

## **Local Curiosities**

Pádraic E. Moore  
Aleana Egan

## Introduction

The conception and development of *Local Curiosities* has been driven by several hopes and intentions. Perhaps the most vital of these aims is to create a subjective portrait – a poetic depiction as opposed to an exhaustive analysis or systematic study – of places that comprise the coastline of South County Dublin, among them Blackrock, Seapoint, Monkstown, Salthill, Dún Laoghaire, Sandycove, Dalkey, and Killiney. Central to this effort is the belief that these suburbs of Ireland’s capital are not merely prosaic purlieus; rather, these neighbourhoods and the people who have inhabited them are a potent source of inspiration and illumination. The streets, the buildings, the sea, the views, and the narratives of this coastline are laden with much that sparks the imagination. But aside from drawing attention to this place, we hope that in putting a different frame around it we might somehow awaken the potential for every overlooked locality to be viewed in a new light or from another direction.

The process of collating facets of the area’s past and present for this publication has revealed a great many neighbourhood characteristics that were previously concealed to us. As a result, our perceptions of a place we thought we knew well seemed, paradoxically, to become less familiar the deeper we looked. But while looking into the past has been essential, the project is equally an effort to record what surrounds us in the present. It became evident from the outset that some of the characters, edifices, and objects that contribute to making this area so special are literally vanishing before our eyes, making the aim of capturing an essence of the place in this moment as important to the project as the process of gathering various materials and stories from the past. A great many of the architectural edifices pictured in *Local Curiosities* were demolished decades ago, long before this project was ever conceived. Frescati House in Blackrock, for example, was razed to the ground in a dawn demolition in 1983. Nevertheless, the area is embellished still with traces of yesterday, whether the buildings and monuments still stand or just the names of the places remain. (Dalkey’s Atmospheric Road, so named for the air-pressure-powered

railway that once ran nearby, is a good example of the latter.) Through pictures and texts, we wanted to revisit and reimagine these sites, and reignite the possibilities inherent within them.

Though the built environment of this suburb is clearly an important focus of our research it is by no means its exclusive purview. Among descriptions of the places they frequented we have also included brief references to just some of the area's former inhabitants, including the eminent scientists Margaret Lindsay Huggins and Sir Howard Grubb. In the case of the Dún Laoghaire School of Art, the building itself remains, but all traces of what was apparently a hive of youthful and optimistic – and sometimes even radical – artistic energy have been stripped away. In that respect, Andrew Manson's images of young art students taking their work into the streets of the town contrast starkly with the comparatively sterile air of Dún Laoghaire today.

While the disparate elements that comprise this portrait are obviously unified by their shared place of origin, it is important to note that familiarity with the particulars of this place is by no means essential. In highlighting and sharing our appreciation for certain details of a place, it is our hope that readers might see for themselves things they may have not previously observed among their own surroundings – a fine house in which nobody lives, an elegant rusted iron railing, the moss-covered stonework of a harbour wall, the elderly gentleman who shuffles to the post office every Wednesday morning. All these facets amount to what might be called the spirit, or even the soul of place – all that which is unique, distinctive, cherished, and sometimes overlooked.

There is clearly a romanticising tone to this portrait, but surely it is preferable to celebrate an area – and even apply one's imagination in responding to it – rather than simply surrendering to its more quotidian aspects? There are several instances in this publication in which the potency of the area in triggering fantasy has been made manifest. David Turpin offers several pieces of new fiction, albeit written in the factual tone of an historical or journalistic account, which

have emerged in direct response to selected places along this coast. In other instances – such as the entry detailing the discovery of an antique bell buried in the sands at Seapoint – truthful accounts assume an almost fictional tone because of the surprising nature of actual events.

Rather than categorise the various elements of this publication by type, we have decided to order everything according to the place with which it relates. Therefore, each neighbourhood, be it Blackrock or Killiney, is introduced by a passage taken from a 1921 guidebook by Weston St. John Joyce – *The Neighbourhood of Dublin: Its Topography, Antiquities, and Historical Associations*. (There is one exception to this system: Sandycove is presented via a relevant excerpt from James Joyce's *Ulysses*.) After this brief introduction, photographs, anecdotes, and profiles are offered under headings that correspond to more specific sites in the area.

To reiterate once again the subjective nature of this enterprise, it must be stated that our reason for relating certain elements – in particular the works of contemporary artists or poems and passages from authors of the past – to various places is oftentimes dictated more by free association and feeling than any historical or physical connections. For us, these feelings have found expression in the bringing together of the individuals whose work is featured in *Local Curiosities*. Throughout the development of this project we have relied upon a constellation of sources – to them we express our warmest thanks and gratitude. In a great many cases we have merely been conduits for precious material that has now been reproduced here.

*Aleana Egan & Pádraic E. Moore*

## Blackrock

For many years Blackrock languished in a dilapidated condition until it was constituted into a township, when great improvements resulted, and from a decayed village it rapidly grew into a prosperous suburb, while an attractive park replaced the malodorous swamp enclosed by the railway embankment.

No vestige whatever of the “black rock” (calp limestone), which originated the name of this locality, can now be discovered in situ.

By 1825 the original Black Rock had nearly disappeared, either as the result of artificial removal or long continued erosion by the sea.

The “Rock” was under what is now the Park-keeper’s lodge, formerly the Peafield Baths. Between forty and fifty years ago these baths were fairly well patronised, and a row of bathing boxes stood on the shore, now portion of the public park, a culvert through the railway embankment allowing the water to enter and pass out with the tide.

Blackrock, some hundreds of years ago was variously called Newtown-at-the Black Rock, Newtown on the Strand by the Black Rock, Newtown Castle Byrne, or simply Newtown, so that “Blackrock” is simply an abbreviation of one of its ancient titles.

Blackrock in the 18th century was a great social centre, and the residence or resort of many distinguished people. Conway’s Tavern, the scene of many a brilliant function, stood in the main street, on the right-hand side entering George’s Avenue, and the annual melon feast held there was an event of great local interest, gold and silver medals being awarded to the producers of the best melons grown in the neighbourhood.

An article on Blackrock which appears in Walker’s Hibernian Magazine for 1783, states that: “This is a noble village, situated about three miles from the north-east corner of Stephen’s Green, on a rising ground south of the Bay of Dublin; it consists of a considerable number of elegant country houses, and in summer it is much resorted to by the citizens for the purpose of bathing. In fine evenings it



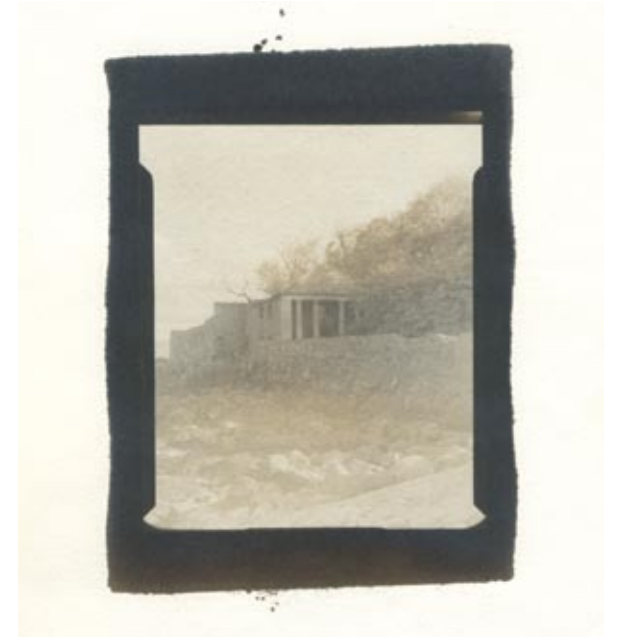
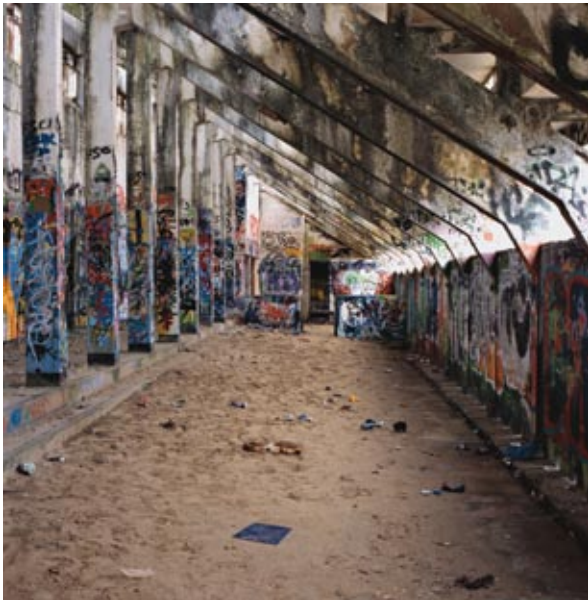
Peafield Road Sign. Photo: Aleana Egan, 2011

is as much crowded with carriages as the most populous streets in the city; and as there is a number of genteel families residing here at this season of the year, they have drums and assemblies as in town, whereby it is very sprightly and agreeable to such as have nothing to do.”

The Vauxhall Gardens, which were opened here in 1793, were, for a time, a favourite place of public amusement until the fickleness of fashion consigned them to obscurity.

From *The Neighbourhood of Dublin*,  
by Weston St. John Joyce

*Blackrock Baths*



Above & opposite:  
Peter Connor, *Rescene Image 1 and 2* (Blackrock Baths), 2010  
Harry Thuillier Jnr., *Two versions of Temple*, c. 1995 (precise date unknown), platinum print, Courtesy of Barry Kavanagh and the Estate of Harry Thuillier Jnr.

## Frescati House



Frescati House, Garden front from 'the lady of the house' Christmas, 1908

Frescati House was an elegant 18th century house which occupied land between what is now the Frescati Shopping Centre all the way back to Sydney Avenue. It has a tragic history due to greedy developers and a prevalent lack of interest by local authorities in preserving historic buildings at that time in Dublin. It began in 1968 when Dún Laoghaire Corporation zoned the house and lands for commercial development and a new bypass road.

By 1970 a development company called Frescati Estates had bought the property and succeeded in getting permission to demolish the house. They gained this permission even despite strong recommendations from An Taisce that such a historic, architecturally-important building should be preserved.

A decade-long standoff between developers, the Corporation, and concerned citizens came to an end in 1982, when a judge concluded that Frescati House had fallen beyond hope of restoration:

From *Between the mountains and the sea* by Peter Pearson, 1998

“It appears to me that the developers have been completely indifferent to, or perhaps have even welcomed, this deterioration in the condition of the building and have done virtually nothing to halt it. I feel the developers have shown a complete disregard for the moral obligations which arose from their course of dealing with the Corporation and the planning application, but I feel the Corporation have also been extremely remiss in exercising whatever statutory powers are open to them to cope with the situation.”

On 4 November 1983, the house was razed to the ground. A plaque placed near the entrance of the shopping centre that replaced the structure commemorates the site as the home of Lord Edward FitzGerald, an explorer, politician, and prominent member of the Society of United Irishmen, who was captured and died during the Rebellion of 1798.



Frescati House, main staircase, 1972.  
All Frescati House images courtesy of Irish Architectural Archive

*Tobernea Park*



Colm Brennan. *Stele for Cecil King*, late 1980s (precise date unknown), mild steel plate. Photo: Aleana Egan

Cecil King was born in Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow, in 1921; he was a businessman before becoming a painter in his thirties. King became a full-time artist in the mid-1960s, producing paintings and pastels in a style that could be described as expressionist before developing his own distinctive hard-edge idiom. Though largely self taught, King soon established himself as one of

Ireland's leading painters and exhibited internationally throughout his career. Cecil King lived on Idrone Terrace in Blackrock for many years before his death in 1986. His work was marked by a stark minimalism, yet the titles of the two paintings reproduced here reference the area where he lived and worked directly.

*Idrone Terrace*



Cecil King, *Idrone II*, 1980, oil on paper  
Cecil King, *Windy Day at Blackrock*, 1977, oil on canvas  
Both works courtesy of John Daly and Oliver Dowling

## Seapoint

The Martello Tower at Seapoint at the present day looks a rather unlikely place for a shipping disaster, but it must be remembered that all the coast along here was much altered by the construction of the railway, and that many of the sharp rocks which proved so fatal to the victims are now covered over by the embankment and by the adjoining road and houses; moreover, in 1807, the immediate locality was so lonely and unfrequented that a vessel might easily be wrecked there at night without attracting notice.

The scene of the Prince of Wales wreck is a reef of dark, jagged rocks projecting from the shore immediately behind Blackrock House, and easily identified by an ornamental embattled structure overlooking this spot of tragic memories. It is accessible on foot at low water only, and is visible from Seapoint Martello Tower, from which it is distant almost exactly half a mile.

From *The Neighbourhood of Dublin*,  
by Weston St. John Joyce



Bernard Mortell, *Red Sails at Sunset*, date unknown. Photo: Aleana Egan

Bernard Mortell's steel sculpture *Red Sails at Sunset* was placed right beside the sea on the grassed area next to the Martello Tower. Over the years the sculpture was damaged by erosion and vandalism and was recently removed.



## Seapoint Avenue



Photo: David Turpin

“Dr. Patrick Gardner, b. 1936 is an Irish orthopaedist briefly notorious for his unfounded theories regarding the relationship between architectural decay and diseases of the musculoskeletal system” – Irish Directory of Medical Practitioners, 2010–2011. (The entry was withdrawn prior to publication)

Resident on Seapoint Avenue between 1981 and 1988, Dr. Patrick Gardner was among the most successful orthopaedic specialists practicing in the Dublin area. However, his reputation was irreparably damaged following the publication of a series of papers in which he claimed that a number of serious conditions, including osteoporosis, were caused by “malevolent lichens” that also attacked the structural integrity of buildings. After Gardner’s papers on the subject were rejected by all reputable British and Irish medical journals, he issued them himself in a pamphlet entitled ‘Lichen and Structural Integrity (Animate and Inanimate)’.

Gardner’s hypothesis was apparently based on the concurrence of severe rising damp in his Seapoint Avenue home and his wife Judith’s diagnosis with acute Brittle Bone Disease. One of the most bizarre aspects of Gardner’s delusion was his insistence upon a conspiracy between “hostile lichens” and his own children, from whom he is estranged. Barred from medical practice, Gardner now resides in Leeds, where he is understood to operate a business as an “alternative therapist” for a small clientele.

## Seapoint Beach



Photo: Aleana Egan

A rare bronze bell dating from the 1700s was recently found on Seapoint beach. Part-time beachcomber William Wood was navigating his way through some rock pools when he made the exciting discovery. At first glance, he mistook the bell for a ballcock from a toilet cistern. He says; “I kicked it and stubbed my toe. I realised that it was a lot heavier than a ballcock, bent down and started to dig the sand away, and pulled out this round object with wonderful sunburst ornamentation on it”. Wood took the object to a pool, washed all the sand away, and revealed what has turned out to be a crotal bell (as opposed to a normal bell, which has a mouth rather than a slit). “I was quite excited. I thought I had found something historic, so I took it home and removed the barnacles” said Wood.

Having searched the internet for bells, he found other examples and got in touch with a bell expert in England. The initials “RW” inscribed on the bell stand for Robert Wells, a noted bellmaker. Wells, and his son, Robert Wells Junior, ran a foundry in Aldbourne, Wiltshire, from 1755 to 1798.

Unlike the bell that Wood found, most other examples have lost their clanger.

This bell is much larger than any example the bell expert had previously seen, being about six inches in diameter, and weighing a hefty three-and-a-half pounds. This makes the find all the more interesting. About ten paces from where the bell was found there is a plaque on the sea – front wall commemorating the sinking of the *HMS Prince of Wales* and *The Rochdale*, in 1807. Dublin had long been dangerous for ships because it was accessible only at high tide. It was the sinking of the *Prince of Wales*, and the 400 bodies washed up on the shore, that prompted the building of Dún Laoghaire Harbour.

There might be a link between the bell and the ship. Wood suggested; “It could have been attached to a piece of wood, and the wood came closer to the beach and then rotted away from the bell”. He would be very interested to find out more about the bell, and hopes that it will be possible to find a record of the ship’s inventory, and discover if the bell was from the ship or not.

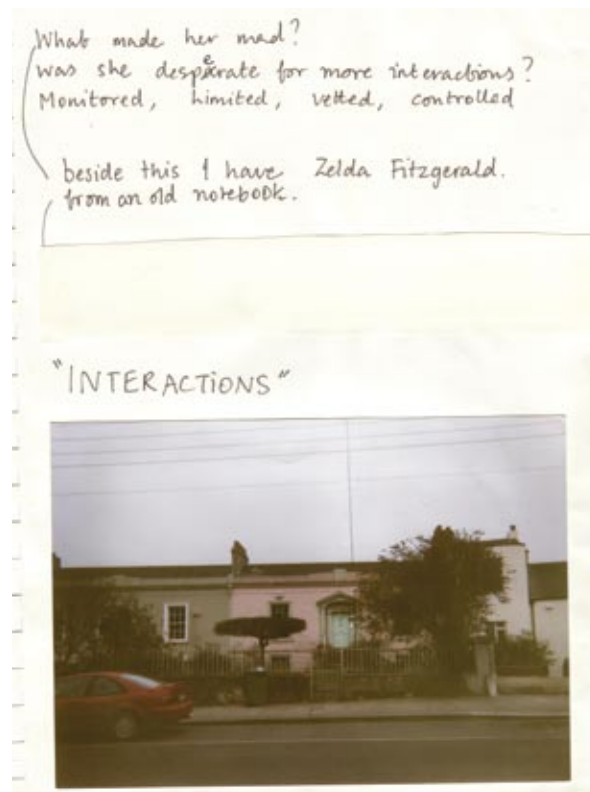
Excerpt taken from an article by Jonny Tennant featured in the Dún Laoghaire Gazette Summer 2011. Since this article was printed the bell has been acquired by the National Museum of Ireland, who have acknowledged it as an item of rare historical importance. How exactly the bell came to be where it was discovered, and in such perfect condition remains a matter of conjecture.

## Salthill and Monkstown

Monkstown is mentioned in that famous hunting song of the 18th century, “The Kilruddery Hunt”, as being one of the places through which the fox passed during an exciting hunt in the winter of 1744. Needless to say, the locality must have been thoroughly rural at that time, when the fox considered it safe to make his route through it, and the huntsmen were able to follow him in hot pursuit across the country.

Close to the Castle is the old Monkstown or the Carrick-brennan Churchyard, where are buried many of the victims of the shipping disaster of 1807.

From *The Neighbourhood of Dublin*,  
by Weston St. John Joyce



Aleana Egan, *Interactions*, 2008, collage on paper.

## 13 Longford Terrace



Sir Howard Grubb resided at number 13 Longford Terrace from 1844–1931. He is remembered as a maker of scientific instruments and in particular astronomical telescopes. His father Thomas Grubb (1800–1878) had started up a scientific instrument factory, and by the time Howard was in Trinity College the firm had become so successful that he had to leave college before completion in order to assist his father in the managing of the business.

Ireland at this time had a number of skilled instrument makers, but the Grubb firm was the most successful. They produced superior sophisticated telescopes and ancillary equipment that was exported to observatories all over the world. Among the many commissions Howard Grubb received in his life time was one in 1875 to make an entirely new set of instruments for the eminent astronomer Sir William Huggins.

Howard Grubb was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1883 and was knighted by the Lord Lieutenant in 1887. He died in 1931 aged 87.

## Monkstown Valley



St Grellan's House, ceiling of a room to the east of the entrance hall.  
Photo: David Davidson, 1979, Courtesy of Irish Architectural Archive.

St Grellan's House stood in what is now Monkstown Valley housing estate, just off the Monkstown Road. It was a neo-classical design, built in 1825 which lay on seven acres of land which was landscaped to include both rose and rock gardens. Inside, the house had ornate plaster work typical of the 1820s and unusual embossed blue tiles in the bathroom from the 1890s.

A stately granite portico which belonged to the original building has been re-instated as a sculptural element close to the entrance of the now Monkstown Valley housing estate.

Up until the 1970s St Grellan's was better known as the Hall School, a private boarding school for girls which had facilities such as netball courts, tennis courts, and playing fields for hockey and rounders.

After laying derelict for many years, the house was demolished in 1982. The Hall School also owned a Victorian House on Queen's park called Clonmore; this structure was also demolished in 1982.

Opposite:  
Above: St. Grellan's House, front portico.  
Photo: David Davidson, 1979, Courtesy of Irish Architectural Archive.  
Below: Fiona Hallinan, *Portico*, 2011



## *The Hill, Monkstown*



St. Anne's House, The Hill, Monkstown. Photos: Aleana Egan

St. Anne's is an unusual Victorian house that was built around the same time as a further eight semi-detached houses were erected on The Hill. It is built on a sloping site and thus its appearance changes dramatically depending on the angle from which it is viewed. It is a two-story-over-basement, red brick house with a square tower.

Its architect, a man named William Caldbeck, designed it as his own residence. He was a versatile architect who was involved in many public and local council housing projects – an example of one is Sallynoggin Villas which he designed in 1904.

St. Anne's is full of decorative flourish, including the employment of variegated brickwork, stucco and cast-iron railings, and even plaster heads incorporated into a frieze. The house also has a variety of bay windows of varying shape and volume, and the black-and-white contrasting colour scheme of the roof's eaves are also remarkable. Today the house is in need of love and care and bears an unsightly modern extension to its Pakenham road side.

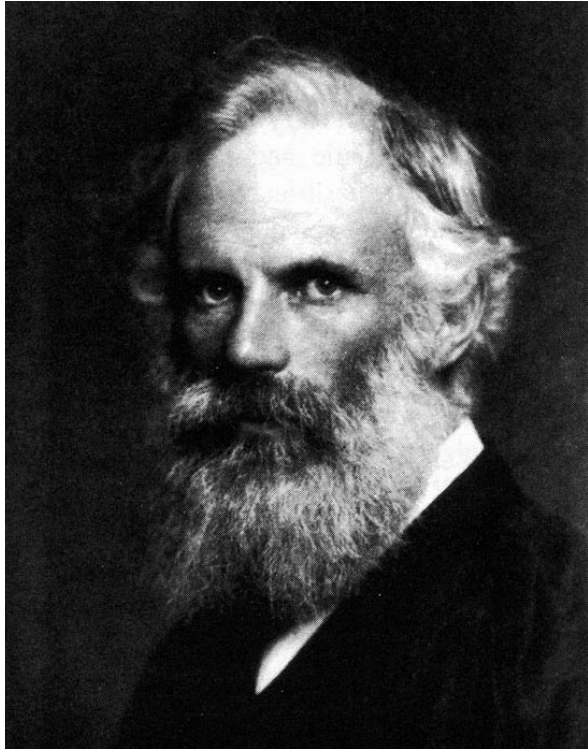


*“The impression she made was overwhelming. It came pouring out like a draught, like a smell of burning. What was it composed of – that overwhelming and peculiar impression?”*

*Myriads of irrelevant and incongruous ideas crowd into one's head on such occasions; one sees the person, one sees Mrs Brown, in the centre of all sorts of different scenes. I thought of her in a seaside house, among queer ornaments: sea-urchins, models of ships in glass cases. Her husband's medals were on the mantelpiece. She popped in and out of the room, perching on the edges of chairs, picking meals out of saucers, indulging in long, silent stares.”*

*Character in Fiction, Virginia Woolf, 1924*





George F. Fitzgerald. Date and photographer unknown.

George F. Fitzgerald was a Trinity College Dublin physics professor who was the first to suggest that in suitable circumstances an oscillating current would produce radio waves. Fitzgerald, whose writings on the speed of light pre-date those of Einstein, spent much of his youth in Monkstown, where his father was rector at Kill of the Grange.

His scientific research, together with that of Maxwell and Hertz, laid the groundwork for Marconi's wireless telegraphy. In the year 1898, in a collaboration between Marconi and Fitzgerald, the first live-radio sports commentary took place at the Dún Laoghaire Regatta.

The Fitzgerald Crater on the moon – which is 110 km in diameter, with some sub-craters – is named after him. Unfortunately, it is on the far side of the moon, never seen from earth, and only visible from satellites.

## Monkstown Road



Carole Cullen, *Maroon Room*, 2010, oil on canvas.

Carole Cullen, *Studio Room*, 1995, oil on canvas. Photo: Aleana Egan



The Boyd Monument, Photos: Aleana Egan

The Boyd Monument in Carrickbrennan Graveyard was erected to commemorate Captain John McNeill Boyd and his crew on board the ship and coastguard vessel *Ajax*. On Saturday the 9th of February, 1861, a huge storm hit the Leinster Coast, where 135 vessels sunk. Captain Boyd had spotted two ships in trouble: *the Neptune* and *Industry* were crashing against the rocks at the East Pier. In spite of the danger, he immediately ordered a rescue vessel to be lowered and headed to their aid.

All of the *Neptune* crew bar one person perished along with Captain Boyd and his whole rescue crew.

The crew from the other ship *Industry*, were saved apart from their Captain. The bodies of the *Ajax* crew were discovered washed ashore days later, whilst the body of Boyd himself was not discovered until several weeks later.

The crew of the *Ajax* were buried in Carrickbrennan Graveyard and a grave was dug for Captain Boyd. There was a huge public funeral, and the town of Monkstown ceased trading that day as a mark of respect. Yet ultimately, due to the late discovery of his body, Captain Boyd's remains were interred in the grounds of St. Patrick's Cathedral. There is also a memorial to Captain Boyd on the East Pier, close to the actual location where the tragic incident occurred and a statue of him in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. At the time of his death, Captain Boyd was considered an experienced professional – an exceptional mariner who was predicted to have made full rank of Admiral within a few years. He had authored *A Manual for Naval Cadets* in 1857; already it had gone into three printings and was still in use by the Navy until the turn of the 19th century.





The Boyd Monument (detail) and Graveyard Feet,  
both photos: Aleana Egan

*Hermes of the Ways*

*The hard sand breaks,  
and the grains of it  
are clear as wine.  
Far off over, the leagues of it,  
the wind,  
playing on the wide shore,  
piles little ridges,  
and the great waves  
break over it.  
—H.D., 1913*

## 23 Longford Terrace

Margaret Lindsay Huggins, (née Murray), 1848–1915, pioneering astrophysicist. Lived at number 23 Longford Terrace, Monkstown from 1856–1875.

She was born in 1848, the elder child of John Majorbanks Murray and his first wife Helen Lindsay, both of whom came to Ireland from Scotland. Margaret's early interest in astronomy was inspired by her Scottish grandfather who instructed her in how to recognise the constellations.

In 1873 Margaret read an article about the exciting developments taking place in the field of spectroscopy – which made special reference to the work of astronomer William Huggins. Margaret was greatly impressed by the man and his work and was inspired to make herself a spectroscope. Soon after Margaret and William Huggins were introduced by Howard Grubb, a Dublin based instrument maker who had been commissioned to make William Huggins a set of new astronomical instruments. A love that endured for thirty-five years was sparked and the two were married on the 8th of September in the Parish Church in Monkstown.

The couple then moved to Tulse Hill in south-west London, where they made a beautiful home and fully functioning Observatory. Margaret became her husband's sole assistant in both the Tulse Hill Observatory and its associated laboratory. They went on to publish fourteen joint scientific papers together. In 1899 they produced the 'Photographic Atlas of Representative Stellar Spectra' which by many accounts is still extremely useful today. The *Times* of the day with uncharacteristic abandonment of reserve, described it as 'one of the greatest astronomical books of all time.'

From 'Whatever shines should be  
observed. Quicquid nitet notandum'  
by Susan McKenna-Lawlor  
Royal Irish Academy, 2002



Margaret Lindsay Huggins, Courtesy of the Archival  
Photographic Files, University of Chicago Library.





# RTE designer was stabbed

By Peter Murtagh, Security Correspondent  
 THE RTE set-designer whose body was found yesterday in his Dublin flat may have been murdered by someone whom he knew and invited in, a garda involved in the investigation said last night.

The body of Mr Charles Self, who was aged 32, was found yesterday morning at the foot of the stairs in his mews flat in Monkstown. It was discovered by a friend staying in the house who immediately called the gardai.

A post mortem examination was being carried out last night. Self, apparently, had been stabbed in the chest, neck and back. There were no signs of a break-in.

Mr Self, a Scotsman, joined RTE from the BBC in 1973 as an assistant designer. He worked on many programmes including the

*Mr Charles Self*  
 Late Late Show. One of his more recent designs was for the Christmas show presented by Twink.



# Gardai look again at Self case

MEMBERS of the gay community in Dublin were interviewed by gardai during their inquiries into the murder of the Co Offaly farmer, Mr Donal Dunn, it was learned yesterday.

Mr Dunne was shot dead on July 25th at his farm near Edenderry. On Saturday last, at a special sitting of Dun Laoghaire court, Malcolm Edward MacArthur was charged with his murder. He was also charged with the murder of Nurse Bridie Gargan.

It is understood that gardai are looking again at the case of murder of the RTE designer. Mr

Charles Self, following the latest series of murders. Mr Self's body was found in his flat at Monkstown, Co Dublin, on January 20th last. He had been stabbed to death.

During their inquiries into the killing, gardai interviewed hundreds of gay people in Dublin and other parts of the country. At the time, there were widespread allegations from gays that they were being harassed by detectives attempting to apprehend Mr Self's killer. At this stage, however, the gardai have made no firm connection between the Charles Self case and the latest murders.

Newspaper Excerpts, The Irish Times, 1982



Aleana Egan, *Man With a Movie Camera*, 2006  
 The Salthill Hotel, Baggage label, 1950s. Courtesy of Seamus O'Connor



Above & opposite:  
Aleana Egan, *Sea-Women Posters*, 2005,  
paint on paper. Photos: Cian Burke  
Building at the end of West Pier, 2005.  
Photo: Aleana Egan



## Dún Laoghaire

Passing in succession through the various localities along the Rock Road, we enter Kingstown, known prior to 1821 as Dunleary, and still having portion of it distinguished by that ancient designation. (NB: Today the town is called Dún Laoghaire, an even more ancient name.) Since that time the town has advanced from an obscure fishing village and watering place to one of the most important seaports in Ireland – a change in its fortunes due to two distinct causes – namely, the establishment of the Mail Packet station, with its fine harbour of refuge, and the connection with Dublin by rail.

The carrying out of the great works in connection with the Dublin and Kingstown Railway in the years 1832–34, excited an extraordinary amount of interest in Dublin, as it was the first railway constructed in Ireland. On the conclusion of the undertaking, *The Dublin Penny Journal* published a number of illustrated articles on the subject, in one of which, inspired by the importance of the occasion, it magnificently observed: “Hurried by the invisible but stupendous agency of steam, the astonished passenger will now glide, like Asmodeus, over the summits of the houses and streets of a great city – presently be transported through green fields and tufts of trees – then skim across the surface of the sea, and taking shelter under the cliffs, coast along the marine villas and through rocky excavations, until he finds himself in the centre of a vast port, which unites in pleasing confusion the bustle of a commercial town with the amusements of a fashionable watering-place.”

From *The Neighbourhood of Dublin*,  
by Weston St. John Joyce



Dorje De Burgh, *Halo*, 2011

In the course of preparing this publication the site of Dorje De Burgh’s *Halo* has dramatically changed. The statue of the Virgin was relocated to the entrance of the hospital, though the neon halo remains *in situ*. The blue halo is now illuminated every evening but is no longer in proximity to the figure for whom it was intended.

**ARCHITECT**

In the opening of the TOP HAT as in any other new building one tends to forget one of the most important people responsible for its construction, namely the architect.

**ARNOLD F. HENDY, F.R.E.A.I., M.I.R.E.,** 6th, Leinster Street, Dublin, has certainly brought all his resources to bear in the planning of the TOP HAT.

**BUILDER**

The construction of the TOP HAT will surely rank as their outstanding achievement by that well known firm of Builders and Contractors, **T. J. CUMMINS & CO., LTD.,** 89 Patrick Street, Dunloughaire.

The work carried out under the personal supervision of Mr. Tom Cummins reflects the greatest possible credit on all concerned.

**MR. L. DI FELICE**

Mr. Louis Di Felice, proprietor of the Top Hat, started in the ballroom business when he purchased the Top Hat Ballroom, Glasgow in 1921, after 19 years he felt that the time had come to retire and he sold his interest in 1940.

He came with his family to settle in Co. Dublin but the urge to get "back in harness" was too strong, and purchasing the Top Hat site, building started in January of this year. We should be very grateful to him, for in retiring out of his retirement he has given us something for which not only Dunloughaire, but Ireland can well be proud of.

With his energetic personality it is easy to see that his success has been well earned and that responsibility rests easy on his shoulders.

**MRS. L. DI FELICE**


Here is a woman who is not content to sit at home and let the men go out and do the work. Mrs. L. Di Felice, wife of the proprietor, is management and the catering is under her personal supervision, with her flair for thoroughness one may be sure that her end of the business will be properly attended to.

**POLICY**

The TOP HAT is a family business, father, mother and son, everything possible has been done to ensure the comfort and pleasure of its patrons, in fact we hope to be one big happy family, Dancers, Staff and Patrons.

"Dancing for the Dancesing" will be our slogan and we appeal to our patrons to help us in upholding this.

We are always open to suggestions for the better enjoyment of our patrons. Complaints, which we hope will be few, will always receive our attention.



**MR. VICTOR DI FELICE**

Introducing the Manager, Mr. Victor Di Felice, son of the proprietor, comes here from Glasgow where he has managed the Top Hat since 1927.

Born in Co. Caron he has been connected with the Ballroom business practically all his life, apart from 6 years spent in the R.A.F. during the war—

This unassuming young man who is settling down here with his wife and son will certainly not lack in experience and with the co-operation of everybody concerned he is going to make himself one of the most popular Ballroom managers in Ireland.

Top Hat Ballroom Brochure, 1950s. Courtesy of Seamus O'Connor

The Top Hat Ballroom in Dún Laoghaire first opened in the 1950s and instantly became a hub of social activity for those who sought music and dancing. The Top Hat was the only venue of its type in the borough, and was modeled on the purpose-built ballrooms and dance halls that flourished in Dublin from the 1950s through the 70s.

In the 1980s the Top Hat Ballroom evolved into a music venue and roller-skate disco. Countless bands performed here in the 80s and early 90s, including Seattle Grunge icons Nirvana, who played a now-legendary gig there in 1991. The venue was renovated in the early 90s and converted into a children's 'adventure' centre typical of that period with slides and ball pools. The Fun Factory closed in the late 90s and was replaced by a block of apartments.

**PALM GROVE CAFES**

TRY OUR FAMOUS

de luxe ices  
melancholy baby

- ★ MORNING COFFEE
- ★ HOT SAUSAGE ROLL
- ★ PANCAKES

FRESHLY MADE

BRANCHES—

O'CONNELL STREET,  
GRAFTON STREET,  
DUNLAOGHAIRE

Souvenir

**Brochure**

Top Hat



Ballroom

Dun Laoghaire

**BETTY MURPHY**

—our "Top-Top" has photographs in conjunction with C. A. P. Photographers Ltd., camera and studio now and local photographers in the ballroom. As a new initiative change your own photographs, showing, at your table, or station, with your own camera, or with our own camera, (L.S. 10.00) you can make the photographs, mounted in an album, free of charge, especially invited, from our house photographer. We are proud of this unique service and take pride in having accuracy of tonight's equipment 1950/1951.



**NORMAN WILLIAMS**

—a young man of social personality and brilliant musical ability—found a greatest opportunity for his talents as the Top Hat's Musical Director—coming from the famous Paul Marston Orchestra at the Marston with a wealth of musical experience behind him, he will hold an excellent record from the corner of his, Dún Laoghaire.

Patrons can be assured that whenever they take a drink, they will enjoy dancing to the finest melodies—remember dancers—V.I.C. and the beautiful music in—The House V.I.C. (Dunloughaire) and the way V.I.C. was there.





Top Hat Ballroom, Menu, 1950s. Courtesy of Seamus O'Connor



Photo: David Turpin

In the small hours of the morning of October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006, college student Peter Merriman was struck with severe memory loss, just moments after drunkenly pursuing a fox down a lane off George's Street Upper, Dún Laoghaire. According to two of Merriman's acquaintances – who were with him at the time, but who did not join his pursuit of the animal – the 20-year-old emerged back onto the street in less than one minute but was unable to recognise them or recall his own name. Intoxication was ruled out as a cause of Merriman's condition after he failed to improve over the following days.

No external signs of trauma were present, and extensive medical testing revealed no neurological abnormalities. Interestingly, while Merriman's linguistic abilities and understanding of the world in general remained largely unaffected, he was found to have lost all understanding of sexual difference.

Merriman's case has been the subject of studies by a number of European and North American experts, but no consensus has been reached.

The French-Canadian neurologist Albaric Bergeron was heavily criticised in the Irish media for his comment, in the *Journal of Pathological Neuroscience* that "the chronic nature of Merriman's case might ultimately be attributed to a lack of will." Merriman continues to reside with his parents in the Dún Laoghaire area, although he has been unable to make a return to education.

*East Pier*



Yacht club, East Pier, Photographer and date unknown.  
Courtesy of Seamus O'Connor

*“Great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind gauge spinning like a propeller, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most...”*

‘Krapp’s last tape’ by Samuel Beckett, 1958



Mailboat, 1950s. Courtesy of Seamus O'Connor

*Haigh Terrace*

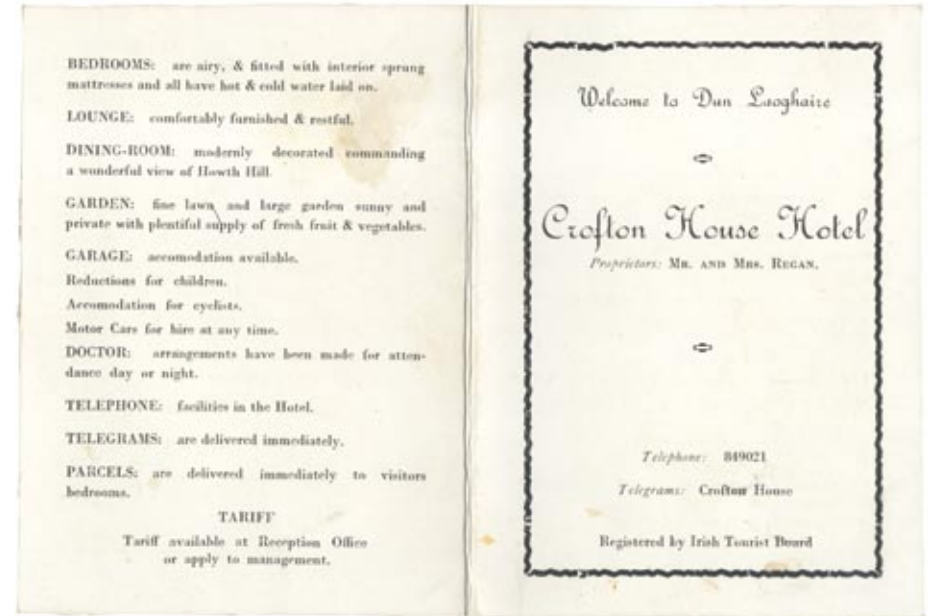


Aleana Egan, *War Atlas Yachting & Nautical Cuttings*, 2008, Steel. Photo: Abaigeal Meek

*War Atlas Yachting & Nautical Cuttings* was installed on the grounds of the National Maritime Museum on Haigh Terrace, Dún Laoghaire, as part of the exhibition 'Sunday Night' curated by Pádraic E. Moore in Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin, November 2009 – January 2010.

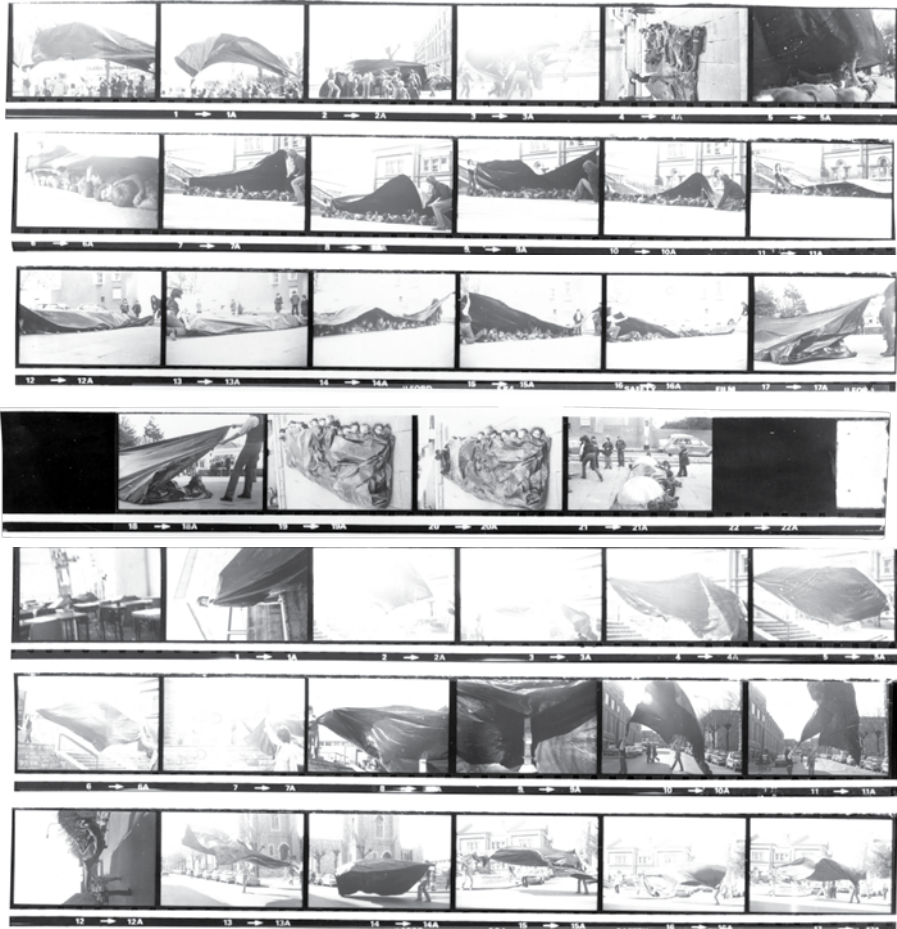


*Crofton Terrace*



Crofton House Hotel Brochure, 1950s. Courtesy of Seamus O'Connor  
Crofton Terrace, Photo: Aleana Egan

Marine Road



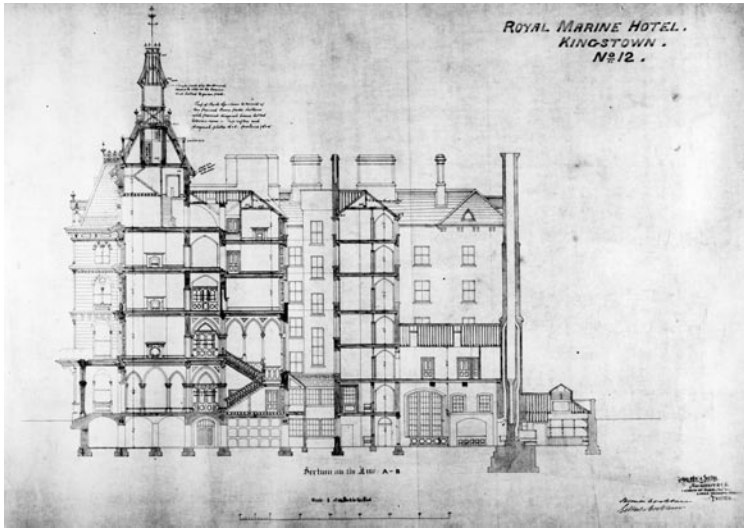
'The Wave' project, Dún Laoghaire College of Art, Eblana Avenue.  
Photos: Andrew Manson

Andrew Manson's photographs document the experimental practices of his fellow students at the Dún Laoghaire College of Art and Design, which included sculptures, performances, and daily happenings. These took place both inside and outside, with the students utilising the public concourse in front of the main building of the school when it was situated just off Marine Road, on Eblana Avenue, in the 1970s.



Royal Marine Hotel and Kingsdown Pavilion Pleasure Palace postcards.  
Courtesy of Seamus O'Connor

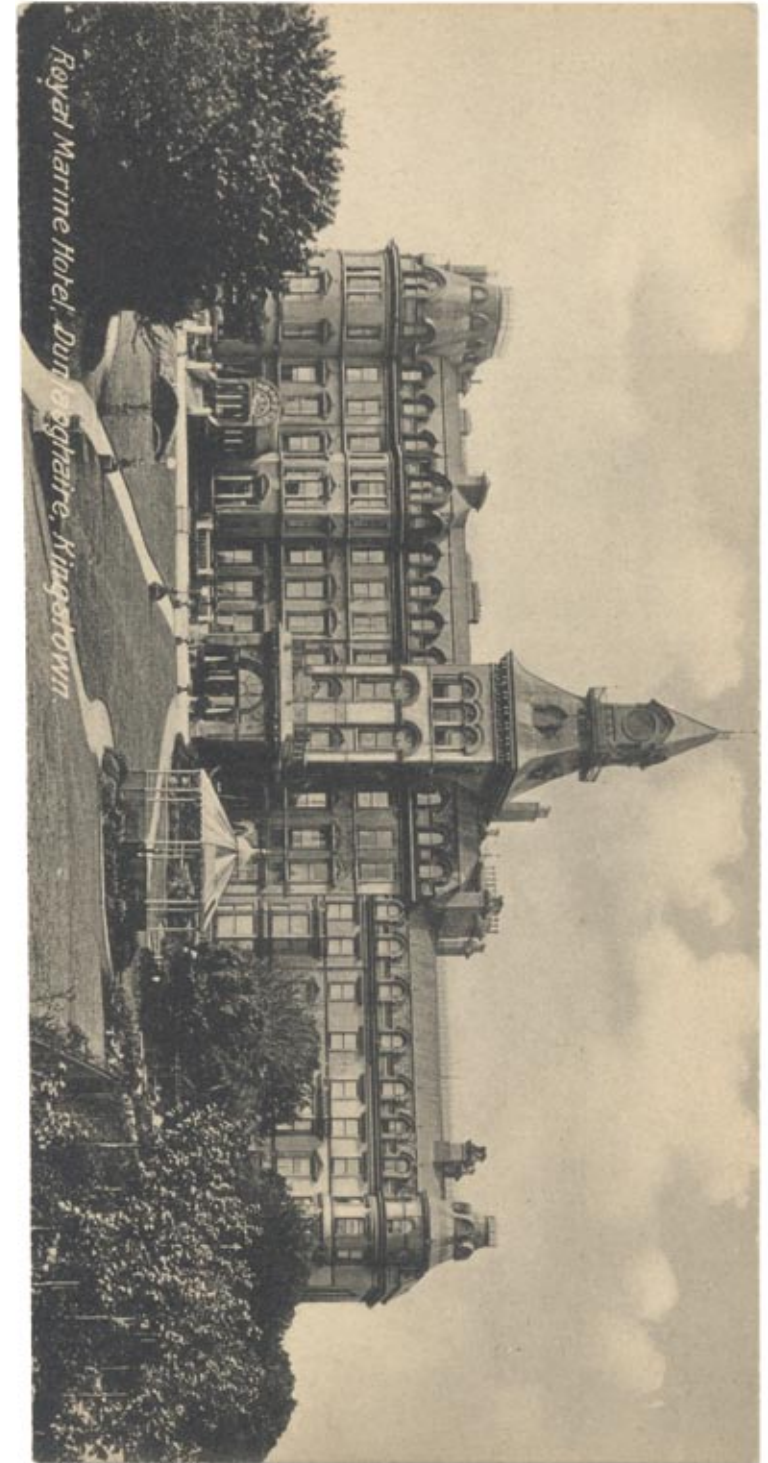




Royal Marine Hotel, Marine Road, Dún Laoghaire. Transverse section, ink and wash design by John McCurdy, National Trust Archive, 1979. Courtesy of Irish Architectural Archive  
Opposite: Royal Marine Hotel postcard. Courtesy of Seamus O'Connor

Royal Marine Hotel – originally known as Hayes Royal Hotel – was built in 1828. It was designed by John McCurdy, an architect who was also involved in extending Monkstown’s impressive Church of Ireland in 1868. William Dargan, builder of the Kingstown Railway, bought the site in 1863 and built the Royal Marine Hotel. The old Hayes Royal Hotel was incorporated into the design, but later demolished in the 1960s. The newly developed Royal Marine Hotel in Dún Laoghaire in South Dublin first opened its doors for business in 1865 and has been a South Dublin institution ever since.

The first line wireless report on a sports event was made in 1899 when Marconi transmitted a commentary on the Kingstown Regatta. Several years later, in 1923, Marconi made further pioneering developments in radio transmission while broadcasting from a room in the Royal Marine Hotel.



## Sandycove

*Woodshadows floated silently by through the morning peace from the stairhead seaward where he gazed. Inshore and farther out the mirror of water whitened, spurned by lightshod hurrying feet. White breast of the dim sea. The twining stresses, two by two. A hand plucking the harpstrings, merging their twining chords. Wavewhite wedded words shimmering on the dim tide.*

From *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, 1922



Gary Coyle, *Fog, Sandycove, November 2010*

## *Sandycove Avenue*



Aleana Egan, *Seaweed*, 2010

Ten more glorious days without horses! So thought Second-Lieutenant Andrew Chase-White, recently commissioned in the distinguished regiment of King Edward's Horse, as he potted around contentedly in a garden on the outskirts of Dublin on a sunny Sunday afternoon in April 1916. The garden in question, secluded behind substantial walls of rough golden stone, was large, and contained two ailing but gallant palm trees.

The house, a dignified villa called 'Finglas', with big square windows and a shallow slate roof, was washed a slightly streaky blue. It was both neat and spacious, built in a style of confident 'seaside Georgian' which in Ireland had felicitously continued until the beginning of the present century and after.

The house and garden, the walls and palm trees, the property of the father of Andrew's fiancée, were situated in Sandycove Avenue, Sandycove, one of the bright little roads of multicoloured villas which run down to the sea from the main road which leads from Dublin out to Killiney and Bray. The road on which Finglas stood, or from which, conscious of a certain superiority over the other houses, it withdrew, was clean and very quiet, seeming always full of grey luminous light from the sea, which could be seen and indeed heard at the foot of the hill where the road ended casually in the water and the pavement turned into yellow rocks, folded and wrinkled and shining with crystalline facets.

From *The Red and the Green*, by Iris Murdoch, 1965

## Geragh



The Scott House, designed by Michael Scott, 1938, Geragh, Sandycove. Photos: Aleana Egan

It was a piece of common land then, an old quarry bounded by dry-stone walls... My father was looking for a site near water – he was a great fisherman. I had found a wonderful site with sea on three sides... A marvelous place for an old gentleman to retire and end his days. And he wouldn't touch it. He wouldn't build there if it was the last site in the world. I was so cross that I told him if he didn't take it, I would take it. I started one morning at 8 o'clock and by 4 o'clock the following morning had finished the initial sketch plans. I was a quick boy in my day.

From *Works 10: Michael Scott 1905–1989*, edited by Michael Scott and John O'Regan, Gandon Editions, 1993.

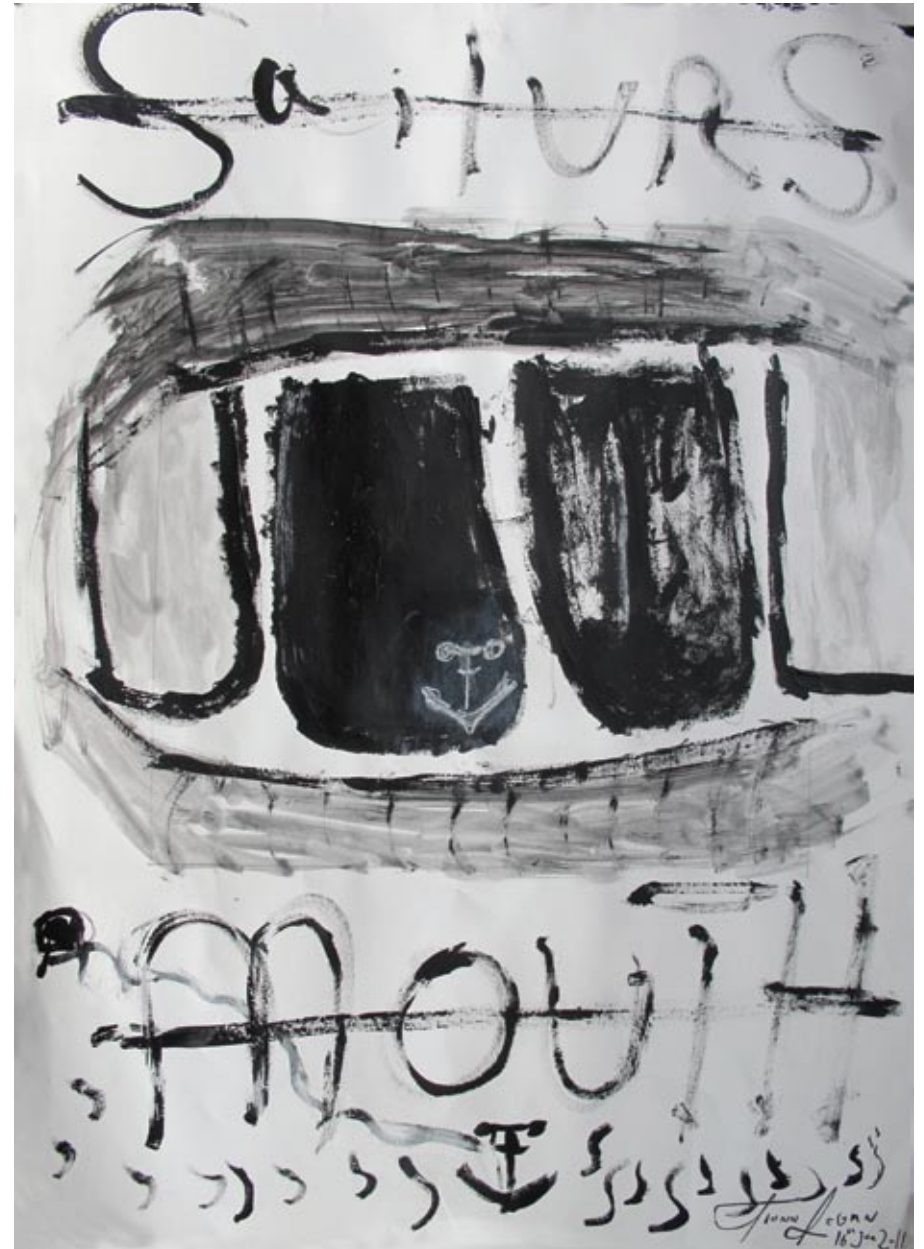


## Dalkey

In 1834 numbers of persons attracted by rumours of buried gold, flocked to Dalkey where they worked and mined, day and night, at the rocks, under the directions of a young girl who claimed to have had the place of concealment revealed to her in dreams. When the craze had gone on for a time, some wags let loose among the operators at night, two black cats covered with phosphorescent oil, which scattered the gold seekers in all directions, and effectually put an end to the proceedings owing to the ridicule provoked by the incident.

A land craze immediately succeeded the gold fever, and a number of modern residences were soon afterwards erected at Dalkey the old squatter tenants selling their holdings for high prices in consequence of the enhanced values produced by the construction of the railway.

From *The Neighbourhood of Dublin*,  
by Weston St. John Joyce



Fionn Regan, *Sailors Mouth*, 2011, paint on paper

## Atmospheric Road



Atmospheric Road Sign, Dalkey, Photographer and date unknown.

The great success of the Dublin and Kingstown Railway, constructed in the years 1832–4, naturally resulted in numerous schemes for other railways all over the country. That which was considered to have the first claim, however, was for the extension of the Kingstown line southward towards Bray, and this would no doubt have been carried out, but for a new system of propulsion championed by the eminent engineer Brunel, known as the Atmospheric system. This invention caused a great sensation when it became publicly known. It was a system without locomotives, the trains being moved by the power of air. More specifically, the engine supplying the power was stationary, and the train was drawn along by the suction of a plug or piston through a tube.

The Dalkey Atmospheric Railway opened to traffic in March of 1844, and people came from many countries to see this marvelous invention at work. Its novelty contributed to a long busy start, but eventually the line did only minor business, as there were no stations between Kingstown and Dalkey. The Atmospheric line remained in use until April 1854 – just 10 years of life – but was in fact the only such line continuously at work at this time except the one in Paris.

## Coliemore Harbour



Alasdair Gray, *That Death Will Break the Salt-Fresh Cockle Hand*, 2007, screenprint, Courtesy of the artist and Sorcha Dallas, Glasgow

## Killiney

Famed for its Druidic associations, which are difficult to prove. Nevertheless, these associations led to many of its early houses being given names which reflect this notion: Druid Lodge, Druid Cottage, Mount Druid and Templeville.

From *The Book of Dún Laoghaire*, by  
Kevin A. Murray Teachers' Centre, 1987

We now enter Victoria Park by the entrance gate, and proceeding by the steep pathway up the hill, we presently come in view of the sweep of coast extending map-like from the base of the hill on towards Bray, fringed in rough weather by a long white selvage of foam. On reaching the Obelisk, at an elevation of 512 feet, we obtain what is probably the finest coast view in the county, comprising the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains extending from south to west, Kingstown and its harbour below the hill, to the north Howth, Sutton, and Portrane, and to the left of these the South Wall, the Poolbeg Lighthouse, and the metropolis enveloped in its smoke.

The Obelisk, which gives such a distinctive character to this hill, has undergone so many repairs and alterations since it was erected, that it may be said to resemble the traditional Irishman's gun, of which the only portion of the original left after the many alterations was the touchhole, and, in consequence, the drawings made at different periods vary considerably in their representations of it. The masonry work is of a very rough description, probably carried out by unskilled workmen, so that it is not surprising that it required frequent attention. It seems to have been at one time surrounded by a circular walled enclosure, entered by a massive gateway, which in time gave place to a railing that was ultimately removed to allow visitors access to the structure. Then, again, a flight of steps formerly led up to a balcony over the lower portion, and the upper part, which is now conical, is represented in one of the older pictures as curved at the sides, giving it somewhat of the appearance of a gigantic sugarloaf. Two marble slabs on the side facing the sea bear the inscriptions: "Last year being hard with

the Poor, the Walls about these Hills and This etc. erected by John Mapas, Esq, June, 1742," and "Repaired by Robert Warren, Esq., MDCCCXL."

The winter of 1741–2, known as "the hard frost", was a time of such distress and suffering among the working classes, that wealthy proprietors all over the country erected fanciful structures merely to give employment to the poor.

From *The Neighbourhood of Dublin*,  
by Weston St. John Joyce

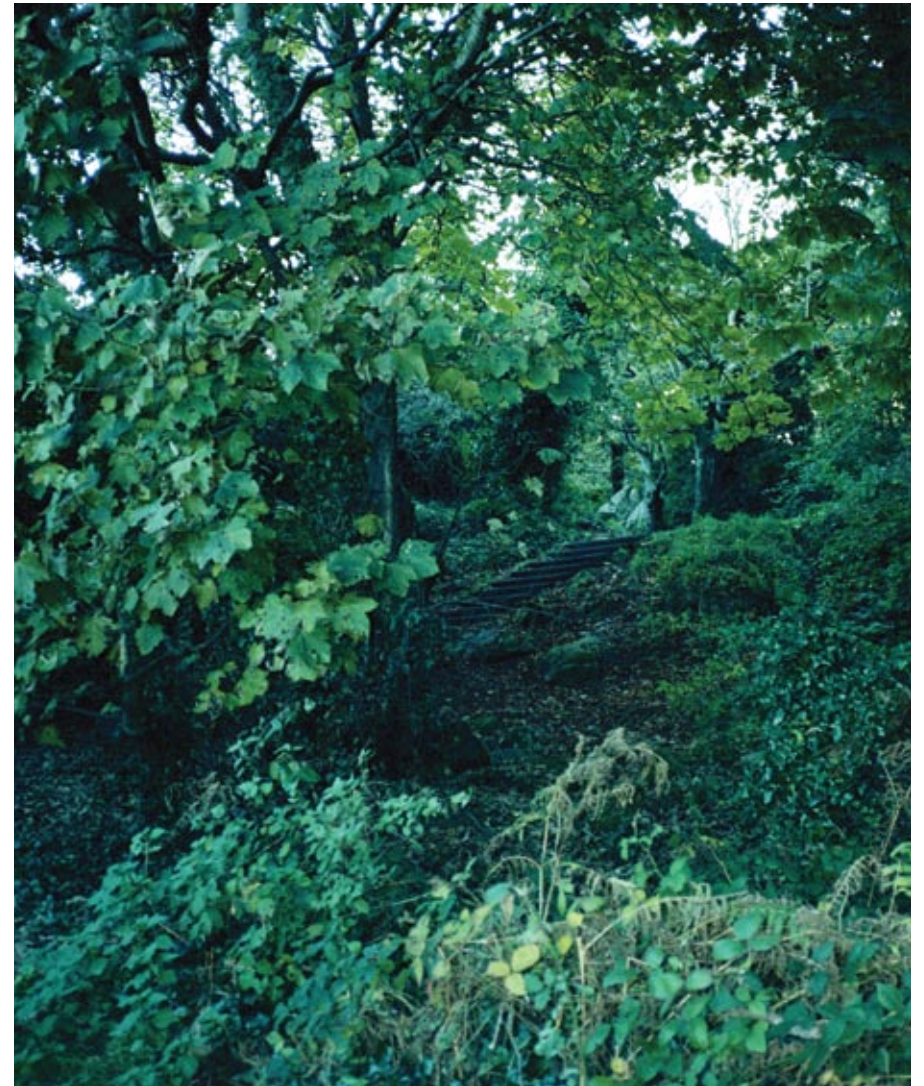


Killiney bay, view southwest from Sorrento point, mid-Victorian photograph. Chandler, 1982. Courtesy of Irish Architectural Archive

*Killiney Hill*

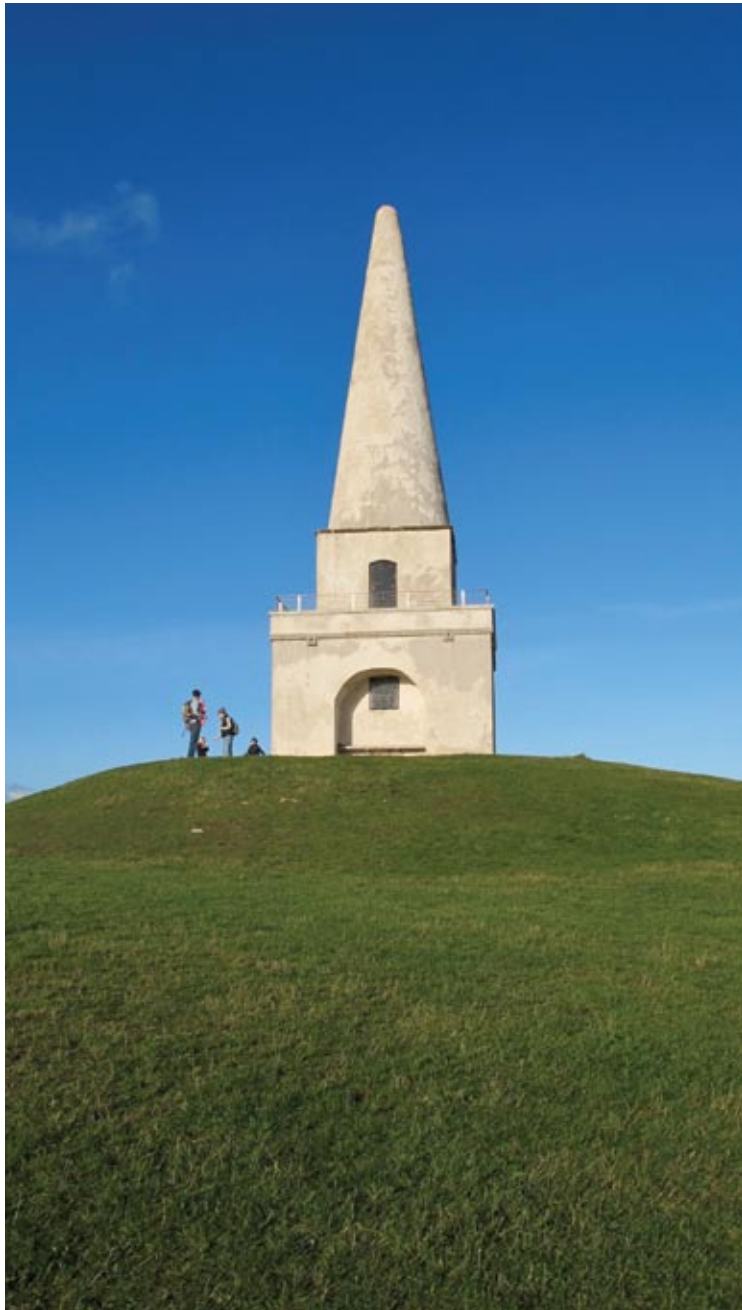
<i>Greater Stitchwort</i>	<i>Alexanders</i>	<i>Bittersweet</i>
<i>Lesser Stitchwort</i>	<i>Burnet Saxifrage</i>	<i>Mullein</i>
<i>Wall Mustard</i>	<i>Pignut</i>	<i>Purple Toadflax</i>
<i>Garlic Mustard</i>	<i>Fennel</i>	<i>Ivy-Leaved Toadflax</i>
<i>Hedge Mustard</i>	<i>Cow Parsley</i>	<i>Figwort</i>
<i>Yellow Weed</i>	<i>Wild Carrot</i>	<i>Snapdragon</i>
<i>Lady's Smock</i>	<i>Hogweed</i>	<i>Foxglove</i>
<i>Horse Radish</i>	<i>Red Valerian</i>	<i>Speedwell</i>
<i>Herb Robert</i>	<i>Pink Valerian</i>	<i>Wild Thyme</i>
<i>Cut Leaved Cranesbill</i>	<i>White Valerian</i>	<i>Ground Ivy</i>
<i>St John's Wort</i>	<i>Lamb's Lettuce</i>	<i>Self-Heal</i>
<i>Tutsan</i>	<i>Violets</i>	<i>Wood Sage</i>
<i>Rose Of Sharon</i>	<i>Field Scabious</i>	<i>Ribwort</i>
<i>White Flax</i>	<i>Feverfew,</i>	<i>Plantain</i>
<i>Common Mallow</i>	<i>Salsify</i>	<i>Sorrel</i>
<i>Great Willowherb</i>	<i>Hemp Agrimony</i>	<i>Sheep's Sorrel</i>
<i>Rose-Bay</i>	<i>Hawkweed</i>	<i>Stinging Nettle</i>
<i>Willowherb</i>	<i>Ox-Eye Daisy</i>	<i>Wall Pellitory</i>
<i>Wood Sorrel</i>	<i>Yarrow</i>	<i>Crow Garlic</i>
<i>Welsh Poppy</i>	<i>Cat's Ear</i>	<i>Ramsons</i>
<i>Corn Poppy</i>	<i>Winter Heliotrope</i>	<i>Triangular</i>
<i>Red Clover</i>	<i>Goat's Beard</i>	<i>Stalked Garlic</i>
<i>White Clover</i>	<i>Colt's Foot</i>	<i>Bluebell</i>
<i>Vetches</i>	<i>Ragwort</i>	<i>Lords-And Ladies</i>
<i>Meadow Vetchling</i>	<i>Oxford Ragwort</i>	<i>Pyramidal Orchid</i>
<i>Milkwort</i>	<i>Wood Groundsel</i>	<i>Twayblade</i>
<i>Buttercups</i>	<i>Thistles</i>	<i>Scarlet Pimpernel</i>
<i>Lesser Celandine</i>	<i>Daisy</i>	<i>Mugwort</i>
<i>Tormentil</i>	<i>Knapweed</i>	<i>Spurge</i>
<i>Creeping Cinquefoil</i>	<i>Dandelion</i>	<i>Sheep's Scabious</i>
<i>Bird's Foot Trefoil</i>	<i>Primrose</i>	<i>Alkanet</i>
<i>Silverweed</i>	<i>Cowslip</i>	<i>Salad Burnet</i>
<i>Wood Avens</i>	<i>Bindweed</i>	<i>Stonecrops</i>
<i>Robin-Run-The Hedge</i>	<i>Small Bindweed</i>	<i>Chickweed</i>
<i>Wood Sanicle</i>	<i>Forget-Me-Not</i>	<i>Pennywort</i>

—Michael Nash



Tansey Cowley, *Killiney Hill*, 2011

*Obelisk Hill*



Killiney Obelisk, Plaque & Ziggurat. Photos: Aleana Egan, 2011



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