park Gardens. This tall Oak (*Quercus robur*) with its encased in grey fissured bark, with young shoots arising from the trunk. The lobed leaves and acorns are seen high up in the tree. Oak is native in Ireland and is the national tree.

Two other trees in surrounding roads are worth mentioning. Glenayr Road is lined with Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*), a relative of the Sycamore. The leaves are glossy green leaves with pointed lobes. For a few weeks in March or April tiny yellow flowers are noticeable on the tips of the shoots. Much more conspicuous are the seeds, commonly called 'helicopters' or 'spinning jennies'.

While street trees have been a feature of urban streets for many years few trees have been selected or raised for particular use on streets. One example is a relative of the edible pear the Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer'). This tree was raised in the 1960's by a nurseryman called Edward Scanlon in Cleveland, Ohio. Take a look at the trees on Wasdale Grove and Victoria Road and the reason is obvious, the conical narrow shape of the tree facilitates the movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The tree also produces white flowers in early spring and is almost evergreen, losing its leaves for a few weeks in December and January.

Many of the trees mentioned here also occur in other parts of Rathgar and all contribute to the urban forest.

What you make of it

Mark McDowell
(busheslane@yahoo.ie)

We are lucky, Rathgar is a great place to live, especially if you have an interest in nature and wildlife, but if you don't pay attention you might think it's not there.

We have the wonderful River Dodder and its associated residents, egrets, cormorants, kingfishers, dippers to name some of the more exotic ones. The planned reconstruction of some of the major weirs on the river could make Rathgar host to the endangered North Atlantic Salmon and sea trout -fingers-crossed on that.

Last week I watched a buzzard being mobbed by two hooded crows over Dodder Park at Mount Carmel. There is plenty to see for anyone who has an interest and also for the chance encounter like a fox on the footpath at night.

Every June and July for at least the last twenty years, we have had to endure the caterwauling of herring gulls from sunrise on and off throughout the day. What are they doing? What are they shouting about? Why aren't they down by the sea?

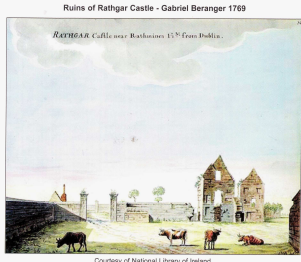
Last year we saw for the first time what it is that's going on. There was the usual racket and screeching of gullish arias from a high roof nearby. I got out the faithful binoculars and had a look.

Wobbling on the ridge tiles was a downy grey blob being berated by its parents. I watched them on and off over the following weeks and I think two chicks successfully fledged. This year I am better prepared. I have the spotting scope trained on the chimney stack where the nest has been built. As the rain beats down now in the last week of May the parent bird sits stoically protecting the eggs, a duty shared by both parents. They could not be more exposed but both parents endure everything that comes their way, rain, hail or gale for about a month until the eggs hatch and a further six weeks or so, the noisy spell, until fledging.

Over the years the gulls have learned to treat buildings as they would natural cliffs with a number of species now nesting on buildings in coastal cities around Europe and probably elsewhere. I'm hoping for another successful fledging this year. It certainly makes those early morning wake-up calls, which are imminent, a lot less aggravating to know that it's just parents and offspring doing one of the oldest song -and-dance acts in the world.

Wildlife is what you make of it.

Rathgar Castle, Rathgar House, Oaklands and St Luke's Hospital, Rathgar



The earliest history of this site indicates that it probably belonged to the priory of St Mary de Hogges, a convent for Augustinian nuns, founded by the King of Leinster Diarmaid Mc Murrough in 1146. This convent was located close to College Green and was given 90 acres of land with a manor house, a granary, farm buildings and woodlands in an area named

Rath Garbh. The priory farm would have occupied an area around where St Lukes Hospital stands today.

For many hundreds of years this farmland continued to provide produce and income for the Priory of St Mary de Hogges.

On the dissolution of the monasteries in Henry VIII's reign in 1539, these lands were granted to Nicholas Segrave. By 1609 120 acres of land passed to the mayor of Dublin Alderman John Cusack and became his country residence.

The Cusack family were a long established merchant family with considerable trade with Bristol. The family continued to hold the lands for more than a century. What became known as Rathgar Castle was undoubtedly the Cusack manor house and occupied a site near Fairfield Park.

In the battle of Rathmines in 1649 fought between Royalists and Parliamentarians, the defeated Royalist army fled to the woods around Rathgar castle but were captured. Rathgar Castle was severely damaged but was repaired by the Cusack family who continued to live there for many further years.

Eventually the lands were divided and leased out and the castle fell into ruins. An antiquarian Austin Cooper visited the area in 1782 and found only the walls and entrance gate still standing.

In 1753 the Rathgar area was opened up with the building of a road from Rathmines Castle, the residence of Chief Justice Yorke, to Rathgar and Terenure.

The Wilson family built a fine house described as "being in the Country" and known as Rathgar House. This was built on Cross Avenue (later known as Highfield Road). The Wilson family didn't continue long in

residence and in 1788 sold it to the Charles Farran, a Freeman of the City of Dublin. Charles Farren and his descendents continued to occupy the house until 1853.

During the tempestuous year of the 1798 rebellion, Farren's house was raided and a gardener named Daniel Carroll was killed. Three local men Kelly, Rooney and O'Donnell were tried, convicted and hanged at Terenure cross Roads. There their corpses were exposed for a period of time before being sent to Surgeons Hall for dissection.



Joseph Farren, Charles' son set about improving the house in 1815 and what we see today is mostly his work.

The new owner of the house in 1853 was Henry Walker Todd who had established the drapery firm of Todd Burns (the Burns part was Gilbert, a nephew of Robbie Burns). Todd renamed the

house Oaklands.

The next owner of the house in 1865, was Hugh Brown J.P. Brown with James Thomas, another buyer from Todd Burns, established Brown Thomas and Co.

At this time, Rathgar was described as "as one of the most prestigious and desirable places to live."

In 1893 the house was sold by Brown's widow to Charles W Hely of Hely Printers and Stationers, Dame Street. He set out with ambitious plans to enhance his property. He created a new entrance on Orwell Park. His initials and coat of arms can still be seen in the ironwork of the gates. Amongst his enhancements was a huge motor house to accommodate his passion for cars. He also extended the house with an additional wing, a billiard room and a ballroom. He employed an Italian artist to decorate the



ceilings and walls of the dining room, the sitting room and drawing room with painted scenes and silk tapestries. Charles W Hely died in 1929. His widow lived on in the house for a further 15 years.

The house and its 13 acres of land were sold in 1950 for the sum of £26,000 to the Cancer Association of Ireland

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Don't let Moss be the Boss in your garden!

Anthea

After a wet winter we all have too much moss in our lawns. So what?, you may be thinking, as you enjoy walking on its fresh green sponge. If we have a dry summer however, you will soon change your mind.

A mossy lawn turns a wretched scruffy brown and the hot weather will stop you doing anything about it.

Some of the moss may be to do with underlying problems like shade and drainage which are too fundamental to be corrected. Most of it however is usually to do with months of winter rain and can be eliminated as a once only intrusion.

There are a number of options. In a smallish garden use an antidote which can be diluted and watered directly on the grass from a watering can.

Evergreen's Moss Killer is one of the best, with the advantage that it is not at risk in a dry spell of weather. Obviously it is best applied when the sky is dull, so it will not evaporate. Do not apply it when rain is around as a wet day will dilute it more. Let it soak for a day before you walk on the lawn as you do not want to transfer the solution on your shoes. It usually works with one application.

For bigger lawns, a sand or a mixed feed-and-weed are the more workable options. As it is difficult by the eye to stick to the correct dosage per square metre, an essential investment is an adjustable spreader on wheels. It can be set to spread the granules at the correct density before you start pushing it over the grass. It makes the job a lot easier.

Scotts offers a combined **Lawn Food and Moss Control** mix which attacks the moss and feeds the grass in one and the same application.

"Attack" is probably the right word for all these dry products. Timing and weather are all important for best results. Do not use them in bright sunny weather, nor in rainy weather nor when frosts are likely at night.

The ideal is a dull dry day with plenty of high cloud. Use the combined feed-and-weed about three days after mowing the lawn and do not mow again for at least another four days. In all but the most awful Summers the lawn will be fed for the next eight weeks. The moss should die within two weeks.

The alternative option is to spread a traditional lawn sand. **Evergreen** has a classic **lawn sand** which goes through the spreader. Again, this dry mixture is best applied in cloudy but dry weather. After you have spread it, you must not walk on the lawn until there has been good rain to wash in the sand. Otherwise you will imprint black footsteps all over it.

When the moss has died back, it will go all brown and should be raked out.

Then you can re sow bare patches. For bigger patches use one of the newish pre-sown mats such a **Miracle Gro Patch Magic**. Water it according to the instructions. The “magic” is a mix of fertiliser, grass seed and coir fibre into which the seed has been fixed. The coir has to be soaked when first cut and laid but then it holds enough damp for the seed to germinate thickly without weeds. Patch products can transform a fiddly job.

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Planning in Rathgar

June 2014

While many other pressing issues have presented themselves to the Association in recent times, the planning role of the Association continues unabated; seeking to ensure that bad planning and development practices are kept to a minimum or ideally not permitted. The Association works to ensure the adequate preservation of the setting, character and environment of our unique area.

In the last six months, nearly all of our comments and observations either to the Local Authority or An Bord Pleanala were successful and were taken on board.

An appeal to An Bord Pleanala in respect of a development on Garville Ave. seeking additional conditions over those required by the Local Authority, was successful. The development is currently in progress and it remains to be seen how the now scaled down proposal when compared to the original, works out.

Following on from a comment from a resident in Brighton Road a second application for a development in the rear garden of one the houses on the north side of the road was refused by An Bord Pleanala, after being refused twice by the Local Authority. We supported neighbouring residents in this regard.

An incompatible component proposed for a protected structure on Summerville Ave (Upper Rathmines) which would have seriously disrupted the visual setting of a terrace of Edwardian Houses was commented on by us and resulted in the exclusion of said component in the permission which issued.

The Association lodged a strong objection in respect of the proposed demolition of a very important house immediately adjoining our area, Denmark Hill, La Bas Terrace, Leinster Road West, in the Kenilworth area. A request for additional information in respect of this proposal from the Local Authority took up many of the points raised in our objection. The additional information has as yet not been submitted by the developer.

An objection was submitted in respect of an intensification of a previous permission for the stables which were once part of Dartry House (protected structure) on Orwell Park. The Local Authority allowed a reduced proposal over that which was sought and this was appealed by the developer. The Association put in an observation requesting the previous less intensive permission from 2007 be upheld. The developer at this stage withdrew its appeal and the new permission granted by the Local Authority took effect. A better outcome would probably have been forthcoming had we lodged our own independent appeal.

In respect of two developments on Grosvenor Road on which submissions were made by the Association to the Local Authority, the Local Authority saw fit to refuse permission. 1st party appeals to An Bord Pleanala in both cases were commented on by us, favouring the prior refusal. The refusal was duly confirmed by the Planning Appeals Board.

Recently, inappropriate proposals for developments at 97A/99A, Rathgar Road and at 125 Rathgar Road have been refused by the Local Authority. Both proposals were objected to. The Association will pursue these through An Bord Pleanala if required, as they are not in accordance with the objectives of the principles of proper planning and development for the area.

After many years of waiting, work has started on 47 Rathgar Road which changed hands last year. How it turns out remains to be seen. We hope residents after such a long wait, won't be disappointed. The Association campaigned long and hard for this house and its setting for many years but in spite of this only a moderate result was achieved , but superlatively better than the original proposal first submitted some 8 years ago. which had it not been for the Association's campaign would have been granted almost unaltered. The Association was responsible for successfully having this building placed on the protected structures list, without which could have seen the demolition of the structure. In the last 10 years this house been the subject of two planning battles, on-going enforcement

battles and a murder investigation with the body of a Romanian girl found in the house some 7 years ago. There have been many cases all over Dublin where such houses on such sites of this size were comprehensively levelled and blocks of apartments constructed.

Enforcement is still an issue but not as serious as before with many of the complaints having been handled, not all of them to our satisfaction, it can be said, and with many inconsistencies evident. There are still some outstanding cases which will be pursued but the fact that there are now fewer instances is evidence that the Association is having successes.

To ensure continued success we must continue to work and campaign for our area and it behoves everyone living in the area to row in behind the Association to achieve best results into the future.

Philip O'Reilly

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Problems then as now for pedestrians in Rathgar village

From *Links* of the past: August 1992 JN

Rathgar Village Centre

.....In the meantime there have been many complaints to the Association about the installation of new filter lights at the corner of Orwell Road.....The purpose of this light is to speed traffic through the junction and it takes no account of the needs of local pedestrians, making an already bad and dangerous situation worse. Your Association had already pointed out to the Corporation Officials that a policy of cars before people was no longer acceptable.....

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