

*Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society*

## *JOURNAL*



*Volume 8: 2015-2016*

*Remastered 2026*

Acknowledgements

Cover photographs of Evie Hone's stained-glass windows in the Holy Rosary Church,  
Greystones provided by Pat Killilea.

The Society's website at [www.greystonesahs.org](http://www.greystonesahs.org) has material from earlier volumes of our journals, details of our activities and much, much more. Pay us a visit!

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## Chairperson's Introduction

This latest volume - the eighth - of the Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society Journal offers insights both into the history of Greystones and the surrounding area, and into the activities of the Society itself over the two years since the appearance of our previous journal. Those years have been particularly busy ones for our membership: in addition to the Society's usual very full programme of lectures and outings, it has collaborated with the La Touche Legacy Committee in the compilation and publication of volume II of Greystones: its buildings and history, and more recently in the preparation of Trails of Greystones, an historical walking tour of the town. Moreover, in September 2014 the Society joined with the La Touche Legacy Committee in hosting the annual La Touche Legacy weekend seminar, an extremely successful event, which focused on an examination of World War 1, both in its global and national contexts and at a more local level. Indeed, we are delighted to be able to include in this journal the contributions of two of the speakers at the seminar, Lord Meath and Anne Ferris TD.

In his presentation to the seminar, published as the opening article in this collection, Lord Meath offers an overview of the impact on his own family of the catastrophe of 1914-18, which included the deaths of his maternal grandfather and several great-uncles. And, as he points out, the legacy of the war long outlasted the fighting: his other grandfather, decorated for gallantry, suffered the effects of gas poisoning for the rest of his life, while his maternal grandmother, who lived to be over a hundred, was a widow for more than seventy years. Indeed, both Lord Meath's article and the two which follow it reveal the experience of women at all levels of society, who bore their own share of the suffering of the conflict. Anne Ferris TD in her essay examines the toll taken by the war on three Bray women, Biddy Whelan, Bridget Sherry and Mary Brien, who respectively lost a boyfriend, a son and two sons, and whose devastation mirrored that of hundreds of thousands of other Irishwomen for decades to come. The third article in this World War 1 section, Mrs Le Blond's War, records the part played by Greystones woman Elizabeth Le Blond (nee Hawkins-Whitshed). Having served as a nurse in France during the first years of the war and toured the battlefields in its immediate aftermath, Le Blond was fully aware of the horrors which it entailed, and devoted her final years to fostering international friendship as a means of avoiding future conflict.

A feature of this volume is the focus in several articles on the built environment of Greystones. Thus, A Walk Around Greystones leads the reader on a tour of some of the most historic sites in the town, while Colin Love's Lost buildings of Greystones stands as a valuable record of some now-disappeared houses and the families associated with them. In The Cul of the Rock, Seamus Hayden applies his unrivalled local knowledge to an interrogation of some of the photographic evidence of the village which Greystones once was, while in No Property Developers - Thank You, Brian White recounts an early instance of 'nimbyism' at a time, interestingly, when the town was just beginning to take on the shape which we know today. And finally in this connection, one of the glories of Greystones - the stained-glass windows in Holy Rosary Church - is celebrated in our cover illustration, the photograph of which was supplied by Pat Killilea.

Three other contributions take us beyond the confines of Greystones: Brian White's eighteenth-century maps offer a survey of the local coastline, while Andrew Phelan describes the search for gold which briefly transformed part of the county in the 1790s. With James Scannell's The Accident that Time Forgot, we move northwards, to a little-remembered maritime tragedy, the sinking of the Princess Victoria with the loss of 128 lives, on its passage from Stranraer to Larne in January 1953.

Last, but by no means least, it is a particular pleasure to pay affectionate tribute in this collection to two of our longest-serving members, Beatrice Gunning and Canon Bob Jennings.

### **MRS LE BLOND'S WAR**

Both Beatrice and Bob have contributed immeasurably to the community in which they live over many years, and are themselves a much-valued part of its history. Beatrice, who at ninety years old still lives in the house in which she was born, is a central figure of Greystones life, with a record of involvement in local initiatives ranging from the Greystones and District Credit Union and the Greystones Civic Association to the Active Retirement Association, and of course our own Society. Canon Bob Jennings has had a varied and fascinating career, which includes service as a British Army chaplain during the Korean War, before returning to Ireland where he served as rector of Newcastle, Newtownmountkennedy and Calary for twenty-two years. He is also a distinguished scholar, with a number of local history publications to his credit, and has been a supporter of the Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society since its foundation in 1988.

Thanks are due to all our contributors for their interest, expertise and professionalism, and most especially to our editor Frank Deignan, without whose unfailing patience and commitment over several months this volume could not have come into fruition. Finally, I must acknowledge the part played in the success of this and all the Society's initiatives by an exceptionally hard-working committee and a dedicated membership. That, together with the range and variety of the work presented in these pages, reflects the flourishing state of local history in our area, and augurs well for the continuing health of the Society.

*Rosemary Raughter - Chairperson*

*Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society*

# The Great War - Personal Reflections

Lord Meath

The following paper was presented by Lord Meath at the La Touche Legacy Festival of History event on the 26th September 2014 which had World War I as its main theme.

Personally I think that the adjective 'great' should mean something good, wholesome or worthwhile. In this context it is used to describe outrage; conflagration; an industrial monster which killed millions of service men and women, millions of civilians, millions of horses and livestock; destroyed heritage buildings, hundreds of thousands of domestic homes, precious artefacts, farm lands and forests, in fact a huge crime against the ethics of civilisation and human decency.

Britain and Ireland lost approximately 900,000, who were killed or died of wounds; France lost approximately 3.5 million, Germany 4 million. We do not know what the Russian casualties were but at the battle of Tannenberg Generals Samsonov and Rennenkampf lost approximately 245,000 soldiers killed in action or who died of wounds. Italy stayed neutral in 1914 but came into the war against Austro/Hungary in 1915, casualties are unknown. These are recorded figures, but what about those who died afterwards from wounds who were no longer serving or who counted the civilian casualties?

If you visit the newly commissioned war memorial at Woodenbridge to those men and women from County Wicklow who lost their lives you will know that there are some 1192 names

recorded and there may be more to come. This is just from one county.

In 1913 there were 16 Irish Regiments under the umbrella of the British Army. It was a natural career for Irishmen to follow when there was little chance of employment at home. From Killruddery Estate alone 32 men served in the forces. Of the men who joined most worked on the land, whether gardens, fields or woods. They were resourceful and good with animals such as horses, in fact horses were in their blood. Out of the 32 who joined 10 joined the Royal Horse Artillery, 7 joined the Dublin Fusiliers and the remainder joined the Irish Guards, Inniskillings and the Irish cavalry regiments. 2 were killed in action; one died of enteric fever and 5 were wounded. Some of you may have seen the documentary on RTE of Gay Byrne's father titled *My Father's War*. Edward Byrne was born on Killruddery Estate, one of six brothers and two sisters, his father was Alec Byrne, head coachman to the Earl of Meath. If you want to find out what happened to him ask Gay or RTE! It is a very well-conceived documentary and worth watching.

I have been asked to mention my own relations and their contribution so I would like to start with my maternal grandfather, Captain Geoffrey Bowlby, whom I never knew and whom my mother lost when she was just two years old. He came from a military family and his grandfather was at Waterloo and survived. He was a Captain in the Royal Horse Guards and part of the British Expeditionary Force, which was dispatched to France and Belgium to check the advance of Germany at the outbreak of war, a very small force of some 400,000 soldiers but well trained and disciplined.

He distinguished himself at Wytschaete in October 1914, taking command of a composite battalion, and was mentioned in despatches. At the first battle of Ypres he commanded 'A' company, Royal Horse Guards, and ran 1000 yards leading a successful afternoon counter attack uphill across open country

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## MRS LE BLOND'S WAR

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He distinguished himself at *Wytschaete* in October 1914, taking command of a composite battalion, and was mentioned in despatches. At the first battle of Ypres he commanded 'A' company, Royal Horse Guards, and ran 1000 yards leading a successful afternoon counter attack uphill across open country near Gully farm. A big tall man, he was an easy target for the German trenches as they got close and he was killed on 13th May 1915. He has no known

grave but his name is remembered on the Ypres Menin Gate.

Geoffrey Bowlby married Lettice Annsley in 1911 and they had two children, my mother Elizabeth and her brother John who was a baby when his father was killed. My grandmother was born in 1885 and died in 1988 aged 102 years. She was a widow for more than 70 years and I was very fond of her. After Geoffrey's death she became very active in war work, becoming Commandant of the Auxiliary Hospital at Bicester in Oxfordshire which treated wounded service men. She was twice mentioned in despatches for her efforts. An epidemic of Spanish flu struck and dehydrated the wounded men who naturally became dangerously vulnerable. Being a very practical person she immediately made contact with her farming and land owning friends and requisitioned as much of their laid up champagne stocks as she could, made up a meat broth jelly with it and fed it to the patients, being the only form of nourishment they could swallow. This recipe proved to be an excellent recovery aid.

Besides losing her husband, Lettice lost her two brothers in the first 18 months. She had five sisters; two of them lost their husbands. My grandmother was a very splendid person, kind and generous and she never re-married like many 1st World War widows as nearly all their contemporaries were killed. She was delighted when just before her 34th birthday women became entitled to vote in a general election.

My paternal grandfather, Reginald Le Normand, known as Normie was born in 1869 and became a career soldier as an infantry man in the Grenadier Guards. He served in the Boer War and then went on to serve in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War as a Lieut. Colonel commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Grenadier Guards, Wellington Barracks, London. However, because of severe losses incurred by the Irish Guards in the Ypres salient, which killed their commanding officer, John Morris, along with some of their company commanders and senior N.C.Os., Normie was transferred to Command the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Irish Guards in the Field by mid-September 1914. Unfortunately he was severely wounded on 1<sup>st</sup> November in action at Polygon Wood near Ypres, saved from death by the deflection of his metal cigarette box. This invalided him out

until he could resume active service in 1918. For his action at Ypres he was mentioned in despatches by Lord French in February 1915 and awarded C.B. Military.

Whilst recovering he worked in the Munitions Invention Department of the War Office and in November 1916 he took command of 3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Battalion Irish Guards at Warley in the U.K.

In February 1918 he took up his command as Brigadier General of the 4th Guards Brigade in the line at Lille. He was badly gassed on 4th April 1918 and hospitalised at Abbeville. However within a few days he was back on the front line.

The following extract is from a letter sent to his wife, Aileen, my grandmother, by Lord Cavan:

*'Just a line from the battlefield to tell you how much I owed to your "man"..... having lost his voice. At that moment things were rather critical and he at once went up to the firing line of his Battalion and restored everything completely, so saving a nasty situation.....'*

Normie was later passed as unfit for the 'firing line' because of the gas attack. He was given command of a big military camp at Etaples in France which command he held until the end of the war. Mentioned in dispatches by F.M. Lord Haig, he was awarded the C.B.E. Military in 1919.

Normie was one of five children born to Reginald and Mary, 12<sup>th</sup> Earl and Countess of Meath. His three brothers also served in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, Claude who ended up in the Royal Flying Corps and survived still flying aeroplanes when the war ended. Ernest who was killed in action serving in the Coldstream Guards on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1915 again near the cauldron of Ypres. He had previously been awarded the D.S.O. in November 1914 and he is buried in the Military Cemetery at Cambrin in France. Arthur, another brother, joined the Irish Fusiliers but died later from T.B.

Normie married Aileen Wyndham Quin, daughter of the Earl of Dunraven from Adare Manor in Limerick. When not on military service both Normie and Aileen lived and worked at Kilruddery. My grandmother was a keen horse connoisseur and kept many horses, both for work, riding and racing. During the two years Normie was working for Munitions in London it was sometimes difficult for her to visit England.

During the war Aileen worked for various charities to do with the welfare of Irish soldiers and their dependents. This also involved helping many women and families who had lost their bread earners in their sons and husbands. She was part of a Red Cross network which attempted to make things a little easier for people left destitute by the war.

When Normie came back from the war he led as much of a normal life as he could despite the damage the gas had done to his lungs. He was a Trustee of the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust, building houses for returning service men. He was a Director of the Bank of Ireland. He was a Commissioner of Irish Lights (boats and sailing being one of his hobbies together with Aileen). He pursued country sports and his horological skills were recorded worldwide when he designed and built (1906) the only clock entirely powered by water and recently restored at Kilruddery. I was seven years old when my grandfather died in 1949 so I did not really know him but Gran Aileen was special to me.

So this is just one story of one family. How many more stories are out there and how many more will we hear now 100 years on? The 2nd World War came far too soon, 20 years later, and the global agony was re-lived but this was not labelled a 'great war. People now realise that war is continuously being waged somewhere in the world and wars are certainly not great.

# Women in World War I

Some Personal Perspectives from Bray Co. Wicklow

Anne Ferris TD

The following paper was presented by Anne Ferris TD at the La Touche Legacy Festival of History event on the 26th September 2014 which had World War I as its main theme. The paper is dedicated to Mary Brien, Biddy Whelan and Bridget Sherry of Bray and the thousands of other Wicklow women whose lives were changed forever by World War I.

## Introduction

on the 18th of August 1917 the Irish Times reported that a 45 year old woman, Margaret Farrell, appeared before a Scottish court and was fined the princely sum of one pound and one shilling for presenting herself at Glasgow Recruiting Office in male attire and asking to be enrolled in the Irish Guards.<sup>1</sup>

The message was loud and clear. War is a men-only affair.

Of course in practice that was far from the truth. The Irish and British men who went to the front left behind mothers and girlfriends, daughters and sisters. Women ran hospitals and charities for the fighting and injured. As the war progressed women populated factories and munitions works, mostly receiving lower pay than the men they replaced.

When 18 year old Ellen Capon appeared before the London courts in 1918, again discovered in a recruiting office committing the terrible offence of wearing male attire (trousers I presume!) her defence was that in order to receive a fair wage in the industry where she worked she had been obliged to dress as a man for two years.

The work of women throughout World War I, buoyed by the efforts of the Suffragette Movement, ultimately led in 1918 to the granting of voting rights for the women of Britain and Ireland. These voting rights were far from equal however.

The efforts of the men who fought in World War I were rewarded by a new reduced voting age of 19. The women however, many of whose lives were forever changed by the war, were given a vote, but only the women considered mature enough. The voting age introduced for women was 30 years and above.

It took the United Kingdom a full ten years to introduce equal voting rights for all in 1928. The new Irish Free State had passed them out six years earlier by granting equal suffrage to all of its citizens in 1922.

History would continue to give women the more silent role in World War I.



## Remembering the War Dead in Bray

In 1919 when the beautiful Celtic Cross war-memorial designed by prominent architect Sir Thomas Deane was erected in Bray to honour the 168 local men who had lost their lives in the battles of World War I, the Irish Builder magazine commented on the unusual phenomenon whereby one name in particular appeared to be so polished that it outshone the other names around it.<sup>2</sup>

The shining name belonged to Francis Sherry, son of Thomas and Bridget Sherry from Fassaroe. Today the name blends into the monument - it is no different in appearance to the other names around it. The exceptional shine observed in 1919 was therefore more likely to have been the result of a loving hand with a polishing cloth rather than some flaw in the metal. Was it his mother Bridget or one of his three sisters, Mary-Ellen, Annie or 17 year old Stasia who maintained this silent shining vigil to his memory? For what other place did they have to visit? The grave of Francis Sherry is in France.<sup>3</sup>

There's a striking piece of film footage on YouTube from Remembrance Day in 1924 showing the long procession of local people to that same war memorial in Bray, just ten years after the first casualties of World War 1.<sup>4</sup> Thousands of people thronged the Quinsborough Road, watching the marching bands and processions. This little film reminds us of how deeply and widely Bray was affected by the loss of these young men and also by the return of other men, sons, husbands, brothers and boyfriends many of whom would remain scarred physically and psychologically for life.

This type of procession was repeated in towns and villages throughout Wicklow and throughout Ireland.

When I watch the film of the procession down the Quinsborough Road I wonder if one of the young women in the smart hats is Biddy Whelan of Castle Street who lost her boyfriend Rifleman Jack Madden in 1914 or if I can pick out the face of Mrs Mary Brien of Ravenswell Row, mother of two names on the monument, Private Michael Brien who died in France in 1916, and Private Joseph Brien who against great odds almost survived the war until he too died during its last weeks in 1918. Mary Brien was also the aunt of Rifleman Phelim Brien.

The names of the three Brien cousins from 11 Ravenswell Row sit side by side on the Bray monument. For their families this was the only remaining connection with the lost men who just years before had been carefree boys playing on the back streets of Bray.

## The Story of Biddy Whelan and Jack Madden

We know about Biddy Whelan because of the long love letter that her beau Jack Madden posted in August 1914 from Tidworth Camp in England, just days before he departed for France.<sup>5</sup>

Biddy was a 27 year old kitchen maid and lived with her widowed mother in a three roomed house on Castle St in Bray. I can't tell you exactly where on the street it was but we know from the census returns that it had only two windows to the front which makes it a little easier to visualise.

The Whelan's lived next door to the Browns, another family mentioned in the letter, and not too far away from where 25 year old Jack Madden lived with his father Justin, a baker, also living in Little Bray.

The love letter that Jack wrote to Biddy is held in the files of the National Archives. This first striking aspect to this correspondence is its length. Jack it seems was very love-struck indeed. Jack has only been gone from Bray for a little over a week -and very little has happened yet in military terms - but still the letter extends to 12 pages and includes 12 references 'dearest or 'dear' Biddy and a total of 66 kisses, 13 of which are for Biddy's mother. Before the letter, Jack

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had already sent Biddy a telegram on departure to England from Belfast. Jack, as they say, had it bad.

But Jack's letter also gives us an important insight into some of the varied reasons why young men joined the forces in 1914. Sometimes it was to impress a young woman. Jack tells Biddy on page 3 of his letter:

'I took your advice. I went to my duty this morning and felt much happiness. Thanks to God.'

On page 4 he tells Biddy:

*'I have made my army Will and you are my heir to anything I have to give. I have also made arrangements to send you one shilling per day while I am serving, that is to say every week you will receive 7 shillings out of my pay. You might as well have it and don't work so hard while you get the money.'*



Another motivation was money itself. Page 8 of the letter lets it slip that before joining up Jack had resorted to the pawn shop out of necessity:

*'Dearest Biddy. I am sending you back the two pawn tickets. Biddy don't think bad of me for doing so. When you get the money run into Dublin and see about it. Tell the man that I have gone to the front and I would not like to lose it. Biddy, for God's sake don't forget to see to them both. How I should be so unlucky as to have them in there? No matter, God is good and we will be together again.'*

The letter is peppered with religious references. Jack asks Biddy to keep her mother in good spirits saying *'tell her to keep the heart up as we will meet again with the help of God and his holy mother.'*

This young man never once mentions the King or nationalism or any other political allegiance. His attachment is to his young woman and to his Roman Catholic upbringing. It's doubtful

even that Jack went to war to see the world. He's only gone a few days and hasn't yet reached the front yet already he is writing:

*'I miss my cup of tea and rasher.'*

The love story between Jack and Biddy didn't have a happy ending. On the 14th August 1914, just four days after the letter was posted, Jack landed in Rouen with his fellow members of the Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Battalion. His war was to last less than ten weeks. By the time he got caught up in his last day of fighting on 27th October, his Battalion had lost practically all of its officers.

On the day Jack died, only 46 men and two officers survived out of the group of 250 men and five remaining officers that had started out that morning. The day that Jack died was the first recorded date of the use of an early form of chemical warfare by the enemy. His body was never recovered.

Two months later on December 27<sup>th</sup> 1914 the Wicklow People newspaper reported that official news of the death of Private John Madden had been conveyed to his father Justin in Little Bray.

Less public record information is available about Jack's bereaved girlfriend Biddy Whelan. We do know that the Army lost the record of Jack's will but officials accepted the love letter as his intention that Biddy would be the heir to his property. Sources tell me that Biddy later married and had her own family. However it's hard not to believe that the loss of Jack Madden in such a brutal fashion wouldn't have left its mark on Biddy throughout her life.

## The Search for Mary's son Private Brien

When I travelled to Ypres in Belgium earlier this year I knew that it would be impossible to visit the memorial places of all the Wicklow men that are known to be in Belgium.

I decided to find the Belgian buried sons of those Wicklow families whose mothers had lost more than one son to the war. There are actually four such families. Two are from Protestant religions and two are from Roman Catholic backgrounds. All came from relatively modest homes and in each case the lost brothers died in different countries.<sup>6</sup>

One of the graves I was particularly keen to find belongs to Private Joseph Brien, son of Mary and Michael Brien from Ravenswell Row and later Green Park Road in Bray.

Joe Brien enlisted on St Patrick's Day 1915, just five days after his 19th birthday. Nineteen was the minimum age for enlisting to go overseas. This young man who had probably never travelled any further than Dublin on the train from Bray was immediately sent to fight in France. His brother Michael was a year older and also joined up. Michael died first, in France in August 1916. By then the political scene in Ireland was changing. The execution of the 1916 Rising Leaders had hardened attitudes at home.

The world war which many had expected to end quickly was into its second year. Many soldiers and their families were beginning to question the sense of sending so many young men to their deaths on foreign battlefields. For many of the young men the adventure was turning into a horror story, with their comrades and friends lying dead and wounded around them.

It is very clear from the military records<sup>7</sup> that Private Joseph Brien suffered a great deal during the war. He was hospitalised on at least four occasions, first with shellshock shortly after he arrived in France, later with physical injuries. On one of these occasions, when suffering from a leg injury, he managed to be transferred to the Princess Patricia Hospital in Bray. It must have been a great relief for his parents to have him close by for that six week period in 1917.

Mary and Michael Brien were to see their son just once more before his death, when he returned to Bray on leave for a week in April 1918. During that week of leave in 1918 there was an incident with a superior officer which ironically almost saved the life of Private Brien. It is easy to imagine the sense of frustration that this young man felt more than three years into a senseless war that resulted in 16 million deaths and 20 million injured people.

The source of the dispute was not recorded but whatever the reason, Joe Brien struck this superior officer. In the official record it seems that the physical act was considered secondary to the offence of using insubordinate language. We can only imagine what Joe said to the Officer. Private Brien was convicted before a military court and received a sentence of 12 months detention for his words and actions. Had he managed to serve that sentence he would have been spared from a worse fate.

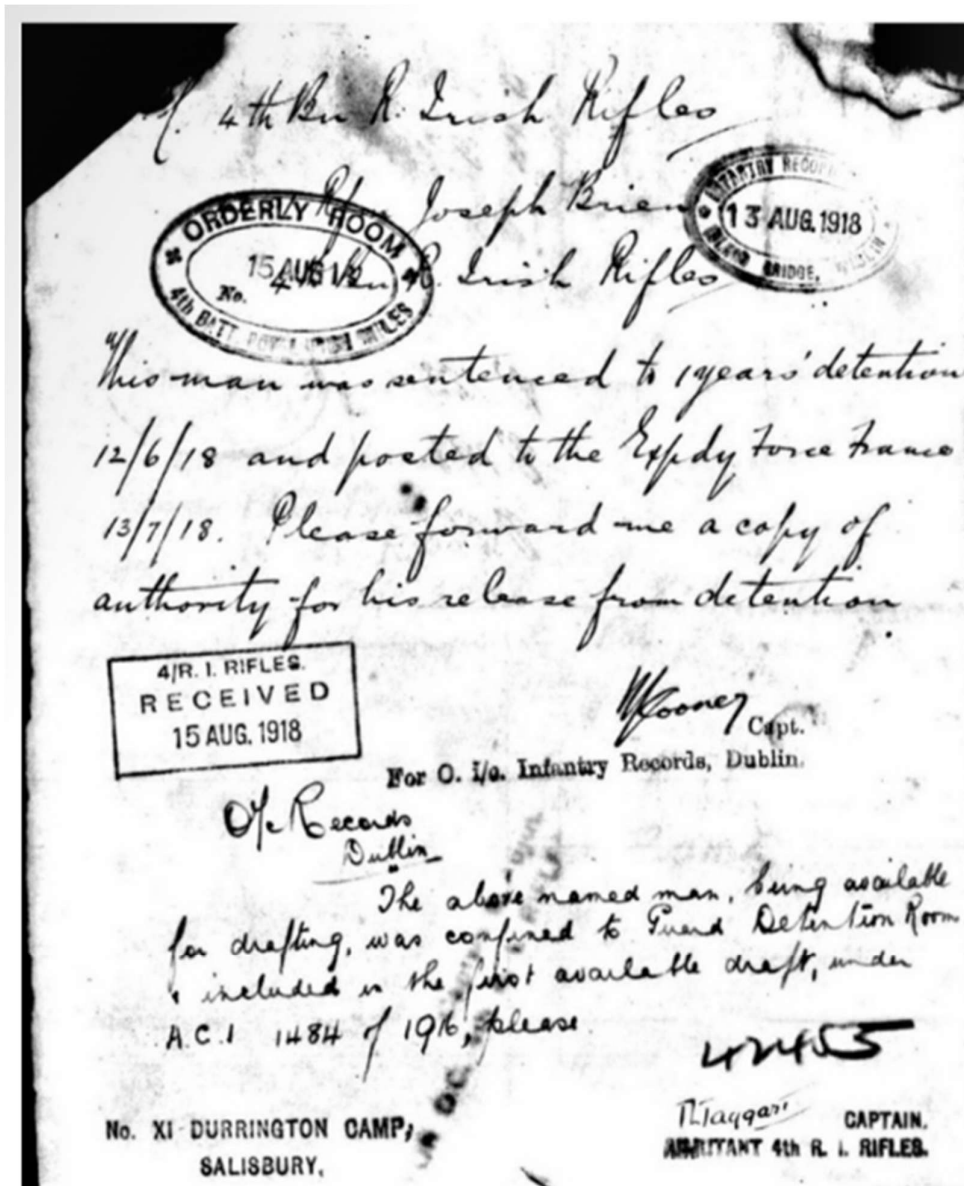
Under these circumstances I am quite sure that Joe Brien's mother Mary would have been pleased to see him in prison. But Private Brien served just weeks of his prison sentence when he was suddenly released and compulsorily transferred from his Royal Irish Fusiliers regiment to a battalion of the North Irish Horse regiment fighting in Ypres. As it turned out, young Joe Brien had been handed a death sentence.

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By all accounts the situation was pretty desperate in Ypres. According to the records, on the morning that Joe Brien was fatally wounded his battalion had no food. The army diary discloses that the men were sent out to fight in the cold without any breakfast because rations had become so depleted.

Joe Brien died of his wounds in Ypres on a cold day in early October 1918 barely a month before the end of the war. He is buried in a graveyard close to where he died.

Earlier this year I had the great honour of visiting Joe Brien's grave<sup>8</sup> in a small well-tended cemetery of simple white gravestones just outside the beautiful town of Ypres. Joe's grave plot is at the boundary hedge of the cemetery, overlooking fields and countryside. He is buried under the shadow of a large lilac bush.



### Private Joseph Brien's release order

I left some heather from Co. Wicklow on Joe's grave. Earlier that same day, in honour of all of the men from Co. Wicklow who died in World War I, I laid a wreath of Wicklow heather, handmade in Bray by local florist Anne Clarke, at the Island of Ireland Memorial Park in Messines.

It is unlikely that Joe Brien's mother Mary ever received a similar opportunity to visit her son's grave in Belgium or his brother's grave in France. In fact, Mrs Brien even had a struggle when it came to receiving the customary medals for her two sons. It was Mary Brien who confronted the red tape and filled in the soulless bureaucratic forms that remain to this day on her son Joe's military file. And it is in her hand that we see a poignant note on the receipt she was

To The M. Brien  
58 Green Park Rd.  
Bray

28 SEP 1920

Kindly sign your name in the space below acknowledging the receipt by you of the "Memorial Scroll" and letter from His Majesty the King - issued in commemoration of your late son Joe 42455

Rank Pte Name Joseph Brien  
9th Bn. Royal Irish Fusiliers.

13 SEP 1920

Lieut. For Officer & Infantry Recor.

"Memorial Scroll" and letter received.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Sign M. Brien

I have received no medals for either of my sons M. Brien

25 SEP 1920

Receipt for Private Joseph Brien's 'Memorial Scroll'

asked to return for the 'Memorial Scroll' that the Army sent in her son Joe's name:

'I have received no medals for either of my sons. M Brien.'<sup>9</sup>

These two Bray women, Mary Brien and Biddy Whelan represent hundreds of thousands of women throughout Ireland who were left to fill in the forms and pick up the pieces of the fragmented lives that resulted from World War I.

I am sure that these women would have become very confused at the subsequent disregard paid to their deceased and injured menfolk by generations to come.

Likewise, I am quite sure that Mary and Biddy and all of the other Irish women affected by World War I in this county would have taken pride in the level of remembrance and discussion and acceptance that this centenary year has inspired in Irish people.

## The World War I Memorial at Woodenbridge

Last week as I stood at the Woodenbridge amongst the 1200 names from Co. Wicklow, most who never came home, I thought of the people they left behind. I thought of how proud Mary Brien and Biddy Whelan and Bridget



Anne Ferris in Woodenbridge

### **MRS LE BLOND'S WAR**

Sherry would have been to see the names of their loved ones carved in Wicklow granite in such a beautiful setting.

The real value in all of this remembering is to ensure that history does not repeat itself during our future lifetimes. To do this memorial in effectively we must remember World War I from all perspectives, and that includes from the perspective of the hundreds of thousands of Irish women whose lives it affected.

## **References**

These follow below. Credit is due to the staff of the Wicklow County Library Service whose work was of great assistance in the preparation of this paper. It was a privilege for me in summer 2014 to be involved in the political process that led to the lifting of the recruitment moratorium in the library service to ensure the continuance of the much used Local History service.

The slides used in the presentation of this paper can be accessed at [www.greystonesahs.org](http://www.greystonesahs.org).

- [1] The Irish Times 18th August 1917
- [2] The Irish Builder 22nd February 1919
- [3] AWM145 Roll of Honour Cards 1914-1918
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- [5] National Archives of Ireland NAI /2002/119
- [6] Burrell Tom, The Wicklow War Dead, 2009
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# Mrs Le Blond's War

From the First Shots to Post-War Reconstruction

Rosemary Raughter

In July 1914 Elizabeth (Lizzie) Le Blond was fifty-four years old. Born in Dublin in 1860, she was brought up at Killincarrick House near Greystones, inherited the Hawkins-Whitshed estate on the death of her father when she was eleven, and at eighteen married the famous soldier, adventurer and best-selling author Captain Fred Burnaby. Widowed a few years later, she went on to enjoy a distinguished career as an alpinist and pioneer photographer, while also overseeing the development for housing of part of her Greystones property.<sup>1</sup> Having retired from climbing in her forties, Lizzie could reasonably look forward to a less onerous life of writing, travel and public service. But her world, like that of countless others, was about to change more radically than she could ever have imagined, and she herself would play an active role in the tumultuous events which lay ahead.

As the political crisis in Europe intensified during the summer of 1914, Lizzie was holidaying with her invalid son, Arthur, in the fashionable Swiss mountain resort of Flims. But the festivities were increasingly overshadowed by rumours of war, and by 26th July the hotel's



Lizzie Le Blond (from Day in, Day out)

international guests, Lizzie among them, began to make plans to return home.

On 1<sup>st</sup> August, as she prepared to leave, a German friend, Herr Stilling, sent word to ask if he might share her carriage as far as Basle. Lizzie consented 'with pleasure', and thus, as she noted with amusement, 'started my war-time experiences by assisting an enemy subject to mobilize, while he helped an enemy subject to regain her home!

At Basle, where she had to wait several hours for her train to Boulogne, she and Stilling dined together on a

veranda overlooking the Rhine. The streets were tranquil and deserted, window-boxes were bedecked with flowers, and the evening was warm and still. Suddenly, Lizzie's ears caught a sound which she could not identify. 'What is that?' she asked Stilling. 'Very quietly' he replied: 'Artillery!' What they heard, Lizzie firmly believed, were the first guns of the Great War. There was no time to be lost, and by 11.45 pm - just a quarter of a hour before civilian traffic was due to cease with the beginning of French mobilization - Lizzie's train moved slowly out of Basle station for what would normally have been a journey of eight hours. In fact, it took two days to

<sup>1</sup> For further details of the life and career of Elizabeth Le Blond (nee Hawkins- Whitshed), see Rosemary Raughter, 'The judge, the admiral and the lady alpinist: the Hawkins-Whitshed family of Killincarrick and Greystones', Greystones: its buildings and history, vol I, 2012, pp 37-42.

### MRS LE BLOND'S WAR

reach Paris, and it was on 4th August, while Lizzie was still there, that Britain declared war on Germany. Two days later she was back in London, where she found 'everything, or so it seemed, just as usual.'<sup>2</sup>

During the autumn of 1914, as young men flocked to enlist in a war expected to be over by Christmas, women sought to make their own contribution, and Lizzie, with her usual energy, was quick to volunteer her services. On 19th September she was one of the speakers at a 'very successful recruiting meeting held in Tunbridge Wells, and produced a recruiting pamphlet which was subsequently translated into Italian. She also served for several months on the committee of the Rotherhithe branch of the Tipperary Club, a nationwide organisation set up to provide support, instruction and entertainment to the wives of newly-enlisted men, visiting and lecturing there on several occasions.<sup>3</sup> Anxious to play a more active role, she also applied for a post at a British Red Cross hospital, but was rejected on the grounds of age. Shortly afterwards, however, reading a newspaper report on the lack of nursing staff in French hospitals, she determined to see if she could find work across the Channel. With remarkably little difficulty, she made her way to Dieppe and, despite her lack of nursing experience, was taken on as an orderly at the College Military Hospital, a large, improvised establishment, set up to deal with the influx of wounded following the first Battle of the Marne. Her first assignment was in a ward full of German prisoners. Later she was moved to a fifty-bed ward at another hospital and, with the arrival of more trained medical staff, was allocated 'trifling jobs', such as making beds, washing patients and helping them with their meals, administering medicines, taking temperatures and sterilizing instruments. Infinitely patient, on one occasion she was reported to have re-arranged a wounded man's arm fifty-two times in an effort to make him comfortable. Unlike some of the 'very starchy English nurses, she was able to establish an easy rapport with the wounded French poilus, sympathising with their dislike of regimentation, listening to their tales of army and home life, writing letters for them, organising concerts, reading to them and supplying them with books and papers. Although her 'indifferent French was, she admitted, unequal to the challenge of translating the jokes in Punch, she was able to supply her patients with French versions of *The Riddle of the Sands* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, reserving the latter, a particular favourite, for those depressed after operations.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the demands of hospital work, with the already heavy influx of casualties swelled during 1916 by the battles of Verdun and the Somme, Lizzie still managed to enjoy a busy social life at Dieppe. Her companions during her leisure breaks included English and French officers stationed in the vicinity, among whom she found her distant cousin and a former High Sheriff of Co Carlow, Major Sir Richard Pierce Butler of the Remount Department, who showed her the horses which were awaiting

delivery to the Front, and the 'charming gardens' of the chateau in which his section was quartered.<sup>5</sup>

In late 1916 Lizzie returned home for what she herself vaguely described as 'family reasons', although other reports suggest that her departure was due partly to health concerns - the strain of the work was beginning to tell on her - and partly to a conviction that she could do more useful work back in London. A frequent visitor to France before the war, her experiences there had intensified her love for the country and the people, and fostered a determination to

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<sup>2</sup> Account of Lizzie's homeward journey from Mrs Aubrey Le Blond, *Day in, day out*, 1928, pp 180-186. Lizzie was mistaken in her belief that she had heard 'the first guns of the Great War': the first shots were, in fact, fired over six hundred miles away, on 29 July 1914, by Austro-Hungarian naval vessels shelling Belgrade, the Serbian capital.

<sup>3</sup> Kent and Sussex Courier, 25 Sept 1914; Ladies' Alpine Club Report, 1916.

<sup>4</sup> On Lizzie's nursing career, see *Day in, day out*, pp 188-193, and reminiscences of Mabel Pattinson (nee Capper) in 'In memoriam: Mrs Aubrey Le Blond', Ladies' Alpine

<sup>5</sup> *Day in, day out*, p. 191.

do all that she could to encourage Anglo-French friendship and understanding. Through her involvement in the Ladies' Alpine Club (LAC), she had already set in hand a scheme to raise funds for a motor kitchen to be sent to the Chasseurs Alpins, an elite infantry unit of the French army, currently fighting in the mountainous Vosges region. The fact that the regiment included many guides from Chamonix and the Dauphine guaranteed a sympathetic response from British climbers, and the appeal attracted generous support both from the LAC and the Alpine Club. LAC members donated £150 10s 0d of the total cost of £788 8s 0d, while a further £32 was realised by the sale of tickets for a lecture, Mountaineering from a Woman's Point of View, given by Lizzie herself at the Grafton Galleries on 12th May 1915. The motor kitchen, especially adapted for the rough terrain in which it would operate, and so that it could, when required, be converted into an ambulance, was displayed for a few days at the De Dion Bouton showroom in London before being handed over by the British Ambulance Committee to the French Red Cross.<sup>6</sup>

Lizzie, therefore, was already well acquainted with the work of the British Ambulance Committee (BAC), and shortly after her return to England took up the post of head of its appeal department, with responsibility for raising the necessary funding of £1,200 a week. Set up in the early days of the war, the BAC was a voluntary organisation, dedicated to providing ambulance transport for the French army. The first contingent of vehicles set off for France in December 1914, and by April 1915 three convoys, each of twenty-five vehicles, each with a volunteer driver, had been sent out to the French sections of the Western Front. By 1918 the BAC was sponsoring five convoys, each consisting of twenty motor ambulances, a travelling workshop, two lorries and staff cars, as well as a motorcycle section, consisting of ten motorcycle side-cars with stretchers, and its personnel in France numbered about 300 men.<sup>77</sup>

Herbert Ward, one of the early volunteers, published an account of the six months he spent as a BAC driver on the Vosges Front. In his diary entry for 29 September 1915 he recorded the danger and discomfort facing soldiers and volunteers alike:

*'We came in my own car, with two French officers - four long hours in the cold and wet, with shells continually screaming overhead and occasionally dropping around us ... We floundered about in the dark, loading wounded men into each ambulance as it arrived. The poor chaps were lying about on their stretchers in the mud - out in the pouring rain.'*

Many of them had lain there for hours, and they were ... all thoroughly drenched. Now and then we could see quite clearly by the light of shells exploding nearby - a dismal and forlorn picture it made. What suffering! Ugh! A big shell has just exploded pretty close by - the ground is still shaking. It's very cold ... We are within three hundred and fifty yards of the Germans. The doctors are busy operating all the time in little underground "dug-outs". I hear only the sounds of groaning and the wicked shell music.'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ladies' Alpine Club Report, 1916, pp 21-22. On Lizzie's involvement with the LAC, see Rosemary Raughter, 'Mountaineering from a woman's point of view:

<sup>7</sup> Lizzie Le Blond and the early days of the Ladies' Alpine Club', Journal of the Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society, volume 4, 2015 (forthcoming). <sup>7</sup> Day in, day out, pp 193-194. For information on the operations of the British Ambulance Committee, see Herbert Ward, Mr Poilu: notes and sketches with the fighting French, 1916, and Laurence Binyon, For dauntless France: an account of British aid to the French wounded and victims of the war, 1918.

<sup>8</sup> Ward, Mr Poilu, pp 38-41.



Poster for fundraising lantern lecture given by Lizzie

carrying pictures of a shell-damaged ambulance, and set up displays featuring the same ambulance, together with a model of a war-ravaged French village and captured German tanks and guns. Lizzie herself gave a number of illustrated lectures on the committee's work, one of which, held at Bexhill in December 1917, brought in £74. In appealing for funds, she extolled the close co-operation between French and British which the effort entailed, the 'coolness and courage' of the crews, which had been recognised by the award of no less than sixty-five French military decorations for valour, and the achievement of the service to date: in one eight-day period, she reported, a single convoy of twenty-five ambulances had transported 11,000 wounded, and a total of 400,000 men had been moved by British Ambulance Committee vehicles, 'which went to the very edge of the battlefield'.<sup>10</sup>

Lizzie was in London on Armistice Day, 11th November 1918, and from the windows of the BAC office witnessed the vast crowds which spilled out onto the streets to celebrate the end of four years of carnage and suffering. With no further need for her fund-raising services, she accepted an invitation from the War Office to lecture to troops awaiting demobilization, and throughout the exceptionally severe winter of 1918-19 travelled to various commands in

An energetic and imaginative fundraiser, Lizzie cajoled donations to the BAC from bodies as various as the insurers Lloyds and the Yorkshire miners, both of which contributed about £40,000 in a single year, and organised a succession of money-making 'stunts'. One of the most successful of these was a week-long flower fair held in Trafalgar Square, which was patronised by royalty, cabinet ministers, the Lord Mayor *'in full toggery'*, the equally resplendent Bishop of London, who bestowed his blessing on ambulances about to depart for France, and a party of trade unionists who helped to marshal the crowds and collect contributions. In all, as Lizzie proudly recorded, the event raised more than £14,000.<sup>9</sup> The BAC also received revenue from the sale of postcards

<sup>9</sup> Day in, day out, pp 194-196.

<sup>10</sup> On BAC fundraising efforts, see Sussex Agricultural Express, 23 November 1917; Hastings and St Leonard's Observer, 15 December 1917; Kent and Sussex Courier, 15 and 22 February 1918.

Britain and France. Transport difficulties coal continuing accommodation was in short supply, malnutrition and the influenza epidemic sapped morale, and the officers assigned to manage the lecture programme had little experience of their role or of lecturers' requirements. The lanterns available for her use were often unsatisfactory - one filling the hall with smoke and fumes before breaking down completely, another burst into flames in the course of her lecture. Attendance was compulsory, and Lizzie worried that her audience might be restive, but won the young men's goodwill by permitting them to smoke during her talk, and promising to hasten to her conclusion if they indicated, by shuffling their feet loudly, that they were bored.<sup>11</sup>

With her lecture tour at an end, Lizzie determined to make what she herself described as a pilgrimage to the French battlegrounds. Her first destination was Ypres, the site of some of the most intense fighting throughout the war.



Ypres salient looking towards Menin Gate (photo: Lizzie Le Blond)

With no motor transport available, she set off on what proved to be a tedious journey, from Montreuil to Calais by slow train, and from there by even slower stages to Hazebrouck, where she spent a miserably cold night in a room with linen instead of glass across the windows and a shattered ceiling. Leaving at 6am the following morning, she boarded a train for Poperinghe, nine miles from Ypres, together with a few soldiers and numbers of returning refugees, and was fortunate to find there an officer who knew one of her innumerable cousins and could arrange accommodation for her. Best of all, he was due to go on a tour of inspection to Ypres that same afternoon, and was willing to take her with him.

Despite her personal experience of the effects of conflict, it is clear that Lizzie was deeply affected by what she saw on that excursion, and her account in her memoirs is perhaps the most powerful piece of writing she ever produced. At Ypres, not a single human being was to be found. All was in ruins - by the medieval Cloth Hall, a 'shapeless mass', her companion shared some of his own memories of the conflict, and from the Menin Gate, the crossing point through which hundreds of thousands of allied troops had passed on their way to the Front, they could see the ramparts and the dug-outs on the plain beyond. A couple of miles on, past

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<sup>11</sup> Day in, day out, pp 131-136.

### MRS LE BLOND'S WAR

Hellfire Corner, they reached Hooze, the site of fierce fighting over four years, now nothing but a name, the ground shell-torn, honeycombed with holes full of stagnant water. Further on, they came to an area which had not yet been cleared. Here, the ground:

*'was churned to an incredible extent. Fragments of cloth, scraps of metal, ghastly remains, the nature of which one hardly dared to guess at, were pressed and rolled into what seemed a solid mass of congealed mud.'*

Near Messines they turned back, afraid of getting lost in the desolate and depopulated wasteland, and turned towards the village of Neuve Eglise. Here too were ruins, and the shattered church, standing on a slight rise, 'the blue sky showing through its slender arches, was the only beautiful war ruin' which she saw during her entire trip. Returning to Poperinghe at the end of that first afternoon's tour of the battlefields, Lizzie reflected on the impact on her:

*'Not till one has stood beside those tortured trenches, and seen how the salient runs out under observation from a half-circle of hills like the edge of a saucer, can one realize what flesh and blood, clothing a heroic spirit, has endured. And even then one cannot imagine more than a mere fraction of what it must have been when the hell of conflict was at its fiercest.'*<sup>12</sup>

Later she would visit other places whose names had become synonymous with conflict and death - Bethune, La Bassée, Loos, Lens, Vimy Ridge and Arras. All were in ruins - Lens 'a rubbish heap ... said to be the most completely obliterated of any French town', Arras a mass of broken masonry, its inhabitants sheltering in cellars from the devastation above ground, Vimy the site of over 10,000 Canadian casualties in 1917 and soon to be earmarked as the site of a memorial to the Canadian fallen. But already, refugees were returning, finding shelter in the ruins and beginning to reconstruct lives shattered and transformed by four years of war.<sup>13</sup>

As her train approached Reims, Lizzie searched the horizon for a first sight of its Cathedral of Notre Dame, its towers rising above the tiled roofs of the town, as she remembered it from visits before the war. Repeatedly shelled by the enemy in the course of the war, the cathedral had taken almost three hundred hits, and had become a potent symbol both of French suffering and of German barbarism. Shocked by the destruction through which she passed, Lizzie was yet more deeply affected by the ruinous state of the great church, its roof and glorious stained glass shattered, the neighbouring Archbishop's Palace razed to the ground, trees already pushing up through the rubble of surrounding buildings.<sup>14</sup> Already, however, work had begun to clear the debris and repair and restore one of France's most historic buildings. It was a task which would take almost two decades to complete, and one in which Lizzie herself, although she did not yet know it, would play a notable part.

Having begun her tour of the battlefields at Ypres, indelibly associated with the British war effort, Lizzie ended it at Verdun, site of the longest and one of the bloodiest battles of the war, and a symbol of French valour and resistance. Visiting its famous citadel with its seven kilometres of galleries, its powder magazines and weapon stores, its telegraph and telephone exchanges, its bakery, mill, kitchens and storerooms, Lizzie found it 'an amazing place ... the most tremendous example of a dug-out which the mind can conceive ... a veritable city'<sup>15</sup>.

What Lizzie witnessed during that post-war tour of the battlefields profoundly moved her, and dictated much of the future course of her life. Back in London, she applied her formidable

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<sup>12</sup> Day in, day out, pp 200-202.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp 202-203.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp 203-204.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

energies to the British arm of the international Rheims Cathedral Restoration Fund<sup>16</sup>, and in August 1924 was one of the members of a delegation which travelled to the city, where they handed over a donation of 443,000 francs to the archbishop, Cardinal Luçon, and presented a Book of Life, in which were inscribed the names of the dead in whose name donations had been made.<sup>17</sup> The cardinal, who had won worldwide admiration for his courage in remaining in the city throughout almost the entire war, was by then over eighty, but Lizzie was charmed by his energy and enthusiasm as he conducted her over his ravaged cathedral,

'showing me recent discoveries of an ancient structure beneath the nave, leaping over yawning gaps, his cassock held aloft, handing me down slippery steps into clayey depths, and enthusiastic and vigorous as a youth.'<sup>18</sup>

In 1927 she returned to witness the first High Mass to be celebrated in the cathedral since September 1914. From her place under the pulpit, Lizzie heard the Cardinal as he preached for half an hour 'without pause or hesitancy.' As vigorous as ever, 'he seemed the youngest of the train of bishops supporting him' - indeed, in the following year, he would make the news again when he went up in an aeroplane over the city, afterwards declaring his 'great pleasure' in being able to see his beloved cathedral and the archiepiscopal gardens from the air.<sup>19</sup>

Although the work of the Restoration Fund was largely complete by 1924, Lizzie maintained her commitment to Anglo-French friendship at a time when wartime amity was already beginning to be replaced by the mistrust and suspicion which had traditionally marred relations between the two countries. In 1925 she became one of the founding members and secretary of the Anglo-French Luncheon Club, which fostered contacts between notable French visitors to London and their British peers. *'Thus', as Lizzie put it, 'a literary man meets writers, a soldier finds himself amidst a bevy of field-m Marshals, a merchant is swamped in a flood of British industrialists, an archaeologist buried in the dust of our excavators.'*<sup>20</sup>

Guests over the years included authors Paul Valéry and André Maurois, the composer Maurice Ravel, and military leader and colonial administrator Marshal Lyautey, for whom Lizzie had a particular admiration, and whose Letters from Tonquin she translated into English. The Anglo-French Luncheon Committee, and Lizzie personally, were also instrumental in having a statue of the French wartime leader Marshal Foch erected in Grosvenor Gardens, near London's Victoria Station, and she was present when this was unveiled by the Prince of Wales, in the presence of the Marshal's widow and two daughters, on 6th June 1930.<sup>21</sup>

Lizzie died on 17th July 1934, having worked 'almost up to the last unobtrusively and modestly for the causes which she had at heart'<sup>22</sup>, and the obituaries which followed recorded a life full of adventure and achievement, among them her efforts on behalf of Anglo-French co-operation and understanding. Only a year before her death these services were acknowledged by the French Government with the award of the Cross of the Legion of Honour<sup>23</sup> - the only one of her many distinctions to be recorded on her tombstone in London's Brompton Cemetery.

<sup>16</sup> On Lizzie's role in the Rheims Cathedral Restoration Fund, see The Times, 14 July and 20 Nov 1920; 16 and 23 April, 14 July and 3 Dec 1921; 27 Oct 1923; 16 March and 3 July 1924.

<sup>17</sup> The Times, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1924

<sup>18</sup> The Times, 30 May 1930; Day in, day out, pp 204-205.

<sup>19</sup> Day in, day out, p. 205; Nottingham Evening Post, 19 June 1928.

<sup>20</sup> Day in, day out, p. 249. On her involvement with the Anglo-French Luncheon Club, see contribution of V C O'Connor and Colonel H Worsley-Gough in 'In memoriam: Mrs Aubrey Le Blond', pp 13-16.

<sup>21</sup> Western Morning News, 6 June 1930; Nottingham Evening Post, 6 June 1930; Western Daily Press, 6 June 1930.

<sup>22</sup> The Times, 30 July 1934.

<sup>23</sup> On the award of the Legion d'Honneur, see The Times, 13 April 1933.

### **MRS LE BLOND'S WAR**

While commemorations of the Great War understandably focus on the men who fought and died, it is worth recording too the significant part played by women, both in the uniformed services and as civilian volunteers. Lizzie's story is a record of one Wicklow woman's experience of war, and the extent to which it determined the future course of her life, but it is also a reminder of the diversity and value of that broader contribution, and of women's willingness to accept the challenges, the hardships, and the opportunities presented by war and its aftermath.

# The Accident that Time Forgot

The Loss of the MV Princess Victoria - January 1953

James Scannell

## Introduction

During the second half of the 20th century one of the greatest shipping industry changes that occurred was the replacement of the traditional Lo-Lo (Lift on-Lift off) cargo ships, which relied on cranes, and gangs of stevedores (dockers) for loading and discharging cargos, by container ships. These carried cargo, loaded at the despatch point, in metal containers built to internationally agreed standard specifications, which dispensed with the need for stevedores and speeded up discharging and loading times through the use of specialised cargo handling equipment. Such an approach made it possible for container loads to be transported by road or rail from the quayside to the point of delivery for unloading by personnel there.

Another change around the same time was the wide spread introduction of the Ro-Ro (Roll on-Roll off) ferry enabling motor vehicles to driven on and off at ports. Prior to the development of this type of vessel, motor vehicles had to have their fuel tanks drained and electrical systems disconnected before being craned on board conventional ferry/cargo ships, carried as cargo, and then off loaded by crane at ports of arrival in what was a tedious and time consuming process. This is how things were done in Rosslare, Co. Wexford, and other ports until the Ro-Ro type ferry came into service.

## The Introduction of the Ro-Ro Ferry

The Ro-Ro ship concept is not as new as people may think. The first Ro-Ro vessels were designed in the 1850's by Sir Thomas Bouch, designer of the Tay Bridge spanning the Firth of Tay in Scotland. These Ro-Ro ships had railway tracks fixed to their decks and were designed to carry trains across rivers, with the Firth of Forth ferry being one of the first to enter service. However, once the rivers were bridged, the need for ferries declined and they were not used in Britain after the 1890's.

Ferries to carry railway rolling stock were used in the U.S.A. after the American Civil War in New York harbour, on the Great Lakes and the St. Clair River in Detroit, and by the last quarter of the 19th century ferries of this type were a familiar sight in San Francisco and Puget Sound on the U.S. west coast, in addition to other locations in Canada, Russia, on the Baltic, and Japan. By the start of the 20th century, ferries had become important adjuncts to railway systems particularly those which were discontinuous due to geography.

During World War 1 train ferries were used to convey rolling stock and locomotives between Britain and France for military use as the railway gauge was the same. After this conflict the first Anglo-Continental freight-only railway ferry service commenced operation between Harwich, U.K., and Zeebrugge, Holland, on 24th April 1924 while a passenger train service between Dover, U.K. and Dunkirk, France



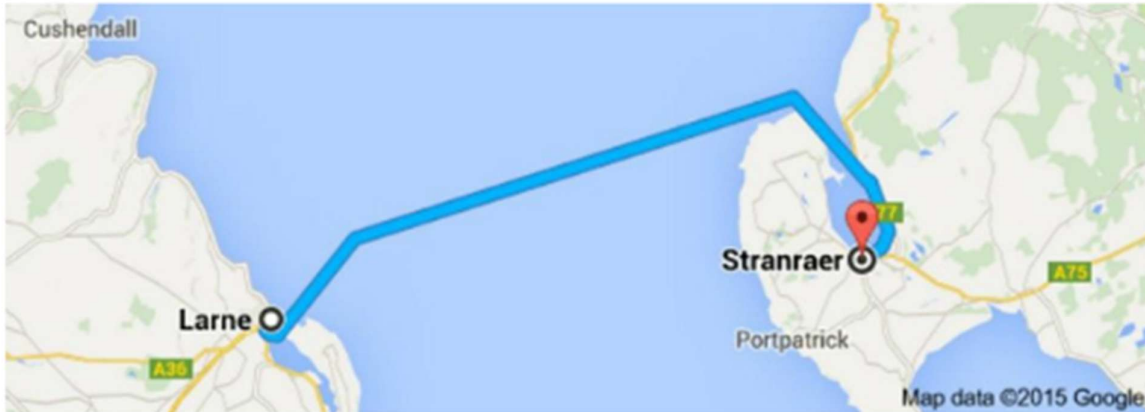
Sir Thomas Bouch

commenced operation on 10th October 1926. These services were suspended for the duration of World War 2 and resumed when this conflict was over.

But in the post-war years this Ro-Ro concept was adapted for use by some merchant ships making short sea ferry crossings with the MV Princess Victoria operated by British Railways on the Stranraer, Scotland, to Larne, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland, route being one of the earliest of these vessels.

## **The Larne, Co Antrim - Stranraer, Scotland Route**

On 27 June 1872 the Larne and Stranraer Steam Packet Company introduced the paddle steamer Princess Louise on this route, the first of 10 ships used on this route by the company.



In 1923 the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS) took over this ferry route and in 1939 introduced a new ferry, MV Princess Victoria, with a car deck for up to 80 vehicles, fitted with doors at the stern so that cars could be driven on at the port of embarkation, turned around on an internal turntable and then driven off at the point of disembarkation. Within eight weeks of the outbreak of World War 2 on 3rd September 1939, this ferry was pressed into military service and was later sunk in the Humber Estuary on 21st May 1940 while on war service with the loss of 36 lives.

In 1944 the LMS decided to replace this ferry with a new one, also named Princess Victoria, and an identical copy of the earlier 1939 ferry design, with William Denny and Brothers, Dumbarton, being contract worth £313,000 for her construction. The fourth ferry to carry the Princess Victoria name, she was launched on 27th August 1946 and delivered to Stranraer on 8th March 1947.

## **MV Princess Victoria Specifications**

This MV Princess Victoria was of steel single hull construction, 309 ft. 8 ins. in length, 48 ft. in breadth at the main deck and a tonnage of 2694.24 tons, fitted with 9 watertight bulkheads extending to the main deck. The ship's 2 propellers were driven by 7-cylinder Sulzer diesel marine engines built by William Denny and Brothers with a rated output of 5100 brake horsepower and 265 rpm (revolutions per minute) which operated at a normal speed of between 230 rpm and 240 rpm, giving it an average speed of 18 knots (roughly 25 miles per hour). 3 diesel driven 150-kilowatt direct current generators provided all the power for electrical services including deck



**MV Princess Victoria**

machinery, heating, and mains electrical items such as lighting etc. Bow and stern rudders, controlled from the bridge were fitted, with the former bolted in place and ready for release by a wheel located in the forecastle to enable her dock stern first in harbour. A Marconi 12-watt radio transmitter, which operated in Morse or wireless telegraphy, provided radio communications. Radar was also fitted.

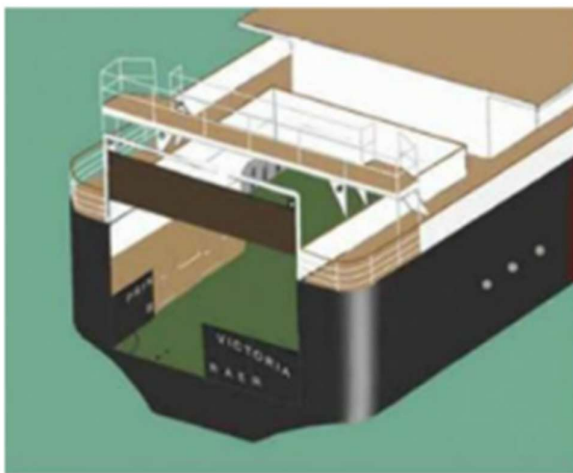
The main feature of this ferry was her open stern to allow vehicles to be driven on and off the 170 ft. long car deck which ran the full length of the ship. Located in the middle of the car deck was a turntable to enable vehicles driven on engine first to be turned around so that they could drive off engine first if required. 18 scuppers (drains) varying in size from 21/2 ins. to 31/2 ins. were fitted on both sides of the car deck to drain surface water.

Across the stern of the car deck were 2 steel doors, each 5 ft. 6 ins. in height which closed it off to the sea. These doors opened inwards on each other when open and were held in place by three steel stays when closed, one in the middle of each door and one where they met, and could be locked by dropping steel bolts into the deck. However these doors meant that the car deck was open to the elements, unlike today when ferry car decks are totally enclosed and sealed from the weather. And, as events later turned out, this open portion of the car deck at the stern was to be this vessel's weakest link contributor to her subsequent loss. In 1949 a vertical steel sliding door 4ft. 3ins. in height, which could be lowered on top of the existing two doors, was added with the aim of trying to reduce the amount of spray coming over the top of them.

In accordance with shipping requirements at that time, the MV Princess Victoria was equipped with 6 lifeboats - 3 on each side - each 26 ft. in length. One of the lifeboats was motor driven and had a capacity of 53 people while the other 5 had a capacity of 56 people each, a total of 333 lifeboat places. Other lifesaving equipment carried included 30 buoyant seats which could hold 1440 people, 12 lifebuoys, 2 life rafts, and 1566 life jackets.

From 1949 to 1953 the MV Princess Victoria was involved in four incidents, two of which should have alerted the ship's owners to the inherent danger the open car deck posed to her.

### Incident 1: 22nd November 1949



**Stern layout (showing vertical steel plate)**

The first accident occurred while making the Larne-Stranraer crossing with 16 milk tankers on board, each weighing 10 tons and holding between 1500-2000 gallons of milk. The force 8-9 gale blowing at the time caused the ship to roll from side to side, resulting in some of the tankers sliding towards the port side. Two of the tankers overturned on their side, their tanks broke loose from their chassis resulting in the ship developing a list of 10 degrees. Senior Officer Leslie Ulsworth ran onto the car deck and decided that the immediate priority was to dispose of the milk in the hope of reducing the list. He opened the valves on four of the tanks and allowed up to 6000 gallons of milk to flood onto the car deck

which was soon covered to a depth of 9 ins. The milk mixed with the seawater that had come already onto the car deck via the stern doors, as well as petrol from ruptured fuel tanks of the tankers with some of this mixture then beginning to drain into the engine room leading to the

### **CANON ROBERT JENNINGS**

development of an extremely dangerous situation. Senior Officer Ulsworth mobilised crew members with brooms to sweep the mixture towards the scuppers [drains], a process that took upwards of 40 minutes to complete.

## **Incident 2: 20th September 1950**

The second accident to this ferry occurred while berthing stern first at Stranraer when she failed to pull up in time resulting in her stern striking the pier ramp even though both engines were going full speed ahead to try and slow her down.

The incident was recorded in her log as follows:

'At 11.24 at Stranraer - when berthing stern first at 11.24 hours today at the Railway Pier, Stranraer Harbour, vessel did not pull up in time with the result the stern came in contact with the Ramp berth at our stern. Both engines were going full speed ahead at the time of the incident. Superficial damage was caused to the shell plating and superstructure about the waterline at stern of the vessel. Cloudy clear weather with Fresh to Strong WSW wind when berthing.'

Chief Officer Shirley Duckels who was assisting Captain J.M. Ferguson, Master, with the berthing, jointly signed this entry.

## **Incident 3: 25th November 1951**



**Officers on the Princess Victoria in 1947. L to R: Third Officer William McInnes, Radio Officer David Broadfoot, Captain James Ferguson, Chief Officer Shirley Duckels and Second Officer Leslie Unsworth.**

The third incident clearly showed how vulnerable this vessel was to the entry of seawater onto the car deck and should have been taken as a clear warning that the potential existed for a serious mishap. On that day she was under the command of Acting-Captain Duckels with John Hey as acting Chief Officer, for the Stranraer - Larne crossing.

As the vessel neared Larne, a strong wind blew up and developed into one of hurricane force just as she began to turn around to begin the stern first entry to Larne. The vessel failed to respond and Acting-Captain Duckels then tried to take her into the wind first to bring her

round to enter Larne stern first but as the stern faced into the sea and wind, sea water flooded the car deck resulting in the vessel developing a 10 degree list to starboard. Acting-Captain Duckels then opted to return to Stranraer as berthing at Larne was now impossible due to the prevailing weather conditions

Acting-Chief Officer Hey was sent down to investigate the extent of the flooding on the car deck and on arrival discovered that the starboard side was flooded to a depth of 3 feet reducing to between 1 1/2 and 2 feet amidships, consisting of between 75 and 100 tons of water or approximately 22,000 gallons of water which took 1 1/2 hours to drain through the scuppers while on the return voyage to Stranraer.

Acting-Chief Officer Hey also discovered that the sea had buckled the stern doors and that the starboard one was open to the sea but fortunately only the bolts and stays had been damaged, and not the door itself, which was eventually closed by crew members using crowbars. Little priority was attached to providing new locking bolts and stays for the stern doors with the vessel making two further complete crossings before these were installed.

But Acting-Captain Duckels was concerned about this incident and the following day submitted a report on it by letter to Captain Harry Perry, Marine Superintendent of British Railways and also sent a copy to solicitors Messrs. Foster and Ferguson in Stranraer. The letter read:

'The stern door of this ship [MV Princess Victoria] was buckled and some pins bent on Sunday 25 November at approx. 01.50 off the entrance to Lough Larne. The damage occurred in the second of two attempts to enter the harbour in storm weather.

Some water was shipped into the car deck and subsequently cleared through scuppers while the ship proceeded at slow speed. The Princess Victoria left Stranraer at 23.31 on 24/11/51 in calm weather. A freshening NE wind at 01.20 25/11/51 quickly became a NE gale with fierce squalls and a very rough sea. The ship returned to Loch Ryan and brought to anchor at 05.30 25/11. The damage to the stern doors did not delay the landing and loading of milk tankers. Temporary repairs will be made as quickly as possible.'

## Incident 4: 2nd November 1952

The final accident, although minor in nature, was to be a contributory factor to the January 1953 disaster although no significance was attached to it at the time of its occurrence. On 2 November 1952, while the vessel was tied up at the mail pier in Larne, she was struck on the starboard side by the SS Empire Gaelic outward bound for Preston. The for'ard moorings of the MV Princess Victoria were carried away by the collision and she drifted backwards and struck the pier and ramp with her stern. Taken out of service, she was sailed to Henderson's Yard in Glasgow where a full examination revealed that her bow and hull had been damaged as had the guide rails of the sliding door which could still move and down but could not be locked in place over the stern doors as was its original purpose. The ship surveyor advised that the damage to the rails could be repaired at the owners' convenience. The MV Princess Victoria was then returned to service with this damage remaining un-repaired. This meant that the shield could not be lowered to prevent sea spray getting on the open rear car deck.

## The Final Voyage

At the end of January 1953 a massive storm began forming in the North Atlantic which would later cause great devastation along the East Coast of England and in Holland. As it grew in intensity, on Friday 30th January the B.B.C. [British Broadcasting Corporation] broadcast a gale warning which was subsequently re-broadcast by various maritime radio stations, including Portpatrick Radio. More warnings were transmitted on Saturday 31st January including a gale warning broadcast on the B.B.C. at 6.55 a.m.

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At 9.10 p.m. on Friday 30th January 1953, the MV Princess Victoria docked in Stranraer after completing another routine crossing from Larne. Once she was tied up, dock foreman Joseph Irons went on board and commenced supervision of the unloading of her cargo which was completed around midnight after which they began loading the cargo for the return journey to Larne. Around midnight another dock foreman William Pirrie joined Irons, with Irons working on the ship and Pirrie on the quayside. As the ship was berthed bow first, loading was carried out using a sliding door on the port side which led directly to the car deck with the lighter mail and parcels being loaded onto the car deck utilising a wooden chute leading through these doors. Normally the MV Princess Victoria carried about 70 tons of cargo but on this occasion it was only in the region of 43 tons consisting of:

|      |                      |    |                           |   |                 |
|------|----------------------|----|---------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 110  | Bags (letter mail)   | 55 | Cartons. of footwear      | 2 | Tons of baggage |
| 425  | Bags (parcels)       | 14 | Tea chests (sundry items) | 6 | Boxes of fish   |
| 1000 | Rail parcels         | 5  | Hampers of laundry        | 3 | Bales           |
| 520  | Sanitary pipes       | 5  | Cases                     | 6 | Drums           |
| 160  | Bags of brush blanks | 2  | Crates of textiles        | 1 | Parcel          |
| 2    | Boxes of tyre covers |    |                           | 1 | Skip            |

Stacked on the car deck were forty wooden steel shod trays for holding cargo. These trays were lifted by crane from the quayside and lowered into the car deck after which they were moved around by a five-cwt Lister motor tractor. Additionally six four-wheel barrows were located on the car deck to enable the dockers to move the cargo to the appropriate location. The sanitary pipes were placed on the starboard side of the car deck and held in place by the cartons of footwear with the remainder of the cargo on these trays being placed along both sides of the car deck with care being taken to ensure that they did not block the scuppers. The five laundry hampers and one case of methylated spirits were stored on the turntable in the middle of the car deck.

Due to the high winds blowing, it was impossible to load a car on board by crane so its owner Mr. Carlin was informed that it would be carried on the next sailing. Prior to loading the cargo, passengers had boarded the ship, been assigned their cabins and retired for the night.

Meantime Chief Officer Duckels went on to the car deck to check on the progress of loading the cargo and while this work was the task of the dockers, it was his responsibility to ensure that it was properly stowed. Chief Officer Duckels asked that a tarpaulin be placed over some of the parcels with dock foreman William Pirrie supervising this work. At 7.30 a.m. before Pirrie departed from the ship, he ensured that the dock porters slid the port door closed and that the bolts sealing it up were positioned properly.

Two hours earlier the overnight train from London Euston had arrived at the quayside and this last group of passengers had completed the embarkation process.

Throughout the ship crew made ready for departure and were busy catering for the needs of passengers and attending to their duties.

Just after 8 a.m. the mooring ropes of the MV Princess Victoria were slipped and Captain Ferguson then eased her out into Loch Ryan, turned bow first towards the sea and sailed for Ireland.

At 8.06 a.m. radio operator David Broadfoot, sent ' / am now leaving Stranraer bound Larne' indicating that the ship had departed and was heading for Larne.

In the Irish Sea a force 9 gale was blowing eastwards and by 9 a.m. when the MV Princess Victoria emerged from Lough Ryan and entered the Irish Sea, she was exposed to the full force of the gale with waves over 25 feet, wind gusts up to 60 miles per hour, and visibility down to not more than 2 miles.

After seeing the full force of the gale, Captain Ferguson turned his ship in a northerly direction in an attempt to use the coast of Scotland as shelter before attempting to sail to Larne but after 20 miles of being battered and pounded by this exceptional weather, opted to return to Stranraer as there was no point in trying to continue the crossing.

As the MV Princess Victoria turned round to sail back bow first into Loch Ryan, the stern doors were exposed to the full force of the gale during which an exceptionally heavy wave crashed into the ship, buckled the stern doors and flooded the car deck. With the stern doors now breached, sea water began to flood onto the car deck as wave after wave washed through the opening created, with the scuppers being unable to deal with the large volume of water on it which washed in and out of the deck as the ship rose and fell with the waves and soon the car deck was covered to a depth of up to one foot of water.

Chief Officer Duckels was sent by Captain Ferguson to see the extent of the damage and with Second Officer Leonard and some crewmembers attempted to close the stern doors. Able Seaman Alec Craig, with a safety rope tied around his waist, attempted to close the damaged doors using a crowbar but was unable to do so. Other crew members also tried to close the damaged doors with no success and these attempts had to be abandoned after twenty minutes. An attempt to use what cargo was to hand to block the doors also failed.

The rough conditions meant that after 9 a.m. serving food to passengers had ceased as many of them began to suffer from the effects of sea sickness due to the constant pitching and rolling of the ship.

Captain Fergusson then decided that they would sail in reverse, i.e. stern first, back to Stranraer but to do this a bow rudder had to be lowered and locked in place. Able Seaman Nelson with Able Seaman McKinnon and carpenter William Gowan went for'ard to remove the locking gear and engage the rudder but the waves breaking over them made this extremely difficult and they were unable to unlock the rudder releasing wheel to engage the rudder.

At 9.46 a.m. radio officer David Broadfoot sent an urgent radio message 'Hove to over mouth of Loch Ryan. Vessel not under command. Urgent assistance of tug required'.

From 10 a.m. onwards, passengers began to hear the first of a series of public address system announcements advising them to prepare for heavy rolling but that they were safe. However third-class passengers noticed that they had to hold onto their seats to avoid sliding around while in other parts of the ship furniture not tied down started to move around the place.

## In Distress

At 10.30 a.m. the first distress signal was sent out:

'Princess Victoria to SOS - Princess Victoria four miles north east of Corsewell. Car Deck flooded. Heavy list to starboard. Require immediate assistance. Ship not under command.'

Thirty minutes later at 11 a.m. the Portpatrick lifeboat on the Scottish side of the Irish Sea was launched while Chief Officer Duckels advised passengers that they were passing through a difficult time but to remain calm and that lifejackets would be handed out as a precautionary measure. Simultaneously crew members were ordered to prepare lifeboats for launching but in the rough conditions the oars in some of them were washed away.

Additionally water was beginning to slowly seep into various parts of the ship especially into the lower deck and down into the engine room with the vessel now starting to take on a prominent list to starboard.

At 11.10 a.m. a private message was sent to British Railways advising them of the situation the ship was in:

'Have sent distress call; four miles North West Corsewell; car deck flooded; heavy list to starboard; require immediate assistance; ship not under control.'

North of the distressed vessel, HMS Contest had departed in response to her call for assistance and estimated that she would reach the stricken vessel around 1 p.m.

In the meantime an officers' conference on the MV Princess Victoria considered opening the port cargo door to drain off some of the water but this idea was abandoned when it was realised that this door was above the water line while the starboard one was below it. By this time the list had increased to 30 degrees. At 11.30 a.m. matters took a more serious development with the formal issuing of lifejackets to passengers as the list had increased by this time to 45 degrees.

One of the problems that ships heading for the MV Princess Victoria faced was her precise location. While Portpatrick Radio had one radio bearing for this vessel's location, it needed a second one to determine her location but none was immediately forthcoming from anyone until eventually one was later obtained. Another problem was that the MV Princess Victoria could only send and receive messages in Morse code while other vessels were able to maintain voice contact with each other and with Portpatrick Radio.

The heavy seas were also impeding the progress of ships on the way to mount a rescue operation but unknown to them the prevailing weather conditions were bringing MV Princess Victoria further south than anyone realised at that time.

At the Corsewell Point lighthouse, keeper George Sutherland kept watch for the MV Princess Victoria but only saw the tug Salveda heading south.

Between noon and 2 p.m. a series of events occurred. On the MV Princess Victoria the passengers were moved to one of the higher decks as the list continued to increase but the rescue vessels were no-where in sight as most had a wrong position for her. A radio fix on the ship's position was eventually obtained after her Radio Operator David Broadfoot transmitted a continuous unbroken message for six minutes to enable this to be done. This position identification revealed that many of the ships searching for the MV Princess Victoria were looking for her in the wrong place and were at least 10 miles away from her. In the meantime conditions deteriorated further on the MV Princess Victoria as the list increased further due to her cargo shifting.

At 1.08 p.m. the MV Princess Victoria's engine room flooded and her engines ceased operating. Realising that they were very near the Irish coast, a lot nearer than previously thought, Captain Ferguson asked Second Engineer John Taylor if the engines could be restarted to make a fast dash to the more sheltered coastal waters but was told that the engine room was too badly flooded to do this. A general message was then broadcast to all shipping:

*'SOS. Now stopped. Ship on her beam end'.*

At 1.15 p.m. MV Princess Victoria informed Portpatrick Radio:

*'We are preparing to abandon ship'.*

When it became apparent that the MV Princess Victoria was nearer to the Northern Ireland coastline than previously calculated, the Donaghadee lifeboat was launched at 1.40 p.m. and headed for her last known position. By this time the list to starboard meant that her lifeboats

on the port side could not be launched. Two of the three lifeboats on the starboard side were prepared for launching. At 1.30 p.m. passengers were told to assemble on the weather deck and be prepared to abandon ship. They then had to make their way through the severely listing ship, parts of which were in darkness, while it continued to rise and fall with the sea. Some elderly passengers, unable to make it to the weather deck, remained where they were and resigned themselves to their fate. A message from HMS Contest advised Captain Ferguson that she expected to reach them around 2.15 p.m. and to hold on if possible.

Around 1.50 p.m. with the MV Princess Victoria lying on her starboard side and slowly sinking, the lifeboats were launched. All the women and children were placed in lifeboat No.4 which was successfully lowered into the water, only to be tossed back by the waves against the ship's side breaking her back and sinking with all the occupants being thrown into the icy water. None survived.

At 1.58 p.m. Radio Operator David Broadfoot, who had been sending and receiving messages continuously for over 6 hours, and with water rapidly rising around him, sacrificed his final opportunity to escape from the radio room to send his final message:

'SOS estimated position now five miles East of Copelands entrance Belfast Lough'.

After that there was silence and no further radio transmissions were heard from him.

Two minutes later the MV Princess Victoria rolled over on to her starboard side throwing all those still on board into the sea, then turned upside down before slipping beneath the waves. Ironically the MV Princess Victoria was very near land and had her engines not failed when the engine room flooded, might have made landfall or calmer waters.

All the lifeboats had lost their oars prior to being lowered into the sea which meant that their occupants were unable to row to those floating in the water but had to swim to them instead. Some made it to one of the six rafts floating in the sea but most were subsequently washed away by the sea or were unable to hold on due to the icy conditions.

At 2.49 p.m. the MV Orchy was the first ship to reach the survivors but their rescue efforts went badly wrong. Those in the water were too cold and exhausted to grasp ropes, ladders, and lifebuoys with lines attached, thrown over her side so that they could be pulled on board. The prevailing weather conditions were too rough for her master Captain Matheson to launch his own lifeboats to pick up survivors. Soon Captain Matheson was joined by the oil tanker MV Pass of Drumochter, commanded by Captain James Kelly. Captain Kelly sighted lifeboat No. 6 and with difficulty got a line on board and brought her alongside him but was unable to bring the occupants on board as there was always the danger that this lifeboat might be drawn under the stern of the ship and come in contact with the propellers. The tanker then stood off from the lifeboat while Captain Kelly called up the Donaghadee lifeboat by radio requesting it to take the survivors on board, which it did. This lifeboat then rescued a lone occupant of lifeboat No. 5 and then rescued another man from a raft. HMS Contest managed to rescue six men in a lifeboat and then two men from separate rafts. The trawler Eastcoates recovered seven people from the sea, six of whom were dead and appeared to have died as the result of being choked by their lifebelts. The Portpatrick lifeboat rescued two individuals from separate rafts. All the survivors were landed in Donaghadee where the voluntary services looked after them but some declined offers of accommodation and opted to go home to their families to recover from their ordeal.

The following day the grim task of recovering the bodies from the sea was undertaken by various vessels and these were released for burial as they were identified. Some relatives had to wait some time to receive the remains of loved ones for burial as eight bodies were later recovered off the Isle of Man, three off Londonderry/Derry, and two off the Scottish coast.

The final death toll was 128, including Walter D. Smiles, M.P. for North Down, Major Maynard Sinclair, Minister for Finance and Deputy Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, and a Mr.

Sweeney from Dublin, the only confirmed casualty from the Republic of Ireland. 44 survived: 10 crew and 34 passengers.

## The Formal Inquiry

Given the scale of this tragedy, there were calls for a public inquiry into the loss of the M.V. Princess Victoria and this opened on 23rd March 1953 in Crumlin Road Courthouse, Belfast, before Mr. John H. Campbell, Q.C., R.M., and sat for twenty-five days resulting ultimately in a 30,000 word report.

The Inquiry Report concluded that:

*'The Loss of the Princess Victoria was caused by the fault of the owners (the British Transport Commission) and the managers'*

citing two principal reasons:

*'the inadequacy of the stern doors which yielded under pressure from the sea and the inadequacy of the clearing arrangements for the water which accumulated on the car deck resulting in the list to starboard which caused the ship to capsize and sink.'*

Many experts pointed out that the design was flawed and highlighted the free water effect of un-cleared water on the car deck which caused the ship to list and ultimately destabilised her. But the ship's previous accident history was not raised nor mentioned.

The report absolved the builders, and Lloyd's Register of Shipping which had declared her seaworthy, from any responsibility. However it was noticed that some of the deceased had been killed by their lifejackets which had pushed up into their necks when they dived into the sea as they had not held them down with their hands to prevent this occurring and it was agreed that new instructions for their use would be issued.

## Compensation

Lump sum compensation was paid to the dependants of those lost on the M.V. Princess Victoria. This varied from claimant to claimant. The sums awarded were:

- £4500 for the loss of a husband
- £1200 for the loss of a son
- £1200 for the loss of a daughter
- £750 for the loss of a wife
- £300 for the loss of a child



Radio Officer Broadfoot

When determining the level of award to be paid for a wife who had been lost, the High Court decided that if she was not a wage earner, the husband could only claim a sum representing the value of her services to him - this ruling of that time would not be applied today. Minors only received their awarded compensation when they reached 21 in accordance with the law at that time which required it to be held in trust for them until they 'were of age' i.e. 21, with inflation diminishing over time the amount they actually received.

## Radio Officer Broadfoot

Undoubtedly the hero of the MV Princess Victoria incident was Radio Officer David Broadfoot who remained at his post for over 6 hours, sending out over 54 messages and forgoing

the chance of escape in the final minutes to maintain communications. He was justifiably awarded the George Cross posthumously.

The George Cross ranks next in importance to the Victoria Cross, and is primarily intended for civilians engaged in operations not in the presence of the enemy. Instituted in 1940, 161 George Crosses have been awarded, 47 since 1947; 85 have been awarded posthumously. None of the MV Princess Victoria's officers survived the sinking.

## The 60th Anniversary

January 2013 was the 60th anniversary of the loss of the MV Princess Victoria with all those who were lost on her being remembered in commemoration ceremonies held in Stranraer, Larne, Portpatrick, and Donaghadee.

In 1999, shortly before his death, Bill Broadfoot, David Broadfoot's son, presented his father's George Cross to Stranraer Museum where it is currently on display. Present at the handing over ceremony was Jim Ferguson, son of Captain James Ferguson. In a short address Bill Broadfoot said:

'The medal has come home as Stranraer deserves the honour ... My father was not the only brave man that day and it is appropriate that future generations can look at the medal and say that he was one of them.'

Asked why he decided to give the medal to the museum, Bill Broadfoot said:

'The George Cross had significance beyond family pride. People have asked me why I gave it away. It is our pride but it is [also] the town's pride.'

78-year old James Ferguson, son of Captain Ferguson, who was 18 at the time of this disaster, recalled in an interview in The Sunday Post:

'I read about it in the Sunday Post [the following day] but this disaster has largely been forgotten despite being one of the UK's worst. As it happened in a largely unfashionable part of the world, it has been neglected, but I think we could have avoided ferry disasters like the 1987 "Herald of Free Enterprise" and the 1994 disaster with the "Estonia" if we had learned from the mistakes. I remember my mum fainting when she was told that they had found Dad's body. This time of year [January] is always difficult. The one solace we have is that my dad and his crew acted impeccably. The ship's radio operator, David Broadfoot, who stayed to send SOS messages, was posthumously awarded the George Cross. That's always made us proud.'

## Acknowledgements and Sources

In compiling this paper I wish to express my sincere and most grateful thanks to the librarians and staff at the:

- Dublin City Library and Archive, 138-144 Pearse Street, Dublin 2
- Bray Library, Eglinton Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow
- Co. Wicklow Libraries Local Studies Dept., Ballywaltrim, Bray, Co. Wicklow
- Larne Borough Council
- Dumfries and Galloway Council Library Service and Mr. Iain Passant, Scotwest Oils, Ayr, Scotland, who very kindly obtained and forwarded a selection of articles from Scottish local newspapers featuring the 60th anniversary ceremonies.
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  - Some photographs/images in this paper were obtained from:  
<http://maritimeradio.pro/radio-officers/david-broadfoot/index.htm>
  - [www.snipview.com](http://www.snipview.com)

# Beatrice Gunning: A Greystones Life

Joan Jones

Beatrice Gunning is a member of the Greystones Archaeological and Historical Society, as many of those reading this are, but what is special about Beatrice is that, having celebrated her ninetieth birthday last December, she is one of our oldest members. She lives at Malvern in La Touche Place, the very same house where she was born way back in 1924.

Beatrice's parents were Patrick and Ethel Thompson, and she is the eldest of three children. Her younger sister, Sybil, now lives in Canada, and her brother, Billy, the baby of the family at eighty-two years, lives in New Zealand.

Patrick Thompson's father had been a member of the RIC and was stationed in Laragh when Patrick was born, and shortly afterward was moved to Tinahely, where Patrick grew up. He served his apprenticeship in Crawford's of Aughrim before getting a job as manager in Stanley Stores on Doyles Corner here in Greystones, and lived in Ivy Cottage before his marriage.

Beatrice's mother was Ethel Jago, born in Blundell sands in Liverpool, England. Her father, William J. Jago, had joined the Royal Navy but had transferred to the Coastguard Service and was posted to Ballymoney, before coming to Greystones as head coastguard. He died in early 1924 in Malvern, before the birth of Beatrice.



**A very young Beatrice  
with her mother**

Beatrice started school in the National School (now a building site), just opposite her house in La Touche Place, and later went to Wesley College in Dublin, travelling there by train. While studying in Wesley, her singing voice was recognised, and she auditioned for Turner Huggard and sang in his choir. She went on to complete her studies in Barnes Academy and in 1940 got her first job as a book-keeper in McFarland's Grocery Store on Church Road (now the AIB). Not long afterwards she went to work for barrister Michael McGilligan, where she was a Dictaphone typist. When Mr McGilligan decided to retire from his practice, Beatrice got a job with another firm of solicitors, Molloy Foyle and Company, in Dublin.

Beatrice met the love of her life, John Gunning, in 1941. She had been talking with her friends Bid Boothman, Sadie Kelly and Carrie Taylor outside the La Touche Hotel when John walked by. She asked him where he was going and when he told her that he was going to the 'pictures' she decided that she would go as well. (The picture house was on the site where Harbour Court now stands, and before that was the site of Glen Press) The 'ninepenny rush', as it was known then, was great entertainment, and the only downside was that any misbehaviour was dealt with by Mrs Hipple and her trusty umbrella, which would see off any wild carry-on! John was also local to

Greystones, and was a great footballer having played with Greystones AFC in the Bog. John's father worked for the railway and his photo can be seen in Greystone Station ticket office to this day. The family lived in the Grove, and there were four sons and two daughters.

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Beatrice and John married on 24th April 1951 in York Roa Presbyterian Church, Dun Laoghaire. Her sister, Sybil, acted as her bridesmaid and John's brother, Joe, was best man. Afterwards Beatrice and John got the express train to Belfast where they spent their honeymoon with Beatrice's aunt. They returned to live with Beatrice's mother in Malvern.

Things were not easy for the young couple when they returned from their honeymoon because John lost his job in O'Neill's of Mount Pleasant Street, but he quickly found another with Buckley Motors. Beatrice had to resign from her job after marriage as was the custom, and decided to devote her time to bringing up their children, Averil, Alvin, Roberta and Ian, all of whom still live in Greystones.

The late 1950s were difficult for Beatrice and John, with John having to leave Ireland to find work in England and they both found this separation hard. But luckily, as things improved,



**Back row left to right: Mr O'Shea, Mr O'Connor, Joe Redmond, Joe Gunning, Mr Cardiff and John Gunning**  
**Front row left to right: Ozzie Spurling, Paddy Murphy, Donie Doyle, Des Mitchell and Kevin Glynn**

John was again able to find work in Ireland. Beatrice was a great cook and baker and is still known for her wonderful wedding cakes.

As well as being a busy housewife, Beatrice also took on the job of being the 'call out officer' for the Greystones Fire Brigade. The tender was housed in the garage of Malvern and it was Beatrice's job to raise the alarm in the event of a fire. Any free time she had was spent on improving the community in which she and her family lived. In 1969 the need for a credit union in Greystones became apparent, and Beatrice, along with Denis Kelly, Nancy O'Neill, Jimmy Harmon, Maureen Lindsey and Walter Verbruggan, had many meetings in a small bedroom in the La Touche Hotel, before opening the Greystones and District Credit Union in St Killian's Hall at the Harbour. Beatrice took over the running of the office. She was awarded the Credit Union Person of the Year, and she was also awarded the Pauline Cottinger Award for her long and dedicated voluntary service to Greystones and District Credit Union.

Over the years Beatrice has dedicated much of her free time to many voluntary groups, such as Greystones Civic Association. She served as supervisor in St David's School, and helped run their 300 Club draw. She also worked on the fund-raising committee for St. Brigid's School. Beatrice is also extremely proud of her involvement with the Greystones and District Active Retirement Association, where she served as chairperson and helped make it the wide-ranging association it is today. She also helped set up the Sugarloaf Bridge Club in 1997.



**Beatrice Gunning at home**

Beatrice's interest in Greystones is still as strong as it ever was, and she has very definite views on how the town has changed from the little village it was in her youth to the busy town it now is. When she was growing up here all the houses on Church Road were family homes - now they are the commercial businesses of the town. Greystones now has a great supply of coffee shops and restaurants, and you don't have to leave the town all that often. The Harbour is also a great development, and the building of the new coastguard station is underway. What would her grandfather think of this new building?

Beatrice is still living in Malvern, in the centre of the town, a fitting place for someone who kept the town centre in all her work.

## A Walk Around Greystones

As part of the 2014 La Touche Legacy Weekend, Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society (GAHS) committee members Joan Jones and Rosemary Raughter led an historical walking tour of Greystones. The event proved very popular, attracting native Greystonians as well as long-term and more recent residents and visitors to the town and several of the walkers were able to contribute their own nuggets of information based on personal experience and family tradition. As a result of the interest shown, Joan and Rosemary repeated the walk during the winter with pupils from St Patrick's NS and with St David's Transition Year students. Earlier this year (2015) a brochure covering the route taken and with details of many of the town's buildings and their associations was issued by GAHS with the generous support of the La Touche Legacy Committee, and this is available free of charge from Greystones Library and at several local businesses. What follows here is a much more detailed account of the walking route, and of some of the most significant events, individuals and developments in Greystones's history.

This walk through Greystones's past begins just across from Greystones Station, at Ireton's shop on Killincarrig Road. This, with the adjoining shop and houses, was built by Patrick Joseph Kinlen, who came to Greystones towards the close of the 1890s, purchased land from the Hawkins-Whitshed/Burnaby estate, and was responsible for a number of houses on the Burnaby Estate as well as buildings elsewhere in the town.



Ireton's shop, start of the walk

Turn left outside Ireton's and then left again, and you find yourself on Church Road. Immediately to your left are two shops, built in 1897 by Kinlen for Omagh man, Andrew McFarland. The first of these, on the corner, originally operated as a pharmacy, and subsequently as the Royal Bank (later the AIB). The second became the Burnaby Stores, operated by Andrew McFarland himself as a grocery shop. The Burnaby Stores, one of the town's most businesses, remained in the McFarland family's ownership until 1970, when Claud, Andrew's son, retired. At that point the bank moved from next door to take over the former Burnaby Stores space, leaving its former premises to be operated as a newsagent (until recently called Eugene's, currently disused).

Moving along, you pass the Burnaby pub, once known as the Railway Hotel, and the block, now including the Bank of Ireland, built in around 1900 as the Commercial Building. Note the cobblestones at the junction of Hillside Road and Church Road - the final vestige of those which once paved the street.

The second house on your left on Church Road after the crossing, Menlo, is one of several houses in the area rented by the widowed Mrs John Hatch Synge, mother of John Millington playwright Synge (1871-1909) for family summer holidays. Samuel, John's brother, recalled an incident here when the adjoining house, Merville, was being built:

'I remember, one Saturday morning early (the men in those days began work about six o'clock) hearing one of the workmen ... at Merville, call out to his companions, "We'll all be blind drunk tonight." .. Poor man, that was his highest enjoyment. Could a man like that ever do anything much in this world, or could he ever be happy in Heaven if he got there? He was, very likely, not a man belonging to Greystones. I don't think very many of the Greystones men were like that.'

Cross Bellevue Road, and continue down Church Road. The second house on your left after the junction is Glen Lodge. Also rented by the Synge's as a holiday home, from 1903 this served as the Royal Irish Constabulary Barracks until the disbandment of the force in 1922. A few houses further on is Orahova, former residence of Samuel French (d.1978), historian of Greystones, and grandson of Robert French (1841-1917), the noted photographer.



Menlo House, one of the houses rented by the Synge family

Across the road, St Brigid's was the family home of the builder, Patrick Joseph Kinlen, while Thornbank, on the corner of the pathway known as Turnpike Lane, was the home during the 1970s of songwriter, Jimmy Kennedy (1902-1984). Born in Omagh, Co Tyrone, Kennedy's songs included Red Sails in the Sunset, Harbour Lights, The Isle of Capri, South of the Border (down Mexico way) and Teddy Bears Picnic. Awarded the OBE in 1983, Kennedy was posthumously inducted into the Songwriters' Hall of Fame in 1997. On the other side of Turnpike Lane is Knockeevin, whose first occupant was civil engineer, James Price (1831-1895), whose projects included a number of important railway and dock developments. Price and his wife, Frances, had eleven children, and they and the young Synge's were friends: Samuel Synge remembered his brother, John, sharing a 'gipsy tea' on the Little Sugar Loaf with the Prices, and later one of the Price daughters, Ellen, married Edward, another of the Synge brothers. While two of the Price sons, James and Alfred, became engineers like their father, another, Ivon Henry, joined the RIC, and in 1914 was appointed head of the Intelligence Department at Dublin Castle. On Easter Monday 1916 he was in a meeting with the Under-Secretary when the Castle was attacked by a thirty-strong raiding party of the Irish Citizen Army. Hearing shots, Price dashed down to the Castle Yard, revolver in hand, firing at the half dozen Volunteers he found there. Remarkably, it appears that he was the only armed man in the Castle at that moment, as the sentries had not been provided with live ammunition. However, the insurgents, who had already gained control of the guardroom, failed to press their advantage and were driven out, taking up their position instead in the nearby City Hall. Price returned to RIC duty in 1919, having been awarded the DSO, and died in England in 1931.

Still on the same side of the road, Arva was the childhood home of the noted artist, Beatrice Elvery (1881- 1970). Beatrice studied at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art under William

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Orpen, who also painted her, and went on to become a designer for Sarah Purser's An Tur Gloine studio. In 1912 she married Charles Campbell, Lord Glenavy. The couple moved in literary and artistic circles in London and Dublin, and included Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, D H Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield among their friends. Beatrice had a varied and prolific career, producing theatrical designs, book illustrations and decorated furniture, as well as stained glass, sculpture and paintings. Beatrice's sister, Dorothy Kay, also an artist, produced a memoir, *The Elvery family: a memory* (1991), in which she recalled life at Arva and idyllic summers spent with their Hughes cousins, who lived at St David's, overlooking the rocks and the sea:

'They were days to remember, when we bathed and swam with Norah, Muriel and Elsie. Their diving and daring feats in the water were known for miles around. How proud I was to be swimming with them, or pushing the Amphitrite down the slipway into the still water of the harbour, helped by old Archer or others of the fishermen ... As we rowed in the warm sun with the smell of the sea on the soft air, it was wonderful to be alive



**St Patrick's Church**



**Arva House, childhood house  
of artist Beatrice Elvery**

St Patrick's Church stands on rising ground on the other side of Church Road. Built in 1857 on land donated by William Robert La Touche, it was designed to meet the needs of growing numbers of residents, attracted to the town by its proximity to the railway. However, lack of an endowment to support a rector delayed consecration of the church until 1864. The building, which was enlarged three times during the nineteenth century and more recently in 2005, contains a number of memorials. They include a stained glass window memory of Peter La Touche, and tablets listing members of the parish who died in World Wars 1 and 2.

A little further on is Elsmere. Averil Deverell (1893-1979), whose family home this was, and who lived here throughout her life, was the first woman in Ireland to practice as a barrister.

Following service with an ambulance unit in France during WW1, Averil studied law at Trinity College, Dublin and King's Inns, and on 1 November 1921 was called to the Irish Bar, together with one other woman and eighteen men, who included her twin brother, Captain William Deverell. Throughout her career she

was a staunch champion of gender equality within the legal profession, and her name is commemorated by a lectureship in law established under the terms of her will at TCD. She

also bred dogs - with her first earnings as a barrister, she bought a Cairn terrier, and later established her own kennels, named (presumably in a nod to her 'Day job') the Brehon Kennels.

On the other side of the road, St Patrick's National School is situated on what used to be known as Carr's Bog, or the Circus Field. This building, opened in 1975, replaces an earlier school on La Touche Place. Carr's Bog was where Greystones's first GAA team, the Wolfe Tones, played their matches during the early years of the twentieth century. It was also - as its alternative name suggests - where the travelling circus pitched its tents on its infrequent visits to the town.

Trenarren Court, towards the end of Church Road, opposite the petrol station, was built as two houses, and later became one of Greystones's many hotels - at one time there were as many as fifteen in the town. Facing you, on Victoria Road, is Brady's Hardware, on the site of which a forge once stood, and adjoining Brady's is the now-disused Ormonde Cinema, which has appeared in The passion of St Tibulus episode of Father Ted, in which it is picketed by Ted and Dougal carrying placards reading 'Down with this sort of thing' and 'Careful now. Built in 1947, this replaced an earlier cinema off Sidmonton Road.

Turning right into Victoria Road, on the right-hand side, as you approach the railway bridge, was located a small shop, the site of the murder, on 26 June 1890, of a young woman, Elizabeth (Bessie) Grundy, by her disappointed suitor, Thomas Byrne. While Byrne, a 30-year old house-painter, believed himself engaged to Bessie, she had different ideas, telling her sister that she wanted nothing to do with him. On the morning in question Byrne turned up at the shop, carrying a stolen revolver and ammunition, and when Bessie was parcelling up the 'pennyworth of sugar barley which he had requested, he fired a shot, hitting her in the chest. Bessie died the following morning, having given a statement to the police. When Byrne came up for trial a few months later the jury found him 'mentally unable to plead, and the trial was postponed, although the prisoner himself 'loudly declared his perfect sanity. 'If found insane', he protested, 'he would be sent to an asylum for the rest of his life, and he would rather be dead.'

Passing under the railway bridge, with on the left the narrow cul-de-sac known as The Bawn, you reach what is now the Harbour Cafe, built in around 1820, probably for the coastguards, as a boathouse. In 1872 it was used to house Greystones's first lifeboat, the Sarah Tancred. Launched only four times in fourteen years, the lifeboat nevertheless saved four lives. She was replaced in 1886 by a second vessel, the Richard Brown, which never launched on service. She was withdrawn and the station closed in 1892. The building itself later became a garage, and subsequently a cafe. On the other side of the road is the Beach House, built in three stages - first the shop, then the bar and finally the residence - by John Doyle, who was responsible for a number of other buildings in the town. One of the owners of the establishment, William Dann, also owned a schooner, the Joseph Fisher, which in September 1918 was sunk by a submarine on its passage from Garston, near Liverpool, to Wicklow. Its crew of four men drifted in an open boat for sixteen hours before being picked up, and taken to safety in Peel, on the Isle of Man.

About thirty cottages which once stood north of the Harbour Café were washed away during severe storms in 1929-1932. The families who lived in them had been evacuated in 1928, and rehoused on higher ground, a number of them further up the hill towards Bray Head, in The Grove.

The earliest references to Greystones mention it as 'a noted fishing place', and there were early suggestions that a harbour should be built to facilitate the industry. However, it was not until 1883 that construction began. It was completed five years later at a cost of £12,000, but almost immediately there were complaints about the influx of shingle and its exposure to storms, and its condition deteriorated rapidly: by 1907, a mere twenty years after its

construction, it was reported that the harbour was silted up and the walls 'crumbling and falling to pieces'.

On the south side of today's redeveloped harbour is a plaque commemorating the tragedy of 14 October 1892, in which three local men, John, William and Herbert Doyle, were drowned. During a north-east gale, the schooner Mersey, moored in the harbour, threatened to break up, and the two Doyle brothers and William's son, Herbert, went out along the jetty to cast a rope to the vessel. As they were returning all were engulfed and drowned. An appeal was subsequently launched on behalf of their families, and a ballad, *The Heroes of Greystones*, composed in their honour.

On 25 October 1910 the harbour was the site of an encounter between Chief Secretary Birrell, on a visit to the town to inspect its ruinous condition, and suffragettes Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Hilda Webb. According to Sheehy-Skeffington:

'The local dignitaries ... were furious, for we managed to get between them and their visitor - and on his other side was the sea- so the "Evening Mail" described the Chief Secretary as between the Devil and the Deep Sea.'

The exchange of words which followed, although it involved no violence, heralded an increasingly militant campaign by the more radical wing of the suffrage movement, which involved attacks on property, disruption of meetings and hunger-strikes.

Facing the harbour, roughly on the site of Wavecrest, was 'the long cottage', owned by a local woman, Dame Doyle. Here, in the 1830s Rev William Urwick (1791-1868), a Congregational minister, took summer lodgings for his family. Later the Urwick's would rent another cottage, formerly occupied by the coastguard officer and situated 'at the extreme point by the flagstaff looking northwards'. Here they returned for many years, enjoying rambles along the shore and long walks in the surrounding countryside.

To the left of Wavecrest as you stand with your back to the Harbour was a coal-yard, with beside it a post-office and pub and, on the corner overlooking the Harbour, Rockport, rented as a holiday residence by Mr and Mrs William Beckett, parents of Samuel Beckett (1906-1989). While William Beckett spent his working week at home in Foxrock, travelling into his office in town daily and only joining his family at the weekend, Mrs Beckett, the children and a maid lived in Greystones throughout the summer. These months made an indelible impression on young Sam: according to James Knowlson, his biographer:

'The Beckett ... children used to play on the stony beach with its large grey and pink pebbles or run along the harbour wall to watch the masted schooners unloading their cargo of Welsh coal to be carted away by heavy work horses to Arthur Evans's Coal Depository by the harbour. On the beach, local fishermen sat mending their whelk pots and repairing their fishing nets. When the children tired of watching all this activity, they jumped or dived into the little dock to the south side of the harbour ... At night, the children could hear the waves crashing against the rocks and, through the windows overlooking the harbour, see the light of the Bailey Lighthouse near Howth flashing across Dublin Bay. These sights and sounds ... were to stay deeply etched in Beckett's memory ... permeated his imagination and pervaded his work.'

Returning to Trafalgar Road which runs uphill from the Harbour, note the walls topped with stones from the beach, which are a feature of the area. On the right-hand side of Trafalgar Road is 3 Bethel Terrace, another of the several houses rented by the Synge family in the village, and later the home of the composer Archibald James (AJ) Potter (1918-1980). Born in Belfast, Potter was educated at the Royal College of Music in London and at TCD, and was subsequently Professor of Composition at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. He was the author of numerous orchestral and vocal works, and has been described as 'one of Ireland's most important and influential composers of the twentieth century. He died in Greystones, and is buried in Redford Cemetery.

Moving on, we pass a block of apartments, built on the site of St Killian's Hall. Originally known as Trafalgar Hall, this was intended as a Church of Ireland parish hall, and was used as a meeting place by the local Orange Order for many years. Burnt down during the 1920s, it was later acquired by Holy Rosary parish for use as a church hall, and became a central feature of Greystones social life, hosting dances, plays, pantomimes, films, and meetings over many decades. Close by, Coolna-greina, occupied for more than a century by the YWCA, is another of John Doyle's building projects, and beyond it is Kenmare Terrace. Built to house the coastguards, who moved to this site in 1843 from the former coastguard station at Blacklion, these premises consisted of a two-storey officer's house (Trafalgar House) and a row of cottages, together with a boat-house. Some of the cottages later housed small businesses - one was a haberdashery, another a tea-room and ice-cream parlour.

On the other side of the road, at the corner of Trafalgar Road and Sidmonton Road, is the site of yet another of Greystones's now-vanished hotels, the Braemar, and a little further on, behind the wall and adjoining the La Touche Hotel, is a small building, once a bank. The hotel itself closed in 2005, and is now, sadly, derelict. Opened in 1894 as the Grand Hotel, its many notable visitors over the years included Michael Collins (1890-1922), who arrived here late on an October evening in 1921. At 5.30 next morning Collins walked from the hotel to nearby Holy Rosary Church, where he received Holy Communion from Fr Ignatius CP, who was currently leading a mission in the parish. On parting, the priest gave him a prayer book with a crucifix inside, and Collins asked him to 'say the Mass for Ireland. He crossed to London an hour or so later as one of the Irish delegation to the talks due to begin on 11th October 1921 and which ended nearly two months later with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Collins was a regular visitor to Greystones: during De Valera's frequent absences during the War of Independence, he used to check on the welfare of Sinead and the De Valera family, then living at Craig Liath (now Edenmore) on Kinlen Road. Another link was his aunt, Maisie Touhig O'Brien, who lived at Dysart, on Kimberley Road.

Marine Terrace, the short road running down from Trafalgar Road towards the sea, is dominated on the right-hand side of the road by the Garda Station. Built as a coastguard station in about 1872 by John Doyle, these premises were taken over in 1922 by the newly-formed Garda Síochána, and one of its most famous short-term residents was playwright Brendan Behan, charged with drunk and disorderly behaviour and detained there overnight in March 1959. Along the edge of the street you will see a few more of its original cobblestones.

Continuing along Trafalgar Road, St Brigid's School on the left is built on the site of Lewis's Hotel, where Collins is also reputed to have stayed. Following the closure of the hotel, the building was acquired in 1955 by the Holy Faith Sisters for use as a girls' boarding school. On the other side of the street is Brooklands, which Collins, in anticipation of his marriage to Kitty Kiernan, reportedly hoped to acquire as a family home.

Next door to St Brigid's (now a national school) is the Holy Faith Convent of Our Lady of the Angels, built by Patrick Kinlen to house the Holy Faith Sisters, who arrived in Greystones on 1st September 1906, in response to the invitation of local parish priest, Dr Nicholas Donnelly. Two days later, on 3 September, the sisters officially opened their school, with just seven pupils on the roll. Numbers steadily increased over the years: a national school for girls was established in 1917, as well as one for boys at Blacklion, and other properties, including the former Lewis's Hotel and a number of houses on the seafront were acquired to provide primary and second-level education for an ever-expanding population.

Across the street is the Presbyterian Church. A Presbyterian mission station was established in Kilpedder, about four miles away, in 1851, and by the 1880s one was opened in Greystones itself. In 1884 William Robert La Touche of Bellevue donated a site for a meeting house for the combined congregations of Kilpedder and Greystones. The church was built by local labour in just four months, and formally opened on 3 July 1887.

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Just a few steps further on, on the corner of Trafalgar Road and La Touche Road, stands Holy Rosary Church, built by Patrick Kinlen on the site of a galvanised-iron chapel, destroyed by a violent storm in 1903. The partially-built church was used for the first time in 1904, and was officially opened in 1909. The church contains some fine stained glass, most notably two windows (The Good Shepherd and Our Lady of the Rosary) by Evie Hone (1894-1955), and two (The Annunciation of the Virgin and The Coronation of the Virgin) by David Clarke (1920-2005), a former resident of Greystones, and son of the artist Harry Clarke.

Leaving the church, cross the road and continue past a couple of pretty cottages on the right, and over the railway bridge onto La Touche Place. On your left is Eden Road, and Davis's Garage - look upwards to see the World War 2 siren on the roof. This was utilised until 1979 as the local fire alarm, activated, from her house on the corner of La Touche Close opposite, by Beatrice Gunning. The Greystones fire engine - a Land Rover with a green canvas back - was kept in the shed adjoining Gunning's' house. A little further on, on the left-hand side of La Touche Place, is the site of the primary school which served the Church of Ireland population prior to the building of the present St Patrick's School in 1975.

Turning left at the T-junction, you find yourselves once more on Church Road, Greystones's main shopping area. Walking along the street (perhaps dawdling en route for a spot of window- shopping or a coffee) you pass a Spanish restaurant, Las Tapas, once a drapery shop, known first as The Arcade and later as Bel's. A little further on Beau's Walk, a small alley-way leading down towards the railway line, is a reminder of a dapper former resident.

Before ending your walk at the station, take a look at the Carnegie Library a little further on. This is one of sixty-six such libraries in Ireland whose building was financed by the American industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. Built in 1910 on land donated by Mrs Le Blond, owner of the Hawkins- Whitshed/Burnaby estate, the library was recently refurbished, with windows in the upstairs reading-room offering excellent views of the South Beach and the coast beyond.

Now retrace your steps to our final stop, the Station, opened in 1856, a year after the opening of the Bray/Wicklow railway line on 29th October 1855. Situated on the boundary of the La Touche and Hawkins-Whitshed/Burnaby estates, it was erected at a cost of £3,000. Though most of its users over the years have been blameless commuters, shoppers and holiday-makers, the station has seen its fair share of excitement, most notably during the troubled years of the War of Independence and the Civil War. In 1918, for instance, Eamon De Valera was travelling home by train one night to his home in Greystones when he was informed that two detectives were on the same train, and intended to arrest him when they arrived at their destination. The engine driver offered to slow down the train as it approached the station so that De Valera could jump off, but he chose not to accept this offer, and when he stepped out onto the platform was approached by the two detectives and put under arrest. Imprisoned in Lincoln Gaol, he later made his escape to the US, only returning to his family in Greystones in late 1920.

A couple of years later, with the Civil War raging, the Station or its environs was the scene of a more farcical encounter, when Dev's former comrades in the Free State administration issued orders for his arrest. In Greystones the local Gardai, on the lookout for the wanted man, apprehended instead the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Dr J A F Gregg. Described as 'tall, dignified, intellectual and aloof, the archbishop was evidently a dead ringer for the austere revolutionary, and was only released after a retired clergyman turned up to vouch for his identity.

The Station is an appropriate spot to end our walk, both because of its convenience for present-day visitors, and because of its significance in Greystones's story. Prior to the arrival of the railway, Greystones was little more than a fishing village, off the main routes and unlikely to attract any but the most intrepid travellers. The coming of the railway and easy

access to Dublin and to the east coast heralded something of a building boom, with a growth in the permanent population as well as in the numbers of summer visitors. The areas of the town which we have visited today will have given some idea of that process. There is, of course, much more of Greystones's story to tell - but that will have to wait for another day, and another walk.

## Sources

Much of the information on which this trail is based was contained in Greystones: its buildings and history, vols 1 and 2 (2012 and 2013), produced by the Greystones Archaeological and Historical Society/La Touche Legacy Committee. GAHS member Colin Love, architectural editor of those volumes, also alerted me to the account of the Elverys' residence in Dorothy Kay, *The Elvery family: a memoir* (1991). The account of J M Synge's childhood stays is from Rev Samuel Synge, *Letters to my daughter: memories of John Millington Synge* (1931), and that of the Beckett family's holiday home from James Knowlson, *Damned to fame: the life of Samuel Beckett* (1996). Peter McNiff recounted the story of Elizabeth Grundy's murder in a paper read to the Society in March 2010, and further information on this episode was obtained from contemporary newspapers. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington's account of her confrontation with the Chief Secretary is from 'Reminiscences of an Irish suffragette', *Field Day Anthology of Irish writing*, vol 5 (2002), pp 91-99, p. 93.

Further information on Greystones is in Derek Paine's seven volumes of photographs, in Samuel French, *Greystones, 1864- 1964* (1964), and in previous volumes of the Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society Journal (volumes 1-7 available online at [www.greystonesahs.org](http://www.greystonesahs.org)).

Many of the places of interest mentioned in this paper are noted on the following Google Map: <https://www.google.com/maps/@53.1454444,-6.0660432,17z>

A copy of the brochure mentioned at the start of this article is available online at: [http://www.greystonesahs.org/gahs1/images/Trails of Greystones.pdf](http://www.greystonesahs.org/gahs1/images/Trails%20of%20Greystones.pdf)

## Canon Robert Jennings

Canon Robert Jennings has supported the Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society since its inception and over the years has delivered many elegant and thought-provoking presentations to the Society. The following article, which summarises his long and interesting life, is based on material written by Myles Buchanan and published in the Wicklow People newspaper. Some additional material was added by Frank Deignan.

At 90 years of age, Canon Robert (Bob) Jennings has managed to fit more into his busy lifetime than most people could even afford to dream about.

Bob was born on 1st September 1924. He was ordained in Derry Cathedral in 1948 and was curate of Omagh and Mountfield Parishes before joining the British army in 1950. In the following year he volunteered to serve in the Korean War as Chaplain to the Welch Regiment. Within no time he was sent off as part of the UN mission to Democratic Korea where the UN was defending it from communist North Korea and China. Up to three million soldiers and civilians died in this war.

While Bob was chaplain to the Welsh Regiment he also administered to other British and American soldiers.

He still vividly recalls some of the horrors of war, including the harsh life in the trenches, particularly during the freezing cold winter of 1950 when many of the men suffered from frost bite and a number of American and Chinese soldiers froze to death:

*'There were no duvets, fleeces or Alpine clothing then, instead it was string vests, long johns, flannel shirts and pullovers under your uniform. It was nearly impossible to get warm food as most of it was frozen and they had little means of lighting fires to heat it. Some men often cooked their food by burning diesel, which could be just as dangerous as the shelling.'*

Bob was bunkered behind the lines at Battalion HQ where he built his own dugout beside the Doctor. He made it as comfortable as possible.

One of these comforts was a bath, and as you can imagine he soon was not short of friends who wanted to use it as regularly as possible.

While chaplains do not usually carry guns, the Chinese did not recognise the Geneva Convention so Bob was issued with a 38 revolver:

'I only really used it to take pot shots at the rats in my bunker and there were plenty of them.'

In 1952 Bob returned from Korea and went on to Chaplain plenty of other regiments. Among them were the Paras where he enjoyed no less than 49 jumps.

He also served in England, Hong Kong, British Guiana, Northern Ireland and Germany before retiring in 1967 after 17 years' service. In 1956 he married Jean and, throughout the various postings, they raised their family: Kerry, Rosaleen, Clodagh, Katie and Robert.

He was a Canon in the Church of Ireland and served in Killeshandra, Co Cavan before going to Newcastle. He was rector for 22 years in Newcastle, Newtownmountkennedy and Calary parishes. He retired in 1992.

During those 22 years he was very involved in the community. He wrote several local history books including ones on Newcastle, Calary, Newtownmountkennedy and Kilcoole.

He was a founder member of St Catherine's School in Newtownmountkennedy and manager for 22 years, first chairperson of Sunbeam services and a member of the government advisory body on nursing homes. He was awarded 2008 National Community Person of the year.

Bob still lives in Newcastle taking life slower but despite his two retirements it will be no surprise if he takes up another community project.

Another of his great passions is history. In 2008 his book Newcastle Down the Years was published. The book covers the full history, heritage, community and religious past of Newcastle and is a fount of information.

The history of Newcastle and its early inhabitants goes back to prehistoric times. The earliest, but still visible, evidence is from the Bronze Age 2000 - 500 BC.

In 1984 Bob released a commemorative booklet on Calary Church and the Diocese of Glendalough.

In 2008 he was involved in the ceremonial erection of the plaque in memory of the unknown crew members of the doomed ship 'Elaine', which was lost with all hands along the Wicklow Banks in January of 1883.

The 'Elaine' had broken up on the beach and three bodies were found immediately. They were identified but the bodies of another five crewmen were washed ashore weeks after the tragedy. They were unidentifiable and buried in Newcastle's Church of Ireland churchyard, but



Canon Robert Jennings at home in Newcastle (© Wicklow People)

without any markers for their graves. Bob also carried out his own research into the **Newcastle burial plots.**

Bob also researched the life of Sir Albert Hime who lived in Ballydonerea House, Kilcoole and became the first Prime Minister of Natal in South Africa. On one of his visits to South Africa Bob visited Himeville, called after Sir Albert, and received a great welcome from the Mayor and residents. On returning home, and with the support of others, he arranged for a plaque to be erected on the entrance to Ballydonerea House in memory of Sir Albert which was unveiled by the South African Ambassador.

He was also heavily involved in last year's centenary arrangements of the Kilcoole gun running on August 2, 1914.

Bob returned to Korea to remember the 60th anniversary of the Armistice and he received an award from the South Korean government for his service to their Country.

***CANON ROBERT JENNINGS***

He also held a service for Anzac Day and the Australians awarded him for that as well. Anzac Day is a national day of remembrance in Australia which commemorates all those who served and died in wars. The day was originally devised to honour the members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) who fought at Gallipoli against the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

More recently he was invited to take part in the Wicklow town St Patrick's Day parade by the Post 21 Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA). The post is the Wicklow branch of the association and re-opened in June 2012. They provide counselling, welfare and social services to members and their families in the county.

## Wicklow Gold

An adventure that brought a thousand people to Wicklow hills and streams

The article that follows was written more than 40 years ago for a local newspaper by Andrew Phelan.

### Introduction

'They use picks, spades, shovels, iron spoons, and even bits of slate, and must have left three times as much gold behind as they discover, for they do not half clean or wash the clay or gravel. The quartz here is exactly like that found in the gold mines of Hungary, and the gold, embedded in it, is considered to be very pure.'

These were the words used by a London newspaperman to describe the fevers of gold rush. But this was a gold rush, not across the far Yukon or on torrid uplands of Africa; it all happened a few miles from Woodenbridge, in Co. Wicklow.

In 1795 there was no reason to think that Irish gold deposits were other than exhausted. Ancient Ireland, of course, was rich in gold. The National Museum in Dublin has, in terms of numbers and total weight, possibly the largest collection of gold ornaments in Northern Europe.

Since they were made long before the Christian era, when forest and swamp preserved isolation and uncertain trade routes were confined to the river valleys, it is reasonable to suppose that they had their sources in local deposits of the precious mineral.

### Biggest find

Newmarket-on-Fergus was the site of one of the biggest discoveries of gold objects ever made in Europe. They were exposed by workmen excavating the line of the West Clare Railway in 1854.

Implements for smelting gold and gold ornaments have been found in the Bog of Cullen near the Limerick - Tipperary border and at the fords of the Shannon.

There have been many discoveries in Donegal, Wexford, and Carlow and the old annals refer to gold workings thousands of years ago in the forests to the east of the Liffey. There are traces of gold in the Glendun River in Antrim and in the Dodder above Rathfarnham.

The streets of Dublin are not lined with gold but traces of it do exist in the quarries above Montpelier and Bohernabreena from which the city got its paving stones after 1851.

### Wicklow nuggets

In spite of the country's ancient familiarity with the metal, it was an unbelieving public that heard in the autumn of 1795 of substantial discoveries in the Wicklow hills.

About 20 years before, a schoolmaster at Ballinvalley, near Woodenbridge, had discovered a nugget of gold in a nearby stream. Not unnaturally, he kept his discovery a secret at the time.

It was not until September 1795, that the tongues of rumour were spreading news of Wicklow gold throughout Leinster. Some reports suggest that years of enforced silence had at last proved too much for the schoolmaster's wife; others refer to a boy's chance discovery of further nuggets when fishing in the streams of this lovely countryside.

At any rate, by the end of September in that year its seclusion was at an end.

Hundreds of amateur prospectors were camped along the river banks. Goldsmiths from Dublin had arrived with their scales. The area was called 'Little Peru' and the most fruitful stream got the name 'Gold Mines River'.

It bears that name still as it runs its five-mile course in a north-eastern direction towards Woodenbridge from the slopes of Croghan Mountain on the Wicklow-Wexford border.

It is one of a number of streams running north and east off the hillside. They lie in narrow valleys, in a district of rolling uplands, and mingle with the waters of the Avoca at Woodenbridge.

## Like duck-shot

The Times of London sent a correspondent to the scene in September. He wrote:

'I found three small streams that come down from the top of the mountain. Where they meet is level ground and here the people are throwing off the surface of the bog and finding gold grains a large as duck-shot. They work in gangs of six or eight men and each gang has a treasurer.'

## A few weeks later he reports:

'There are now at least 1,000 people here; two or three hundred men digging on the bogs and the women washing the sand and gravel in the streams. Three men found a nugget of the amazing weight of 22 ounces. It is, indeed, fortunate that most of the harvest was in before these gold deposits were discovered; otherwise not a labourer could be found.'

The nugget of 22 ounces was made into a snuff box for George III. Many smaller nuggets were found and, until stolen in 1865, one was on view in the Royal Dublin Society Museum. As closely as can be estimated, about 800 ounces of gold may have been extracted in the Wicklow gold-rush.

After six weeks the Kildare militia turned the prospectors away and mounted guard over the area. The British Government secured an Enabling Act from the Irish Parliament and established a gold-washing plant. This was destroyed three years later in the '98 Rebellion but during that time it had worked at a profit and produced over 500 ounces of gold.

## Later attempts

Gold working resumed in 1800 and concentrated on the digging of exploration trenches along the slopes of Croghan Mountain. At one point a shaft was driven into the hillside.

These labours were abandoned in 1803, but in this period the stream gravels lower down had yielded a further 400 ounces. We know that in 1840 a body called the Crockford Mining Company acquired the mineral rights and in a few months recovered 600 ounces.

One nugget weighed eleven ounces and The Mining Journal reported that 'every flood carries down particles to the common stream and the properties of the ores are very like those of the gold country of South Africa'.



Later the Carysford Mining Company worked on the site and there have been a number of personal ventures started under the lure of Wicklow gold.

## Some hope

A Mr. St. John Lyburn traced veins near the top of the mountain in 1899 which gave four pennyweights to the ton but considered that extraction would not be commercially profitable.

Occasional washings have been made in recent times, not with much success, but the summer Rambler who would like to do a little spare time prospecting can take heart from the words of two geologists. 'The possibilities of these gravels,' said Mr. Malcolm Maclaren in 1903, 'are, as far as I am aware, absolutely unknown'; and Mr. Hallissey, the Director of the Geological Survey of Ireland, addressing the International Geological Association in 1929 said: 'Many geologists think the possibilities are by no means exhausted.'

At Arklow Head, near where the Avoca meets the coast, the black sand shows even now the evidence, very faint but certain, that Wicklow rivers still bear some tribute towards the sea.

# Lost buildings of Greystones

Colin Love

## Introduction

Greystones abounds with fine buildings, but, over the years, and for numerous reasons, parts of the built heritage have disappeared. Significant structures such as St Killian's Hall, Hillside Farm and Hillside Cottage, a thatched dwelling, are now gone. The following paper describes some of the buildings that have been lost to Greystones, their stories and the people involved with them.

## Jubilee Castle

Jubilee Castle was a simple two storey castellated detached house, built about 1890, located on Sea Beach Road. It was the home of the Hewson family which included Thomas Hewson, the Rev Henry Hewson, M J Hewson, the Rev Maurice Hewson and F M Hewson. These were the children of Falkiner Minchin Hewson and Mary Brownrigg Hewson

By 1913 the house was occupied by William John Young, who renamed it Rosetta Fort. He occupied it until 1930 when, along with several other houses on Sea Beach Road, such as Woodbine Cottage, St David's Cottage and Seaforth, it was damaged by a storm and subsequently demolished.

## Liscarrig House

Liscarrig House was a detached so-called gentleman's house, with double height bay windows, located on Marine Road, roughly where the basketball court of St David's School is located today. It was built circa 1870. The first occupant that can be found was Joseph Dobbs Esq., a colliery owner and farmer, who also resided at Coolbawn House, Castlecomer, in County Kilkenny. Joseph was the owner of Jarrow Collieries Ltd., based in Castlecomer. By 1922 his wife and son were living at Liscarrig. His son, Captain John Kivas Dobbs, was in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and was chosen by Ernest Shackleton to be in charge of Dogs on the SS Endurance 1914 expedition. On the outbreak of World War I he returned to his battalion from the South Atlantic and was awarded the Military Cross for his service. John was fortunate to survive this war, unlike his brother Lieutenant Colonel George Dobbs who was killed in 1917.

By 1934 Liscarrig was the home of Dr Robert Blake McVittie and his wife Violet nee Poole. Robert was a noted doctor and writer. Publications include *Train Up a Child*, a view on child development, which was published in 1930. When Violet died she bequeathed the house as retirement home for retired clergyman and their wives. The house was sold to the Sisters of the Holy Faith about 1975 and was subsequently demolished. Braemar Hotel

A two storey four bay detached hotel, built about 1890 as a house which was located at the corner of Sidmonton Road and Trafalgar Road. In 1906 Braemar was occupied by Major Robert Fetherstone Devereux, retired from the 2nd West India Regiment, and his wife Frances Josephine Alicia Dennis. Richard Gorman acquired Braemar around 1915, and he converted it into a hotel. It remained in Richard Gorman's ownership until it was destroyed by fire in the 1950's and subsequently demolished. Magheralin House A detached single storey house built circa 1860 which was located at the junction of Rathdown Road and Church Road. At the turn of the 20th century the house was occupied by Henry Flavelle and family who lived primarily in Rathmines. In 1906 it was the home of the Misses Beattie and in 1922 was the home of Elizabeth Mary Ussher, who died in 1926. John Reid lived at Magheralin after Mrs Ussher and it later became the home of Charles Croly. Magheralin was recently demolished after a fire.

## St David's House

A substantial detached two storey gentleman's house, situated where St David's School is today, built about 1890 for Arthur Hughes. The architect may have been William Kaye Parry. Arthur Hughes was a grain merchant of 8 Burgh Quay in Dublin.



Magheralin House



St David's House (© Colin Love)

By 1908 St. David's was occupied by Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Samuel Heuston, C.M.G., R.A.M.C. In 1910 it had in residence the well-known surgeon Francis Thomas Heuston, Frederick's brother, who was Professor of Anatomy at the Royal College of Surgeons and Surgeon to the Adelaide Hospital. Frederick and Francis were the sons of Robert and Elizabeth (nee Tydd) Heuston. Frederick was senior medical officer of the Scottish Coast defences. He served in the RAMC and opened the Chinese Imperial Medical College in 1894, of which he

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was President and senior Professor. He was decorated for services in the China-Japanese war by the Chinese Emperor with the Imperial Double Dragon. St David's was later the home of Stella Kate Dempsey and then John David Digges La Touche who was in the Chinese Maritime Customs and was Deputy Commissioner of Customs at Chinwangtao. His is best known for writing *A Handbook of the Birds of Eastern China*, which was published in two volumes. St David's was later acquired by the Sisters of the Holy Faith, and later demolished to accommodate St David's School which still occupies the site today.

## Pretoria House

A detached two storey, three bay gentleman's house, with two storey bay window built circa 1895. It was located where the Supervalu supermarket on Church Road is situated today. The original owner was Alexander Buckley and it remained in the Buckley family, who were prominent victuallers on Church Road. It was demolished in the 1980s prior to the building of Supervalu.

## Verdella Cottage

A single storey house built around 1890, with central door flanked by bay windows. It was built by Patrick Flynn, who built six houses in Greystones including Waverly and Menlo on Church Road. In 1894 it was the home of Thomas Jefferson Thomson CE, who was the son of Ross Thompson of Greenwood Park, County Down. Thomas was the Assistant Engineer on the Armagh and Monaghan railway. He was made Superintendent and Chief Engineer of the Bahia and Sao Francisco Railway in Brazil. Between 1881 and 1885 he was involved in the construction of the Denver and Rio Grande and other railways in America. He returned to Ireland and worked for the Board of Works on various harbour works, prior to retiring in 1897. He also lived in a house in the Burnaby. In 1906 Verdella was occupied by a Mrs Ferrar, though by 1910 it was the home of John McGonigal, BL, also of Mount Street Crescent. John McGonigal was born in County Down and was married to Margaret Mary. He was called to the bar in 1892 and became Professor of Law at Kings Inns. In 1939 he became County Court Judge for County Down.

In 1935 Bride O'Mara died at Verdella. She was the mother in law of Dr William J Cussen, who was living at Verdella. Bride was the widow of Joseph O'Mara, who was a noted opera singer from Limerick. Joseph was chief tenor at Drury Lane and at Covent Garden. He was the lead tenor of the Moody Manners Opera Company before he founded the O'Mara Travelling Opera Company. By 1939 Verdella was occupied by Dr Finnegan, though by 1946 it had become the home of William Johnson Bowesman, an accountant, and his wife Edith. In 1958 John P Elliott was living there. Finally Verdella was demolished in 1970 and became a supermarket, later owned by Frank Love. Today the site is occupied by Extravision on Church Road.

## Killincarrig House

A large two storey, three bay fronted mid-19th century detached country house, built for the Hawkins-Whitshed family. This house was located near Charlesland Golf Club. It appears that the 2nd Bart Sir Vincent Keene Hawkins-Whitshed built Killincarrig House, replacing an earlier house. Sir Vincent was the son of Admiral Sir James Hawkins-Whitshed. He was married to the daughter of Lord Erskine and divided his time between London, Killincarrig House and Johnstown, County Dublin. Killincarrig House was inherited by Elizabeth Hawkins-Whitshed, later Burnaby. She was a noted alpine climber and writer. In 1917 Killincarrig House was lived in by the Right Hon. Richard Robert Cherry who was a liberal MP for Liverpool and became the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. He was married to Mary Wilhelmina, the daughter of Robert Cooper of Collinstown House, Leixlip. Richard was called to the bar in 1881. He was Professor of Criminal Law at Dublin University between 1889 and 1894.

By 1926 Killincarrig had become the Clyda Hotel whose proprietor was Cornelius de Groot, an antiques dealer from Bray. By 1939 Killincarrig House had become the International Hotel. Later it was called the Woodlands Hotel prior to a fire and demolishment.

## Rathdown House

An early two storey, three bay house, originally owned by the Morres or Morris family. It was located off Windgates Road, near to the entrance of where Redford Park is today. The playwright John Millington Synge stayed here with his family in the summer of 1884. In 1906, it was lived in by a Mrs Fox and later became the home of Captain Gracie, followed by Miss Lavinia Armstrong and Miss Blunden. Lavinia was born in County Dublin. She was the daughter of E J Armstrong, DL, Esq of Lismohar, County Clare and Leeson Street, Dublin. Her sister who lived with her was the widow of Maurice Robert Blunden, son of Sir John Blunden of Castle Blunden, County Kilkenny.

## Fernside

Fernside was a two storey, three bay semi-detached house that was located where Sam McCauley's Chemist is located today. It was built around 1880 and was lived in by William C Watson, who was Postmaster of Greystones, and his wife Eleanor A Watson. It was later lived in by M Blackmore.

## Lewis's Hotel

A two storey, four bay hotel built circa 1895. The building may have been called Prospect, a restaurant run by Henry Joseph Evans in 1908. John Hughes Lewis is recorded in 1922 as proprietor of a Hotel and Restaurant on Trafalgar Road, called initially the Central Hotel and then Lewis's Hotel. John was born in Essex, England and in 1911 was a Catering Manager, living in Dublin. He was married to Kathleen Lewis. He died in August 1932. The hotel was owned later by Edward F Fleming, who died in 1946. He was married to Margaret (Orse Rita) Fleming. It eventually became a boarding school before being demolished in 1972 to make way for St Brigid's primary school on Trafalgar Road.

## Greystones Golf Club

Greystones Golf Club was originally a nine-hole golf course laid out, on part of the Burnaby Estate, in 1895, the same year the first Pavilion House was built for the club. This was also the year that the first professional golf tournament took place in Ireland. The owners of the Grand Hotel established the club. The Golf Club was extended in 1914 when extra land was purchased and in the same year Mr. Bonar Law, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, played Golf in Greystones. Between 1945 and 1969 the president of the club was Lord Glenavy.

The Pavilion House was a timber structure, developed by Robert Harpur in a colonial style, and was entered at the end of Pavilion Road off Whitshed Road in the Burnaby. It was extended before 1926 in a similar style, but unfortunately was burnt down circa 1980 and was subsequently demolished. Today the clubhouse is located in what was Killincarrig House, the original Whitshed family home.

## Walkers Garage, Church Road

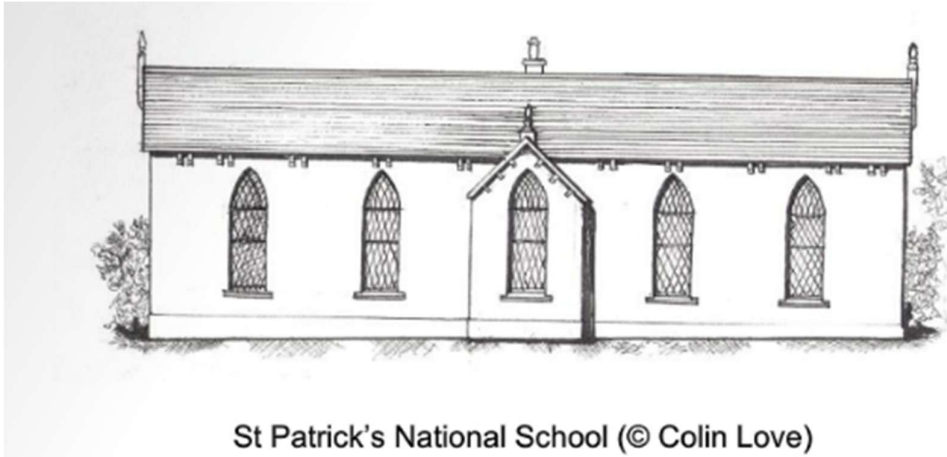
A red brick garage located where Mrs. Robinson's bar is located today. It was built around 1940. Designed in the Art Deco style, Walkers Garage produced caravans in the 1940s and was founded by Thomas Walker, who was a professional golfer and made golf clubs of some repute. It was later run by Bill Paterson and Jack Smallman. The building was demolished to make way for a more modern Garage for the Hill family, but it too was subsequently demolished for a commercial development in the last 10 years.

## Watson and Johnson Garage, Church Road

An Art Deco building now sadly demolished and converted to shops. Built around 1945, though could have been built earlier.

## St Patrick's National School

The school was designed/engineered by James Price of Knockeevin, Church Road, who was a member of the vestry of the parish. He was also the designer of Knockdolian, Church Lane, and of the reservoir for Greystones.



St Patrick's National School (© Colin Love)

The first stone for the school (under the patronage of the Church of Ireland) was laid in September 1879 by William Robert La Touche in La Touche Place. The original contractor was Richard Henry Ludlow of Willow House, Church Road who built the walls of the school. George Enright Doyle of Stanley, Church Road completed the work on the school. The school had a schoolmaster's house, named Seamount, located in the grounds of the school. This house was the original school, with a teacher's residence on the first floor. Later the new school was replaced by a prefab school on the same site in La Touche Place and Seamount became the sextons' house.

When St Patrick's National School was opened in the 1970s in Church Road one of the prefabricated classrooms was moved to beside St Patrick's Church. It was used as a Parish Room until the Parish Centre was built in 2005 at the Church. The Parochial Hall, St Patrick's Hall, which was built in 1958, was in Kimberley Road, at some distance from the Church, so the prefab was used for small gatherings and was convenient to the Church. The other prefab classroom remained at La Touche Place and was a voluntarily-run Parish Thrift Shop, which raised funds for St Patrick's for many years.

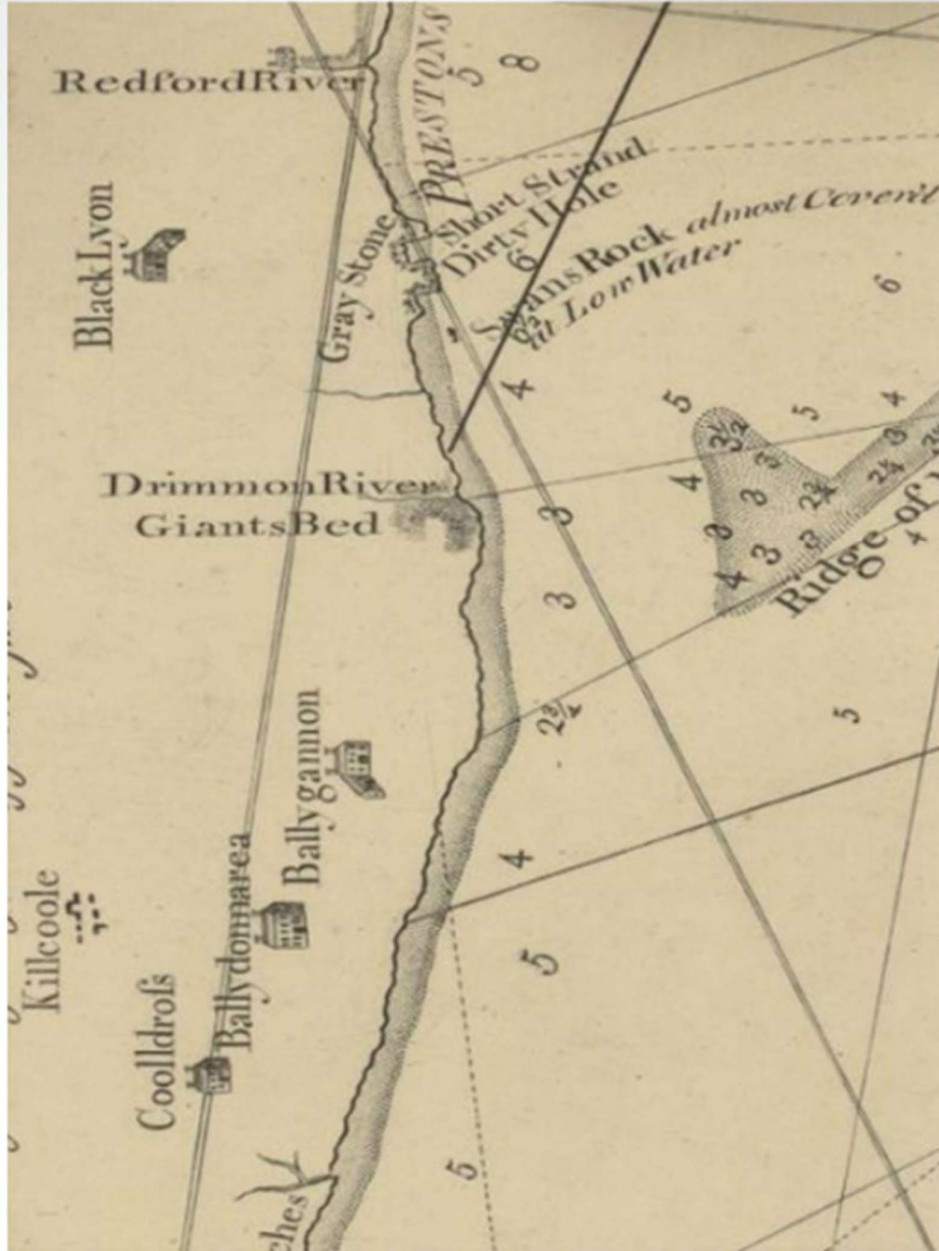
The Principal of the school in 1871 was Miss Richards. The first Schoolmaster of the new school was John L. Johnstone and the Schoolmistress was Rebecca Johnstone. By 1901 Rebecca, aged sixty, was a widow and a school teacher in Kilbixy, Westmeath. By 1894 Thomas and Jane Greenaway were Master and Mistress of the school. Thomas retired between 1901 and 1911. He was from County Armagh. Jane was an organist and was from County Limerick. The School Principal in 1910 was James Joseph Hazlett, whose wife Alice was also a national School Teacher. He was born in County Monaghan. Alice was born in Dublin. James was a Graduate of Trinity College and in 1901 was living at Edenvale Road, Rathmines/Rathgar.

## St Patrick's Parish Hall

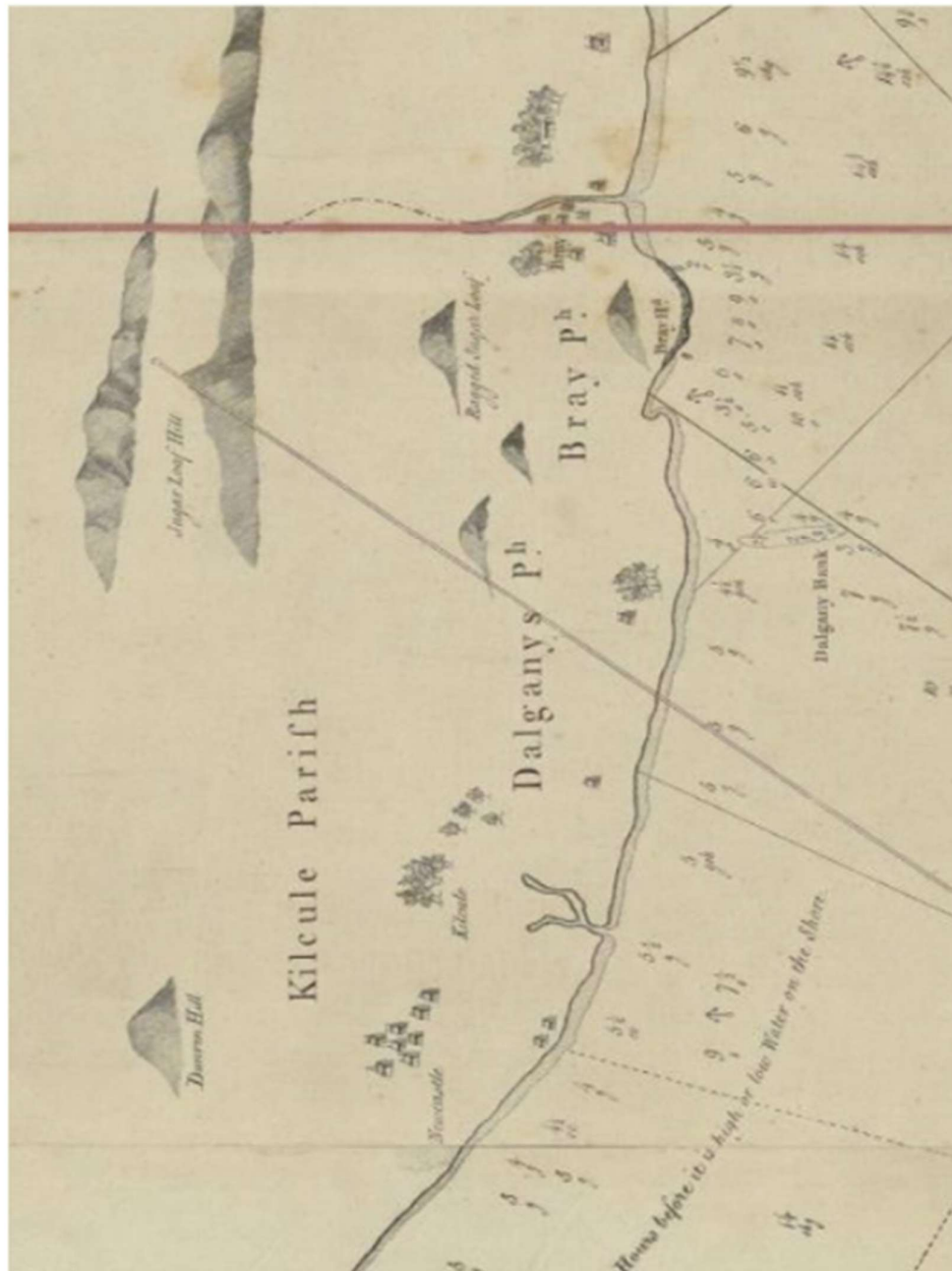
There was no Church Hall until the late 1950's. Church functions were held in the School building (often referred to as 'the Schoolroom') before this. Trafalgar Hall (later St Kilian's Hall) on Trafalgar Road was offered to the parish, but was declined by the Select Vestry. It had been built on the site of the Greystones Orange Lodge. St Patrick's Hall was built on Kimberley

Road at the rear of Liscarrig House in 1958, the foundation stone being laid by Archbishop Simms. Liscarrig House had been willed as a retirement home for retired Clergy and their wives by Mrs Violet McVittie, the widow of Robert Blake McVittie. She also left money for the Parish Hall to be built. The Architect was John Herbert Brown, an Architect based in Molesworth Street in Dublin. He later designed the offices for The Commissioners of Irish Lights on Pembroke Street in Dublin. The contractors of the Church Hall were Messrs James Scott and Co.

## 18th Century Maps of Wicklow Coastline



From 1765 revenue map of Ireland, produced by Bernard Scale and William Richards (image contributed by Brian White)



1776 Navigational Chart of Wicklow Coastline (image contributed by Brian White)

# The Cúl of the Rock

Picturing the past by examining its images

Seamus Hayden

## Introduction

Early in 2014 I set myself the task of chronicling the development of Greystones from a 'noted fishing place' to the small County Wicklow harbour town I was born into almost a century and a half later. The 'Cul of the Rock', I felt, was at the core of it. An almost forgotten place name at the time I first heard it from Dr Eric Doyle in 1956.

In furtherance of this project I read everything I could readily get my hands on.[1-5] Most of all I scrutinised the seven books of old photographs and documents of Greystones and its north County Wicklow environs[6-12] published by fellow Greystones man Derek Paine and his son Gary. I owned all seven. It was then my narrative came alive for me.

Given the connection with Greystones of Robert French, famous chief photographer of William Lawrence, it was natural that I also searched the digitised Lawrence Collections of the Photographic Archive in the National Library of Ireland.[13]

What I observed was that, on occasions, original scenes were re-photographed at later dates while still retaining their original William Lawrence reference numbers. On other admittedly rare occasions, I noticed that images appeared to have been deliberately flipped, or to have been represented as something else. The implication for my search was that I would need to be careful.

## Images of Greystones

Looking briefly at a handful of images from Derek Paine's 1993 book[6] - his first - we immediately encounter a conundrum. On page 7, Derek has reproduced a Lawrence image which was photographed from just south of the railway station and which looks straight up



the Church Road.

Three jaunting cars are pulled in tight to the kerb at the front of the station and a man appears to be leaning with his back to the side wall of the protruding entrance annexe. Three other

men are in conversation at the other side of the road, adjacent to the wall of a plot where McFarland's shop was later built. The building that became the Railway Hotel, and later Larkin's, is unpainted except for a sign that reads 'Hotel & Refreshment Rooms', above and to the left of a single Oriel window in the gable. The houses and plots beyond it on the west side of the road are walled and fronted with a footpath, beyond which can be seen a broad grass verge in which small standard trees are planted. The east side of the road is similarly walled and bordered beyond the station, but the nearest house, a fine two or three storey construction, is a considerable distance up the hill.

The photograph is clearly titled 'Greystones. Co. Wicklow. 481.W.L.' and Derek has dated it 1900. It has to be older.



On page 16 he has reproduced a similar photograph (see below) clearly taken on a later occasion. There is much more traffic about the street and a hansom cab stands together with the other conveyances outside the station. A bicycle is leaning against the entrance annexe.

Across the road, 'A. McFarland's Burnaby Stores' stands proudly at the foot of the street. A man is standing beside a pony and cart to the front of the shop. The hotel is white-painted and the sign, also painted, now reads 'Railway Hotel'. A crafted facade rising to the bottom of the Oriel window wraps the corner on the ground floor. The standard trees lining the street on either side are noticeably larger and additional houses have been built on both sides. There are no longer grass verges. Derek has dated it 1901 and the caption reads 'Church Rd. Greystones, Co. Wicklow'.

What's puzzling is the Lawrence serial number; it also reads 481.W.L.

The earlier image has clearly been reproduced from a postcard in Derek Paine's possession, because it seemingly no longer exists in the Lawrence Collection. The second image does, catalogued as from the 'Royal Collection', and can be accessed online.[13] It seems to me that the first of the Greystones images in Derek's book was most likely published as a postcard from the original 481.W.L. plate in the Royal series, and the second was re-photographed using the same reference number at a later date.

Coincidentally, there is another photograph in the Royal Collection that also appears to be a later duplication from the same time as the McFarland's photo. Numbered 480.W.L. (see below), it is a general view of Greystones looking east from Jones' Hill - the hill at Greystones

Golf Club that many people will be familiar with - and takes in the Grand Hotel and a steamship out to sea.



The number is at odds with the time zone of the general view; the Grand Hotel was only opened in 1894. The 400 range in the Royal Collection is from a decade or more earlier. What is even odder is that virtually the same image was photographed for the Cabinet series just moments before the Royal 480 photo. Check the steamship out to sea in the image below. The Cabinet snap is numbered 3293.W.L, which is also a number from a much earlier sequence.

I believe both of these images were snapped on the same occasion as the 'McFarland's



Burnaby Stores' photograph, which Derek Paine dates to 1901. As I said, one would need to be

careful. The first image, which Derek dated to 1900, was most probably photographed in 1887.

## Back to Greystones Harbour - interrogating the image

In regard to Greystones, the familiarity with the roads and houses that I absorbed in my young days doing paper rounds from the age of eight or nine for my Grandfather John McKenzie, and selling hanks of fish, crab and lobster door to door through the summer months, was an invaluable asset as I started to re-scan Derek Paine's photographs - to interrogate them as it were - even though it is fifty years since I got married and moved away. That old familiarity returned and I began to see in them features I had skipped past when first I acquired Derek's books in the nineteen nineties and later.

A handful of photographs that were taken at or about the harbour and that are scattered through the various volumes were of particular interest. It seemed to me that they were part of a series that had been photographed over a succession of days; which somehow made me think that they might therefore reveal a clue or clues as to the date or dates on which they were snapped. It was something I felt needed to be done; Derek had widely differing dates for some of them.

On page 102 of his first (1993) book[6] he had reproduced what he describes as 'a very old



This is a very old photograph of about 1860, and shows the lime kiln on the north beach. The lime kiln was later built up to house the Jubilee Castle. The boats pulled up on the road are called "Snuffs".

photograph of about 1860'. He is probably right. It appears to have been taken from the triangle that is still there today, minus the original grass, just level with the bottom of Trafalgar Road, with the camera focused nor'nor'west.

What it reveals is that the cottages at the Bawn have already been built, as have five or six other cottages further along the beach, but no two-storey house. The house named Alberta has not yet been built. The expanse of beach is broader than one would expect and the original railway embankment can clearly be seen, as can one end of the Crab Wall. In the background at the extreme left of the photograph stands a stone-built store of some kind, possibly a

boathouse, and a straggle of 'Snuffs' have been pulled right up to the edge of the track or road way in the foreground. The most significant feature is that the gables on the building have a plain finish at roof level. There is no indication as to who took the photograph.

On the following pages he has reproduced a number of later photographs which most assuredly were taken by Robert French. They are numbered from 3291.W.L. to 3339.W.L., although not all the photographs in the sequence are included, and those that are, are mixed through others, as if Derek at the time he published the book was unaware of how they connected. He can hardly be faulted for that, however, because although the Lawrence Photographic Collection had been in the possession of the State for quite some years, I doubt if it had at that stage been digitally processed and made accessible on line.

It took me quite a while to get my head around the various surviving plates that make up the sequence, which may have been taken over as little as two days. The key was in the numbering, as well as in the photographs themselves.

The first, which is numbered 3291.W.L. and is the third of three photographs on page 107 of



Derek's 1993 book, was taken from the green sod at the back of the rocks near the flagstaff and takes in the two Sugarloaves and the north beach from the boathouse to north of the dipping tank.

The two-storey house named Alberta partly obscures some of the cottages of the Bawn and there is a cluster of perhaps eight cottages further north along the beach. All the cottages appear to be white-washed. A long dark-coloured skiff straddles the dried wrack line on the beach, just below the stone-built store from the previous photograph which has already become the RNLI Lifeboat House - check out the stone coping and the granite orbs atop the gables. The photo was taken some time after midday; the walls of both the Lifeboat House and that of Alberta facing the sea are in shadow and the gables facing south are sunlit. It seems to me that this was a trial photograph, taken perhaps a day before the others.

The next photo in the sequence that is still available is numbered clearly 3299.W.L. and it also is reproduced in Derek's 1993 book. It is to be found on page 103, the bottom one of two photos.

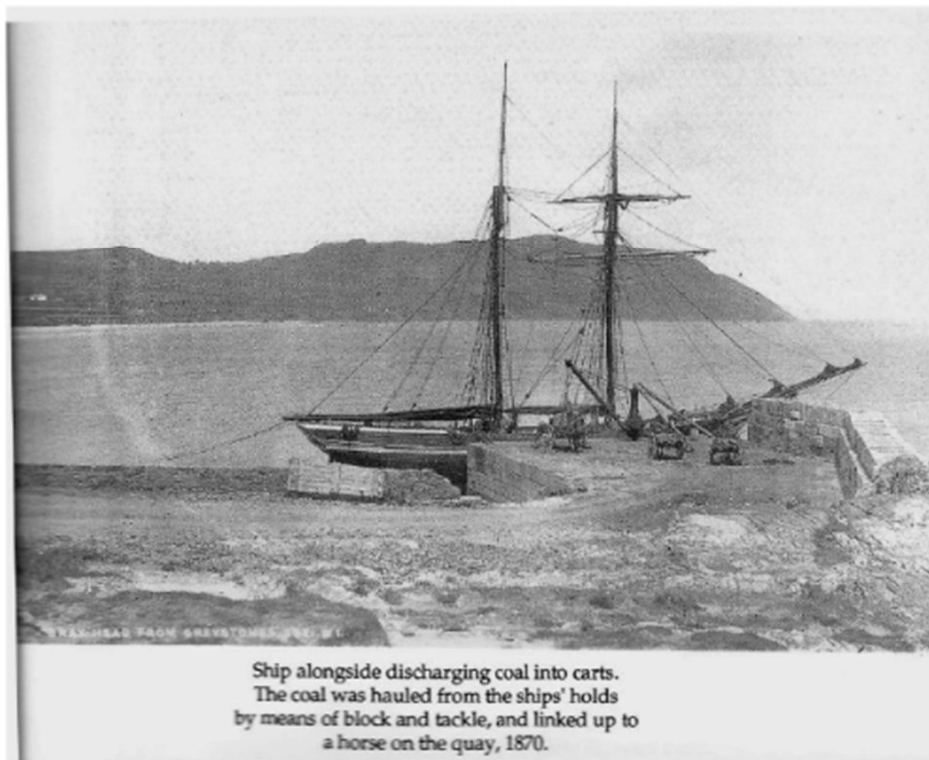


Speculatively, I believe it was taken early enough on the following forenoon. The gables of the only two cottages that are visible up the north beach are in shadow, whereas the fronts of the cottages are sunlit.

In the photo, the north end of the 'crab wall' is just visible and there is an excellent view of the shop that was McEntaggart's then, and Dann's in my time, and of Duncairn Terrace, the railway arch, the Lifeboat House and Alberta. Something over half a dozen snuffs are pulled high up on the beach, with a scatter of skiffs and smaller rowing boats just below them. Two transom-sterned boats, closer to the crab wall, are painted in brighter colours. The long, dark skiff below the Lifeboat House is still astraddle the line of wrack at the high tide mark, and what appear to be three men are sitting on the beach not far away; taking a breather, perhaps, after spreading herring nets out to dry. What looks like a spread of nets can be seen just beyond the skiff and the men on the beach. In the foreground a man looks over the round-topped concrete wall I vaulted over so many times in my youth, and below him, three young people are tending a half-skiff with four rowing thwarts that is just afloat alongside the long grey rock. One of them, a girl, is at the water's edge. A boy, paddling in the water, holds onto the breast hook at the bow. The third, a youth, holds a sculling oar that is cupped atop a small transom at the stern. All in all, it is a peaceful scene. The photograph is clearly identified 'At Greystones, 3299.W.L.'

The activity that all the photos revolve around is featured in the lower of two photos on page 105 of the same 1993 book: a two-masted topsail schooner is discharging coal at the nose of the jetty (see below). The ashlar blocks used in the construction of the jetty and the back wall of the pier are very distinct, as are three horse-drawn drays. One cart is just being loaded while the other two await their turn to pull in under the sheerlegs. It is just about midday or slightly before; there is a faint shadow on the near portion of the back wall on the side facing the shore. And it is summer time; the areas of light and shadow suggest the sun is high. Neither pier nor north groyne have yet been built. It is pre-1884.

Derek Paine's postcard of the schooner discharging to three drays, however, is a Lawrence image that may be unique to Derek. It does not exist in the Lawrence Collection, or if it does, I have not been able to find it. He dates it to 1870, but I feel in this he is mistaken because it is clearly an integral part of the sequence I have identified.



There are two other photos to consider also, both taken from the harbour side of the jetty looking generally in the direction of the coal yards beyond the crab wall. The first of them (see below) appears at the top of page 107 in Derek's 1993 book and the photo takes in the entire sweep of the houses on the south side of the harbour, from the house named Rockport to the house that predated Upton, with Wave Crest, Bayswater Terrace and Bethel Terrace in between, and the roadway to the pier and the rocks on which the slip was later built, in the foreground.



A man standing right in the bow of a rowing boat - the same boat that the three young people were holding just off the beach in the 3299.W.L. image - is doing something at the middle one

of three iron stanchions that have been set into the stone at the very edge of the 'Cool of the Rock'. Two horses and drays can be seen, either passing or just standing in front of the entrance to John Doyle's coal yard below Bethel Terrace, one at each side of the gate which appears to be open. It is a W.L. photo but only the very tops of the four digits in the number are visible. It looks very much as if the number actually reads 3333. Derek Paine captioned it 'Harbour Area, no dock, no slip, early 1880s'. I feel this date is the more likely one for the series of images.

The second of the photos (see below) that was taken from the jetty that day appears at the top of page 103 in Derek's 1993 book and it is also available online under the original number 3334.W.L. And it is from the Cabinet Collection. It too looks straight in along the rocks to Bethel Terrace, where the same two horses and drays appear to be stationary on the road in front of the gate to John Doyle's coal yard. The house that predated 'Upton' is next; then J.C. McEntaggart's. Beyond it are the two exceptionally fine two-storey houses of Duncairn Terrace. The boathouse is just visible at the extreme right, as is the long dark skiff which, if



anything, appears to have been pulled a little higher. Only two men are now sitting on the beach in this photo; the third is standing at the bow of the skiff.

At the other end of the beach a single figure stands at the stern of the transom-sterned half skiff which now appears to be approaching the long grey stone, where another man is waiting to give the first a hand to beach the boat. Just above him and a little to the right, yet another man is standing between the two brightly painted boats that were more clearly seen in photo number 3299.W.L.

One extra detail is somewhat clearer in the online image. A small sailing boat appears to have come to the beach and has been pulled completely clear of the water in between the taking of the two photos; either that, or the men have just brought the gig to the beach and are getting ready to launch it. It can be seen between the two brightly painted transom-sterned boats just under the crab wall. A forward-leaning mast is stepped just forward of amidships and a small jib-sail is rolled around the forestay. The main is about a quarter raised and the boat is painted white, or some other very light colour. This is clearly the same small (Coastguard?) gig pictured in photo number 3331.W.L.

In the foreground to the extreme left of the photo the three metal stanchions set into the rock are clearly visible; they are even more so in the online image, as are the two mooring lines that stretch right across the harbour from the (unseen) stern of the schooner moored at the jetty.

The nearer of the stanchions brought back to me the substantial ring linked into a ringbolt that was set into the same roundy rock at the time the jetty was built, and that was still functional when I was a five year old, the time I slipped off the same rock into the tide and nearly drowned.

There is one further photo in the sequence, identified on the photograph as 'Bray Head from Greystones. 3339.W.L.' and as being part of the Cabinet Collection (see below).

The image captured is of the same top-sail schooner still unloading at the jetty, the disposition of the rigging still the same as in the earlier photo. The whole picture is well lit. It is afternoon, and sunny. The banks and cliffs along the north beach in the background are also much clearer and I fancy I can make out the original 'Gap Bridge'. There is only one horse and dray on the pier and a full lift of coal bags has just cleared the hatch. A man stands in the very stern of a rowing boat alongside the port quarter of the schooner, which obscures all but the stern of the boat. Whether it is the same man and boat that was on the water earlier in the day, there is no

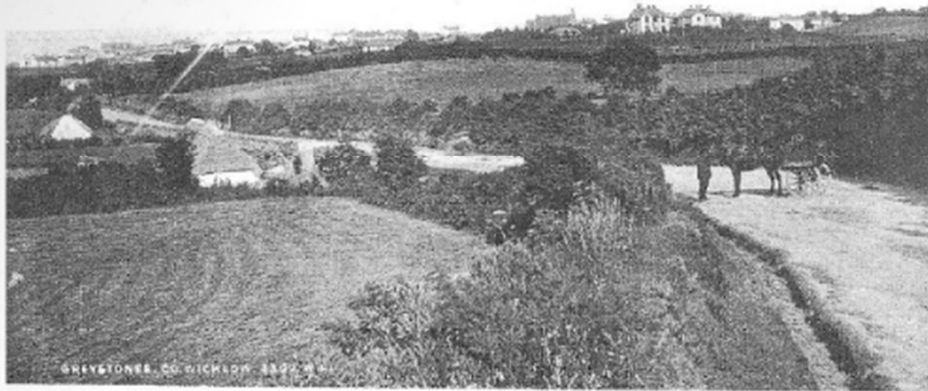


way of knowing, but it's likely. What other images were captured in the two-day photo-shoot - some forty-odd plates by my reckoning - would be another day's work.

## Errant plates

The errant plates niggled at me and I trawled through everything yet again. It was both fruitful and frustrating. I found some photos that seemed to fit the pattern I had teased out, and others that were ambiguous.

The photograph (see below) that Derek Paine captioned 'Rathdown Road, and Jink's Hill, 1904' on page 9 of his 1993 book bamboozled me right to the end. It was so obviously an earlier photo and the Lawrence number 3302.W.L so clearly in accord with the series I had identified, that I checked out the detail only to confirm that. But, there was more to it than immediately met the eye. It showed St Patrick's Church before it was lengthened, but most likely after the north transept was added in 1875. Let me take you through it.



Rathdown Road, and Jink's Hill, 1904.

West of the church, the two fine houses of Killard and Knockdolian, dominate the skyline. Looking east, Duncairn and Burlington, the two houses of Duncairn Terrace are clearly visible beyond the railway embankment, as is J.C. McEntaggart's; there is no harbour as such that I can see and neither the Braemar Hotel nor the Grand Hotel have yet been built, nor the houses in between. But the two houses predating Carrig Eden, and the tower, windows, and chimneys of the Coastguard Station are there. It would be helpful if Derek Paine's original postcard could be re-scanned - what I have reproduced here is only a scan of a scan - and it may be I have missed other tell-tale details. The two-storey house on the distant skyline to the left of St Patrick's Church, for instance, that at first I thought to be Malvern No.1 (1875), turns out when I checked Google Earth for sight-lines to be Brooklands on Trafalgar Rd, a house that has been dated to circa 1870.

What really threw me, however, was what I failed at first to see in a further photograph I came across in the Lawrence Cabinet Collection online. Clearly numbered 3330.W.L and titled 'Bray Head from Jones' Hill, it showed a landscape remarkably clear of development. For a long while I thought that Killard was not there; it had it looked so substantial in the Jink's Hill photo. It was only when I checked the [buildingsofireland.ie](http://buildingsofireland.ie) website that I realized how compact the original house looked when viewed from the south, and that the then isolated house in the photograph was indeed Killard. Let me take you through it also.



The cottages of the Bawn are there as is the cluster of cottages up the north beach. The lime kiln is particularly noticeable. Even the thatch cottage at the bottom of Jink's Hill can be made out with the help of a magnifying glass. Re-roofed, perhaps even rebuilt, it was where the Sheeran family lived when I was growing up. There is a prominent individual tree that appears to be common to both images. St Patrick's Church appears as it was originally built (see - 3329.W.L. below) and Knockdolian is very distinctly visible.

Numerically, both images are co-elements of the series I have identified. But I believe the real purpose of the two particular plates was to showcase the two houses, both of which had only recently been built. The publication *Greystones - its buildings and history* part 2 gives a very definite 1879 as the year in which Knockdolian was completed, while the *Irish Architectural*



Archive has c.1880 for Killard. Together, they add the most positive affirmation yet to the 1880-ish date I have for the images captured about the jetty and the embryo harbour.

The 3329.W.L. Cabinet Collection photograph of St Patrick's which can be found on page 23 of Derek's 2001 book[10] (see above) is also a bit of an enigma in that he dates it to 1864. The actual building is clearly as he describes it - 'as it was originally' - but the ivy growing on all the walls of the church that can be seen shows a growth of a considerable number of years;

not just a mere seven. It even extends to the copings on the eastern gables. The image must be from a later date and my conjectured 1880-ish fits.

A different photograph - of a portion of the Church Road - on page

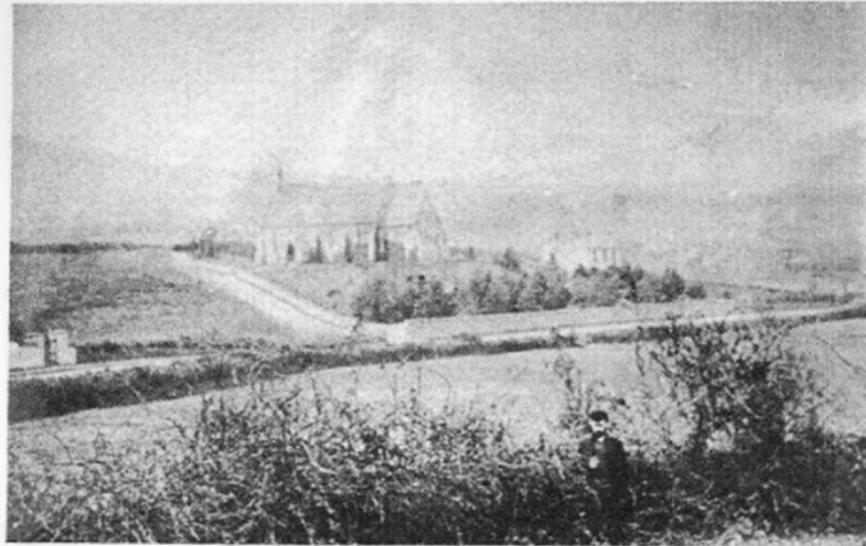


40 of Derek's 2001 book tends to confirm it.

Taken from a position just south of the top of the Turnpike Lane, it shows an unpaved road, with unpaved footpaths and gullies on both sides and what might now be described as 'standard trees - i.e. somewhat stouter than saplings - planted on the verges. Only the east gables of the church can be seen and they are somewhat blurred, even in Derek's book. Viewed on page with a magnifying glass, however, the extent of ivy growth along the copings fairly matches the growth in the preceding photo. I include this also in my 1880-ish sequence.

In contrast, there is a totally different image of St Patrick's Church on page 15 of Derek Paine's 1994 publication[7, his second book. He describes it as having been 'taken from the area of the Turnpike Lane about 1885'. It is almost certainly much, much older; perhaps, even, the oldest of all his photos.

A dark-bearded man stands tight in against a hedge in the foreground. Beyond the hedge,



Very old photograph of St. Patrick's Church, Church Rd. and Church Lane, taken from the area of the Turnpike Lane about 1885. The Church is in its original state before being extended.

which is roughly about head height, lies a totally bare field on which the mirror-image stone and redbrick cottages of Arva and its twin, Shamrock Lodge, were later built; a development Greystones - its buildings and history part 2 dates circa 1870.

The main focus of the photograph shows the lower part of what became the Church Lane as a mere access lane to the gate of St Patrick's, the grounds of which are bare of trees or shrubbery except along the lower boundary wall. On the road below the church there is not a tree. Not as much as a sapling borders the brae on the Church Road, nor the Lower Church Road; something that's strange to me.

This was the route I traversed daily to school at the Convent from the age of three or so, and to St Kilian's Hall after I moved to the 'Brothers' in 1944. (Two over-spill classes from the old, overcrowded boy's school in Blacklion were housed in the supper room of the hall). After school I kicked my way in the autumn months through the leaves of both the Church Road and of the Church Lane, even detouring via the Turnpike to do so. Later still, I sold fish door to door and collected for the Lifeboat house to house along the same roads.

The image of the church shows the beginnings of a growth of ivy in places on the external walls. The three-bay two storey house to the right and somewhat lower down must surely be the Rectory. Above or about the church there is no sign of the house named Knockdolian;

neither is there of any of the houses that were built beyond it when the Church Lane hill was linked to the lane from Blacklion. And who is the dark-bearded man in the foreground? A younger Robert French? Is this, perhaps, the first ever selfie? Derek Paine dates it 'about 1885', but this has to be older. In that sense of place that I even still have, I feel this image is the photo that should be dated 1864.

## Other markers

There were other markers that I spotted, and false leads also; photographs that were numbered as if they too were part of the 1880-ish sequence but clearly were not, and to better identify them I went back to the online collection and did some detailed research. Further information on this can be found in the extended version of this paper available on the Society's website[14].

Of particular interest are two images I came across in the Lawrence archive that are titled and numbered simply 'Bray Head 3319.W.L.' and 'Bray Head 3320.W.L.' (see below). The first shows the fine broad embankment of the original railway line approaching what is now the 'second tunnel, i.e. the Cable Rock tunnel; and the second, taken from a little further south, shows the cliffs seaward of the track between the Gap Bridge and the Burrow to be in a



parlous condition. The rampart wall further north appears intact, but a lesser section of protective wall that originally ran some couple of hundred yards to the south of the stream at Morris's road cannot be seen.

A detailed account of the history of the railway around Bray head by K.A.Murray which Derek Paine reproduces on pages 48 to 57 of his fourth book[9] gives a date of 1888 for the 'Rathdown Deviation', when the track that crossed the original Gap Bridge was moved back somewhat from the crumbling cliffs. It just seems to me that Robert French would have been interested enough to trek up along the line at the time he photographed the topsail schooner, and took those other shots of both harbour and town, to record the impending destruction of the original railway line; so I rate them 1880-ish also. A paragraph from K.A. Murray's account on page 55 of Derek's book adds credence:

'From this time (1879) onwards, attention had to be given increasingly to the southern side of the Head, where the storms were becoming a serious menace to the soft material of "Morris's Bank" - the steep hillside of clay in Rathdown Lower barony. In 1882 an act was got for another diversion, which however was not made until after the powers for it were renewed in

1886. This was the "Rathdown Deviation" of 1888-9, 7 furlongs and 220 yards (sic) long, and it included a new stone underbridge at Redford, replacing the original "Ennis's Bridge".

## One extra

There is one rather extraordinary photograph on page 137 of Derek's 1993 book: an image of the level crossing that predated the footbridge at the lower end of La Touche Road, on which not a house has yet been built, but shows in the distance both the house that was Fanning's in my young days, and the Coastguard Station and terrace. There is not a single obstruction except for a low hedge near the current boundary of the Church of the Holy Rosary. Everything about it speaks of it being a 'Lawrence' photo, but the exact number is unreadable.

What it suggests, whether Derek Paine's date of 1870 is correct or not, is how limited was the development of that end of the town at the time the photo was taken.

A page accessible at [www.buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie) gives the date of building of the new coastguard station as circa 1875. Derek Paine, however, in an entire section dedicated to



Excellent view of the railway from the station with no buildings between the station and the coastguard station in 1870.

coastguard events and actions in his 2005 book[11], gives an earlier date. Under the banner 'Greystones Coastguard Station, subheading on page fourteen reads: "Officers house and 7 cottages erected by Board of Works in 1872".

These 'cottages' are not to be confused with the earlier coastguard dwellings of Kenmare Terrace which were erected by John Doyle in 1843, but are in fact the individual residences in what we knew in our time as 'The Barracks'. A cursory scrutiny of the chimney stacks, even today, will find two pairs of chimney pots on each of the four stacks. Regardless of whichever year it was, the significant building in the photograph is the three-bay, two storey house immediately to the left of the bridge: Malvern no.1, which I understand was built in 1875.

At first glance, it seemed that the two coast guard stores that housed the Rocket apparatus in my time were not there. But a closer scrutiny of the printed image in Derek's book with a magnifying glass reveals that they are; and that just might give us a more proximate date for the photograph. Two letters in the O.P.W. files in the National Archives may refer to the building of the stores.

The first pertains to an uncompleted contract, possibly for the construction of the sheds:

Greystones Coastguard Station

Co. Wicklow.  
Office of Public Works  
Dublin.  
27 July 1877

*Sir, The rented boathouse of this station is so bad and damp that it is impossible to keep the Government stores in serviceable order, there is also a Rocket apparatus. It is in a very dilapidated state. There was a contract with the Board of Works to build a new house and slipway early last year and a dispute arising between the fishermen and the landlord, or Board of Works, about the site, the work was stopped there has been nothing done since then.*

*I would beg leave to request you would be pleased to move the proper Authorities to have the said boat-house and slip built as the station is very much in want of them. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,*

*Richard Doherty. Chief Officer.*

To Commander E.M. Dayrell RN. Kingstown.[15]

The second looks for payment (for the stores?):

Greystones Coastguard Station  
Co. Wicklow.  
Office of Public Works  
Dublin.  
8 September 1877

*Sir, I reported to you that the work was completed at Greystones Coastguard Station and wish an inspection as soon as possible, as I am in need of money.*

*Thomas Evans*

*Contractor[16]*

What a pity the actual serial number of the photo cannot be read, because the image does not appear to exist in the online collection. As to the year: could it be 1880-ish?

Samuel French in his 1964 booklet refers to the first twenty- five years 1864 - 1889 from the consecration of St Patrick's Church as the period 'during which most of the houses on Church Road and Trafalgar Road were built, then continues 'a road (i.e. La Touche Road) from Trafalgar Road to the station on the seaside was constructed to connect with another new road along the seafront. All this is shown on the ordnance sheet of 1885.' So it is worth another look.

## Conclusion

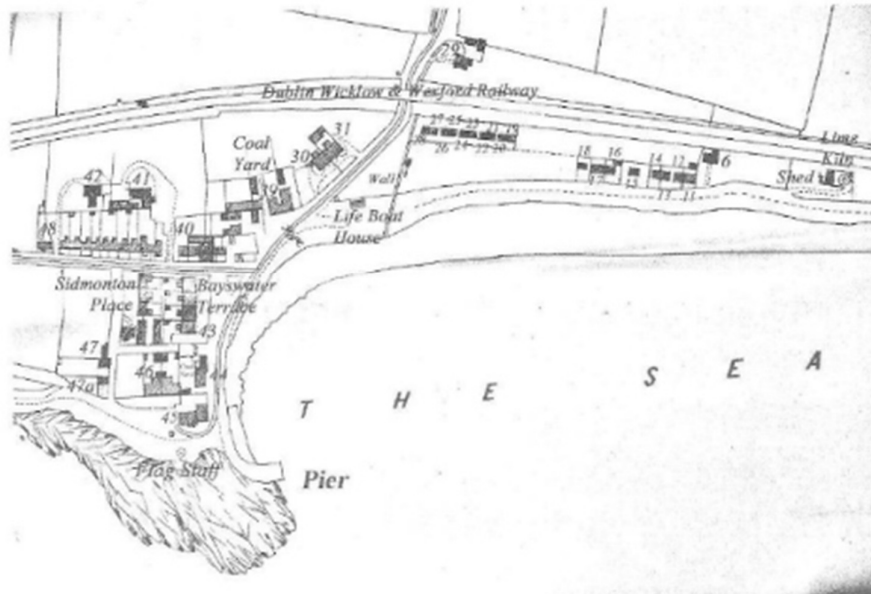
Back in 1870s Greystones it must have seemed that it was all happening. Arthur Evans opened his second coal yard at the back of J.C. McTaggart's in 1871. The RNLI Lifeboat House was opened and the pulling lifeboat Sarah Tancred was installed on station in 1872. A substantial new Coastguard station was commissioned early to mid-decade. And in 1876 an application for permission to create a piped water system was made by the then incumbent of Bellevue House and Demesne, William Robert La Touche.

The map accompanying the application (see below) is reproduced in Derek and Gary Paine's 2007 book[11]. Unearthed in Gary's painstaking research, it has every appearance of being based on an earlier Ordnance Survey map; but which revision? The complex of buildings fronting the 'Coal Yard must surely delineate earlier structures; not the substantial building of

J.C. McEntaggart's time, which book 1 of Greystones - its buildings and history dates to circa 1850 and attributes to John Doyle, who died in 1855.

1876

The houses and buildings in the immediate vicinity of the harbour are shown on the town plan below.



Nevertheless, this is the first map detailing the jetty and approach road most people will have ever seen. It also depicts the general area of the Cool of the Rock as it may have looked originally.

This was the 'notable fishing place' of which William Wenward Seward said in 1795 'the herrings first brought into Dublin are usually taken by the fishing boats of this place', and that A. Atkinson referred to in 1815 as a 'half-formed harbour'. This was the wave-scoured deeper channel edging the lee of the Gray Stones that became the kernel from which the town fanned out and grew. This was the place, also, of which a Fisheries Inspector named Mr J. Irvine, echoing the experience of local fishermen, reported in the 1820s:

*'Every heavy gale from the northward fills up this harbour and the next year's southerly one opens it up again ...'*

and then continued his recommendation in support of what the local fishermen wanted:

*'The opinion therefore of the fishermen also is that if a mere breakwater of loose stones was run out from the beach towards the eastward with a return to the southward it would not only protect them from the northerly gales which are most prevalent and dangerous but would also prevent the partial choking of the harbour which then takes place.'*

And then, a 'wheen of waiting'.

Within five years comprehensively by Robert French some sixty years after that report, the Cul of the Rock was already silted over due to the construction of the pier in the mid eighteen eighties, and was gone within the next decade as a consequence of the inadequacy of the north groyne completed in 1888/89.

It was at this very spot, where once a half-transomed boat with four rowing thwarts was sculled to shore by a lone figure standing in the well of the boat, having tended to the mooring lines of a top sail schooner moored at the face of the jetty, that my brother Billy and I daily baited our lines in 1951, the year I first fished the longline; when I was fourteen, and he was eighteen and had just completed his first year at university.

It was here, after we had moved to Mrs George Archer's cottage at number two in the Bawn for the summer months, as we had done for many years previously - although Billy lived with our Grandfather McKenzie in the shop next to Samuel Ferns' draper's shop in front of the Holy Faith Convent - that we stripped and '*gowed up*' the hooks after coming from fishing and spread our cotton lines to dry.

And in the evenings, or on days we didn't go to fish, when by then the '*Cúl of the Rock*' was just a broad shingle bank, we played '*quaits*', pitching flat, palm-sized, rounded stones picked from about our feet from one '*motte*' to another set twenty paces away, in a game that was pretty unique to the fishermen of Greystones in our time.

What is ineffably sad now is that, when the opportunity arose in the recent award-winning harbour construction project to restore the depth of water tight into the lee of the rock that was at the very heart of the original vision of a harbour that could offer safety to all seafarers coming to shore, to acknowledge it for posterity as being the seed from which this town grew, it was instead irrevocably in-filled and the basin and the rock were buried.

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# No Property Developers - Thank You

Brian White

Forty years ago I began working in the Civil Service and with one of my first salary cheques I bought a SLR Camera. At the same time I began working on my book *The County Wicklow Database* (published in 2006). It traces the history of County Wicklow in the categories of Transport, Education, Religion, Human Endeavour, Sport, Flora and Fauna. So my brother and I set off for Greystones with the new camera and some vintage images of Greystones. We were going to replicate these Victorian/Edwardian images with more up to date 1970s style images of the same locations.

The first stop was at the junction of La Touche Place and Church Road opposite Fenton Fires



Church Road, Greystones, in the Victorian era

shop.



Church Road – looking North, 1974 (photograph: Brian White)

A vintage image of this spot is shown above. Some photos of Church Road, taken in the 1970s follow.



**Church Road – looking South, 1971 (photograph : Brian White)**

In the image looking south on Church Road towards the Texaco filling station, at the junction of Hillside Road, you can clearly see a Victorian cobbled walk way. In the days of long flowing dresses the carriage men would have to keep these cobbled areas free of horse manure, so the ladies of Greystones would not get their dresses soiled. Across the road is Bell's Clothing Shop. In the footpath near the shop are a number of manhole covers marked DCWW (Dublin Corporation Water Works).

Next we headed for the Carrig Eden Hotel, one of the many temperance hotels in Greystones.



**Carrig Eden, Marine Road, Greystones, 1940's**

In the postcard of the 1940s, below, a close inspection will show that an extension was under way at the hotel.



**Carrig Eden – Greystones, 1970s (photograph: Brian White)**

The future boathouse of the coastguard station is ready for action selling HB Ice Cream, with two bicycles parked outside.



**Vintage North Beach, Greystones**

In the 1974 image of Carrig Eden, below, note how the skyline is dotted with TV masts.

Two further photos follow below.



Sunset over Greystones (Photograph: Brian White)

Our final stop was at the Harbour. With our vintage image to hand for guidance we lined up for a shot, 1974 style.



Vintage Greystones Harbour

While doing this two ladies approached us and started to shout "We do not need property developers in Greystones - thank you".



Greystones Harbour, 1970s

We tried to explain that we were replicating old images of Greystones taken by Victorian/Edwardian photographers. We continued to take our photographs much to the annoyance of the two ladies, who continued to shout that Greystones did not need property developers. We withdrew to a kiosk near the beach for an Ice cream.

I have returned many times to Greystones and each time received a warm welcome. But I will always remember the day I was run out of town.

The Society welcomes New Members.

If you are interested, please contact our Secretary:

Mrs Aileen Short  
'Brookfield', Glen Road,  
Delgany,  
Greystones, A63 FT68  
County Wicklow.

Telephone +353 (087) 237 0315

Visit the Society's website at:

[www.greystonesahs.org](http://www.greystonesahs.org)

**ISSN 1393-2756**