

The History of Killiney Hill Park

"There was a meet of drags at Ball's Bridge, and these, to the number of ten, followed the Royal party to Killiney, about seven or eight miles off, where a public pleasure ground was to be opened. The journey was only broken at Blackrock, where a stoppage of a few minutes was made in front of the Town Hall, and an address was presented to which Prince Albert Victor, without alighting, replied."

"In this suburban district the greeting accorded to their Royal Highness was very warm. Most of the houses displayed something in the way of bunting and were bright with the animated faces at the windows waving welcomes. The ascent of Killiney Hill was rather tedious, for the sun was very hot and the dust very plentiful, but when its top was reached there was full reward. The hill commands a magnificent view of Dublin Bay, which lies at the foot. It has hereto been the private property of Mr. Warren and favourite place of picnics. When the required permission could be obtained, the committee formed for the purpose of commemorating Her Majesty's jubilee purchased the hill from Mr. Warren, and it was today opened as a public pleasure ground. There was a considerable gathering awaiting the Princes, who were again very cordially received. An address was presented, and Prince Albert Victor declared this hill open as a public park and named it the Victoria Hill, Killiney. Rockets were fired and cheers given for the Queen, the Lord Lieutenant, and the Princes, and then the descent was made."

(The Times, Friday, July 1, 1887)

A little bit of heaven was thus made available to the populace. It is a wonderful inspirational place to walk, sit or be. It is unique amongst Dublin Parks in the quality of its topography and distant views over sea, coast and land. Indeed, natural landscape of this quality is seldom experienced in such heavily populated urban areas anywhere. It is rich in wildlife. Parks and Landscape Services and Birdwatch Ireland are conducting a habitat conservation programme in Dalkey Quarry.

There are quite spectacular views from the park, over the city, the bay, and Dublin and Wicklow mountains. Killiney Bay is said to resemble the Bay of Naples and this comparison is reflected in local Italian-sounding names: Vico, Sorrento Terrace, Monte Alverno, San Elmo, Capri. In 1987 extensive reconstruction of the park's infrastructure, including the granite tower portion of the Tea Rooms, took place with the aid of a grant from the Department of the Environment, and the park was formally re-dedicated.

Killiney Hill Park is immediately surrounded by Dalkey, Killiney, Ballybrack and Loughlinstown. It is easily accessible from Dun Laoghaire, Blackrock, Sallynoggin, Glenageary, Deansgrange, Cabinteely and Shankill and by pedestrians from the local DART stations at Killiney and Dalkey at each end. Dun Laoghaire Ferryport, one of the main tourist gateways to the country, is very close by.

The Park's topography is quite dramatic. Its highest point, at the obelisk is 170m above sea level. The steepest slopes are on the Eastern side, embracing the curve of Killiney Bay. Slopes on the Western (landward) side are more gentle except in Dalkey Quarry where sheer 30-40m high cliffs enclose flat, sheltered areas at road level.

A plaque on the main gate has the following inscription: -

"Acquired by the Queen's Jubilee Memorial Association Dublin 21/6/1887, the day appointed for celebration of 50th year of the reign of Queen Victoria. Opened as a public park on 30/6/1887 by His Royal Highness Prince Albert Victor of Wales."

Trustees:

Rt. Hon Earl of Meath
Rt. Hon. Lord Ardilaun
Sir Ed. Cecil Guinness, Bart.
Sir Richard Martin, Bart.
Hon. F.R. Falkiner, Q.C. Recorder
Thomas Pim Jun, J.P.
Samuel S. Waterhouse, J.P.
John R. Wigham, J.P.

The park was once part of the estate of Killiney Castle (now Fitzpatrick's Castle Hotel) a prominent residence in the district. The original house, Mount Mapas was built in 1740 by Col. John Mapas. The property was owned in turn by a Mr. Maunsell, Henry Loftus, Viscount of Ely, Lord Clonmel and Robert Warren, who in 1840 enlarged the house and called it Killiney Castle. He also restored and added to the monuments on the hill. The park was purchased from his son, Robert Warren Jnr. by Queen Victoria's Jubilee Memorial Association (see above).

The obelisk at the summit is a prominent local land mark which bears the following inscription: -

"Last year being hard with the poor walks about these hills and this were erected by John Mapas, June 1742."

Nearby the "Wishing Stone" dated 1852 is of uncertain origin. Another smaller obelisk a little further along known as Boucher's obelisk has "Mount Mapas" inscribed on it. It may be a memorial to the Mapas family for which John Mapas left monies.

From 1751 for a number of years, a lead mine was operated in Killiney Hill from an opening in the rock near the present Killiney Station, known as Decco's Cave.

The Telegraph Tower above Dalkey Quarry was built in 1807 as a signalling station to communicate with the several Martello Towers along the coast. It was thus an important element in the defences against a possible Napoleonic invasion. It was also used to communicate with ships in the bay.

Much of Dalkey village developed as a result of the work in Dalkey Quarry, which was the source of granite used for building both locally and abroad. The most prominent structure whose materials were quarried in Dalkey, is the East Pier in Dun Laoghaire harbour started in 1817. The stone was transported from Dalkey via the "Metals" which still exists as a popular local walkway.

There is a broken celtic cross near the Radio Beacon atop Dalkey Quarry. It is said that a

previous owner of the property lies buried there. The cross is inscribed as follows: -

"Dust thou art to dust returneth was not written of the Soul"

Thomas Chippendall Higgin, July 16 MCMXI (1911).

The "Tea Rooms" at the main Killiney Hill Road entrance, is a stone lodge built as a keeper's house when the lands belonged to the castle.

Granite outcroppings have been shaped by glaciation into "roches moutonees" or unusual elongated, rounded units dictated by the particular direction and pattern of ice flow.

About 50% of the park is covered by mature woodland: trees such as *Quercus petraea* (Sessile Oak), *Fagus sylvatica* (Beech) *Pinus radiata* (Monterey Pine), *Acer pseudoplatanus* (Sycamore), predominate. There is evidence of regeneration in several locations.

There is also a local variety of ragwort called "Dalkey Ragwort" noted in 1904 in Colgan's "Flora of Co. Dublin". The plant resulted from hybridisation of *Senecio cineraria maritima* and the common ragwort *Senecio jacobea*. This is said to have originated from a garden at Sorrento Cottage in 1875.