

## **Passage West/Monkstown Highlights, 2007**

2007 was a busy and exciting year for the harbourside towns of Passage West and Monkstown. This was the year that Passage West and Monkstown went global, with the launch of the very impressive new community website, [www.passagewestmonkstown.ie](http://www.passagewestmonkstown.ie). Established by Passage West Town Council and funded by local businesses, this website has over 500 pages of richly illustrated information about these towns and the Cork Harbour area, directories of local businesses, clubs, voluntary organisations and local services. The Town Council section contains details of its history, members, publications and minutes of the monthly meetings. The website also has a regularly updated news page, with an events diary and a list of recent planning applications. This is a facility destined to be a treasured and much-used resource for the community at home and abroad.

2007 has also been the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closing of the Cork, Blackrock and Passage railway. To mark the importance of this railway to these historic towns, Passage West Town Council is erecting a Railway Trail through Passage West and on into Monkstown. Funded by grants from the Heritage Council, Cork County Council and local business, Prime Line Logistics, the Railway Trail will have information boards illustrating the railway in its heyday and marking items of railway infrastructure remaining in the town. The Railway Trail is a first and remarkable step towards celebrating the rich industrial heritage of Passage West and Monkstown.

Passage West/Monkstown celebrated ten years of twinning during 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> November when a delegation of 25 people headed by the Mayor M. Claude Eidelstein from the town of Chasseneuil du Poitou, Western France, visited the area. The local twinning group in conjunction with Passage West Town Council had prepared a comprehensive programme to welcome and entertain their French friends, all of whom were hosted by local families. A delegation from Passage West/Monkstown is due to visit Chasseneuil du Poitou during 2008 and it is hoped that exchanges can be forged between clubs, cultural groups, schools and other organisations in both towns.

At last, there appears to be some hope on the horizon for traffic calming in Monkstown. I first raised this issue in July 2004 with the Carrigaline Area Office. Since, the need for traffic calming on the R610 through Monkstown has received unanimous support from all Members of Passage West Town Council but, while acknowledged as being desirable, has not been in any way advanced by Cork County Council. A preliminary design and costing of a traffic calming scheme incorporating gate treatment at the Carlisle Place end of the village, a ramped and traffic-lighted pedestrian crossing from the Sandquay through the island to the bottom of the Glen and upgrading of the pedestrian crossing at The Bosun has been awaited for the past three years. After nine months of requesting same, Passage West Town Council has finally met on site with an engineer representing the Roads Department of Cork County Council. Also present was the Carrigaline Area Engineer. The Roads Department has agreed to undertake a topographical survey of the R610 from the southern end of Alta Terrace right through Monkstown village. The Town Council has asked that the survey should also include The Glen. Subsequent to the topographical survey, a preliminary design and costing will be progressed. Funding for the scheme will be sought thereafter.

During September, the community of Monkstown came together to organise and host the uniquely sensual experience of scent and visual beauty that was the Monkstown Heritage Flower Festival. For the entire weekend, flower and garden clubs from across Munster displayed one-off arrangements representing facets of life from the local community. All proceeds from the Flower Festival were put towards the Sacred Heart Church Restoration Fund.

Flowers and planting were also the focus of the Passage West Town Council's successful application for funding under Cork County Council's Urban and Village Renewal Grant scheme. Comprehensive clearance, planting and stone walling at Rockenham, adjacent to the Pembroke Wood roundabout, has seen a steep bank of grass being replaced with attractive rocks and shrubs. Proper off-road car parking for local residents was also included as part of this project which has done much to enhance the northern entrance to Passage West.

The long-awaited resurfacing of the R610 through Monkstown village carried out earlier this year by Cork County Council did much to have the village looking its best for the summer season. However, there was much dismay that the long-promised traffic calming scheme was not installed after the resurfacing. Passage West Town Council was much relieved that a recent and oft-sought meeting with the relevant section of Cork County Council may finally deliver some progress in this much-required project.

In August, An Bord Pleanála gave the go-ahead to an 82-berth marina which promises to dramatically improve water access at Monkstown. Other planning applications submitted during 2007 and currently under consideration include the restoration of Monkstown Castle to a magnificent home and the development of a water taxi service linking Cobh with Cork City and providing stops at both Monkstown and Passage West. Both are generating much excitement locally. However, the greatest excitement has been generated by the Howard Holdings proposals for development of the Royal Victoria Dockyard in Passage West, for which planning permission is expected to be lodged before the end of the year.

Passage West Town Council is hoping that further positive development will be the outcome for the towns after its noteworthy meeting with Martin Riordan, the new County Manager. Maintaining the green belt, improved infrastructure, small business units, better public transport were amongst the focused list of items raised by elected members. This meeting strengthened the Town Council's submission to the County Development Plan review at the beginning of the year.

Local clubs made the headlines several times during 2007. Passage West Soccer Club had great success in reaching the Munster Senior Cup final and winning the Saxone Cup. In April, three Passage West GAA players were up for selection to represent Cork at Inter County level, while the St. Peter's Community School camogie team had the proud honour of having won the U16 ½ A Munster Championship against Youghal Community School. Passage Coastal Rowing Club performed handsomely in the All-Ireland Coastal Rowing Championships in Union Hall during August.

Several local individuals were also to the fore during 2007. Matt Aherne of the Passage West GAA Club was given a prestigious McNamee Award for his book, "*120 Years of the GAA in Passage*" at an official presentation in Croke Park during July. Another local author, Angela Sweeney, presented €20,000 to Marymount Hospice gathered from the sales of her book, "*A Penny for your Thoughts: A slice of life from Passage West*". The Monkstown-based President of Alliance Française, Nora Callanan, received an award of Officer of the National Order of Merit from the President of the French Republic for expanding Franco-Irish relations in the fields of culture, art and education. A student of St. Peter's Community School, John Tabirca, represented Passage West at the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition in January. His project won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in his category. During that same month, Monkstown girl, Karen Concannon, was the Head Organiser of the European Youth Parliament (Ireland) Munster European Conference 2007 held in Cork and attended by 120 delegates from across Munster.

Truly a notable year for Passage West and Monkstown.