

Cllr. Marcia D'Alton writes ...

Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway

Next year is the 75th anniversary of the closing of the Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway. The route of the railway was from Cork City to Blackrock, through cuttings and over embankments to Rochestown and then along a scenic riverside embankment to the quays in Passage West. The first train ran from Cork to Passage in June 1850. It cost 6d. for first class travel or 4d. for second class travel to take the 18 minute journey from Cork to Passage. Because the train ran only to Passage for the first 50 years of its life, first class passengers were able to take an omnibus to Monkstown for an extra 1d.

The railway company operated paddle steamers in connection with the trains. Thus the railway terminus at Passage was connected to Monkstown, Cobh, Haulbowline, Aghada, Currabinny, Ringaskiddy and Crosshaven by water. By 1853, it was possible to take a river steamer up East Ferry to Ballinacurra.

The railway was extended through Glenbrook, Raffeen, Monkstown, Carrigaline and on to Crosshaven between 1902 and 1904. This involved the construction of a 450 metre-long tunnel at Passage. At the same time, the railway was converted to 3 ft. narrow gauge. It was unusual in the history of Irish railways that an intensive passenger service such as this should have a narrow gauge track. By 1911, the Cork, Blackrock and Passage railway system involved 16 route miles and the company had 4 locomotives, 28 coaches and 29 goods vehicles.

The Great Southern Railways took over the Cork, Blackrock and Passage railway in 1925. Unable to compete with the policy of using government taxation to maintain roads, the line was closed on 10th September 1932. There is a story that on the announcement that the line was to close, a great outcry occurred and a massive delegation of local interests descended on the offices of the Great Southern railway. The railway boss asked the delegates to show their rail tickets – but they had all travelled by car.

The Passage West Town Council has given unanimous support for my suggestion that we should take the opportunity next year to mark the importance of this remarkable railway in the history of Passage West and Monkstown. Should anyone have any photographs or anecdotes relating to the Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway that they would be willing to lend or share, I would be most grateful to hear of them.

Cork Harbour Forum

The second working group workshop of the Cork Harbour Forum was held last Friday, 20th October. The Forum comprises some 50 individuals, all of whom have a direct interest in the proper management of Cork Harbour. It is funded as part of an EU-wide initiative and co-ordinated in Cork by the Coastal and Marine Resources Centre of UCC and the Planning Policy Unit of Cork County Council.

The general aim of the Forum is to facilitate improved management of Cork Harbour, culminating in the production a plan which will address all facets of Harbour use: leisure and amenity, residential, industrial, fishing, planning, transportation, etc. In the meantime, it is providing an invaluable opportunity for dialogue and networking. Some of the short-term deliverables arising from last Friday's meeting are anticipated to be:

- a website devoted entirely to Cork Harbour
- programmes for primary schools to raise awareness of the unique value of Cork Harbour
- improved management of the beaches in Cork Harbour
- promoting general access to the waterfront
- measures to address litter in Cork Harbour.

Litter in Cork Harbour

At the October meeting of the Passage West Town Council, I suggested that we should ask Cork County Council, Cork City Council and the Port of Cork to consider the installation of litter traps or similar litter-trapping devices upstream on the various channels feeding into the Lower Harbour. We are all too familiar with the plastic bottles and other flotsam washed up onto the stony beaches and slipways of the Lower Harbour. This type of litter is controlled in many other countries either by litter traps which are emptied regularly or by boats sucking the litter off the surface of the water. Passage West Town Council agreed that it was time the Lower Harbour communities ceased to be the receptacle for upstream litter and that litter traps would help the waters of Cork Harbour to regain the high quality deserving of such a wonderful resource.

Passage West/Monkstown Project 2006

The prizegiving for the Homes and Gardens Competition organised as part of Passage West/Monkstown Project 2006 will be held on Tuesday, 24th October, at 8pm in the P.A.C.E. Centre, Passage West. In late August, Mr. Charlie Wilkins, Gardening Correspondent with the Irish Examiner, assessed all houses in Passage West and Monkstown with a view to awarding under the following categories:

- Best window box and container display
- Best garden in a public estate
- Best garden in a private estate
- Best public estate
- Best private estate
- Best effort for a new house
- Best collection of hanging baskets
- Best effort in a new estate
- Best display of annuals.

Sincere thanks to Mrs. Eileen Murphy who took the time to show him the way around Passage West and Monkstown. The Homes and Gardens Competition was a hugely successful aspect of Project 2006, helping to raise awareness of the huge contribution of a well-kept home and garden to the well-being of a neighbourhood.

With you and your support, I am working through the Passage West/Monkstown Town Council to help our community realise its potential as a unique place to live, work and play. Please contact me by e-mail at info@marciadalton.net, by mail at 22, Hillcrest, Pembroke Wood, Passage West or by telephone 4863293 / 085-7333852.