

# THE PALE PROJECT

Personal psychogeographies  
from Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown

The Pale Project is a writing initiative,  
devised to examine the weight of  
attachment we bring to being resident.

An open call invited participants  
to explore the everyday life of their  
local area.

Each participant chose an area  
in the county as their individual 'pale',  
a territory they would document in field  
notes, sketches, maps and photographs.

A selection of work from  
the project will be exhibited

**Level 3, dlr LexIcon**  
**14 November 2016**  
**to 14 January 2017**

Photo : Dylan Ryan

#### Acknowledgements

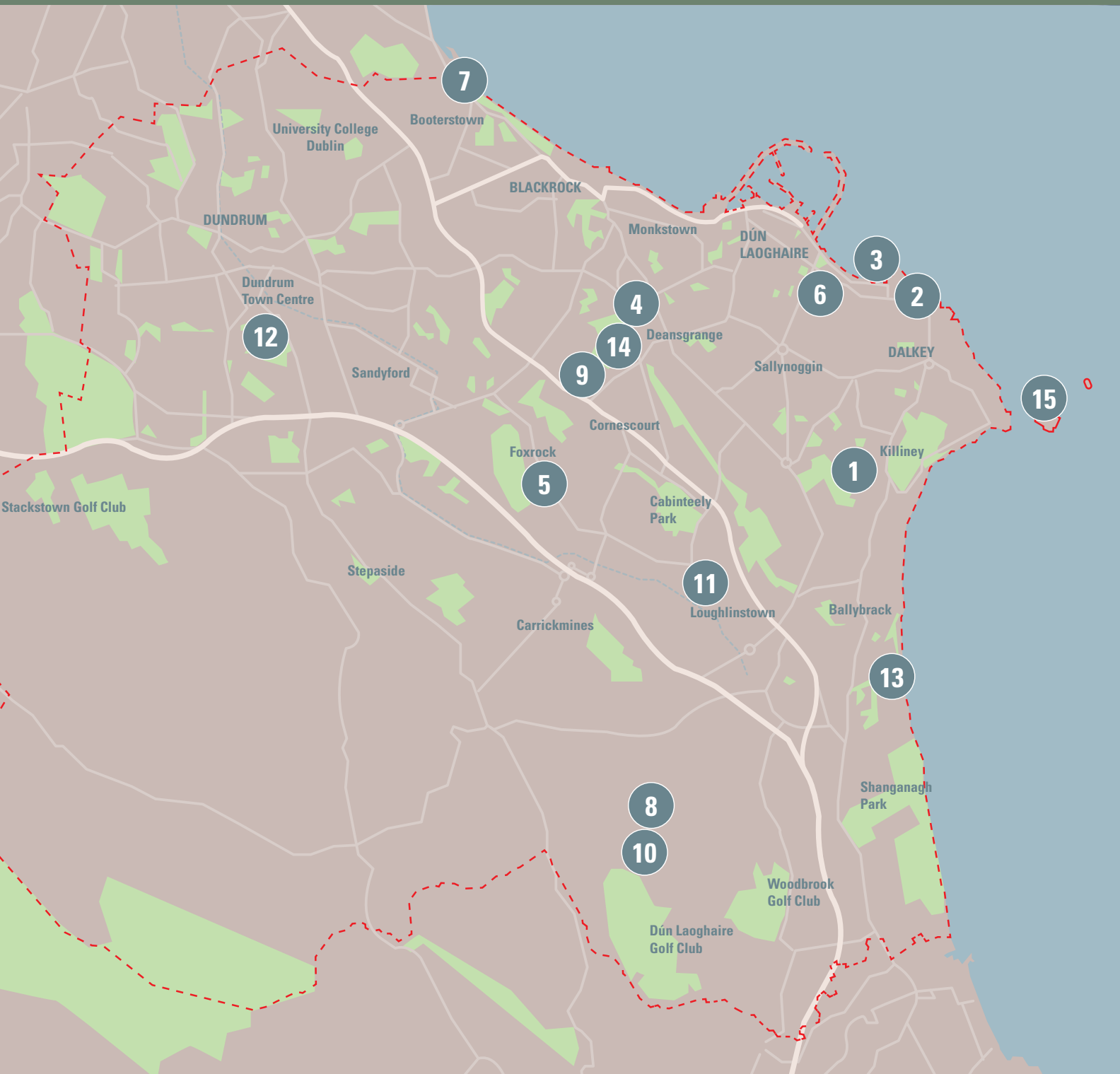
The Pale Project is funded by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council through the Arts Office 2015-2016 Writer-In-Residence programme, grant aided by The Arts Council. This exhibition is funded by dlr Libraries. With thanks to the organising committee: Denise French, Sara Hanley and Padhraig Nolan.

# The Pale Project *our locations*

*These are the territories chosen by members of The Pale Project as their personal 'pales'.*

*The locations range from active wildfowl reserves, to long-vacated sites from our industrial past, suburban housing estates to working harbours, from hilltops to islands. Each served as a stepping-off point for considerations of place, family, community, history, surrealism, politics, wit, melancholy and hope.*

*Most of these areas are easily accessed by the public, but the responses contained within this project are first and foremost highly personal interpretations, channeled through each member's unique creative approach.*



# The Pale Project *an overview*

Selina Guinness

Selina Guinness was Writer-in-Residence with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, 2015 – 2016.

The Pale Project workshops provided the central platform for public engagement during the residency, supplemented by a series of public interviews with writers and editors, called Salon Nights at the Studio. Her memoir, *The Crocodile by the Door*, was shortlisted for the UK Costa Book Awards (2012), and the BGE Irish Book Awards (2012). She is currently writing a novel.



## Introduction

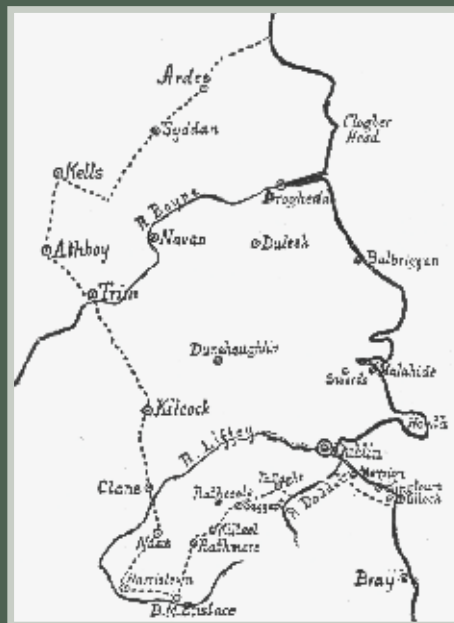
The Pale Project is a writing initiative, devised to examine the weight of attachment we bring to being resident. This concern seemed pertinent to a time when residency status, citizenship, and the right to asylum have become the defining issues of our age. An open call invited participants to explore the everyday life of their local area. Our collaboration began with twenty members in September 2015.

Each participant chose an area in the county as their individual 'pale', a territory they would document in field notes, sketches, maps and photographs.

The workshops quickly became an echo chamber for past and present voices and for the exchange of ideas and information about a place each of us thought we knew, but soon discovered, we had yet to explore.

From January 2016, we focused on discovering the forms best suited to each individual writer and story. A public reading of this work was held in the Studio at dlrLexIcon on 4 May 2016. This exhibition showcases a small selection of the writing generated by the project, and offers a set of fresh perspectives on the county.

## Why 'The Pale'?



The Pale according to the Statute of 1488

Historically, 'The Pale' described the area around Dublin controlled by English colonists in the fifteenth century. It is still a loaded term, used to connote territory where access defines the civilized, and excludes those outside as barbarian, or existing 'beyond the pale'. A map of 1488 shows the boundary of the Dublin Pale beginning at Bulloch Harbour and running in to Mount Merrion, before turning towards Dundrum, and on across the hills to Tallaght.

This dividing line through the county, invisibly tracking from the sea to the mountains, was intended to prompt self-reflection about our ideas of home, family and by extension, community, and what it means to feel settled, or unsettled, in any given place.

'Place' is an oddly elusive concept, as the geographer, Yi Fu Tuan, has observed. Where our physical and social environments are understood primarily in analytical terms, regulatory authorities will inevitably fail to account for our intuitive experience of 'being in the world'. A place can become weighty with habit, memory, and longing; it can be intimately supportive, or restrictive and imprisoning. Home is not solid, but protean: it can be a destination shimmering on the horizon, or a neighbourhood recovered, discovered, or fled. Our particular place is a vessel; sometimes we don't notice how it contains us, supports or shapes us, until it is taken away. And yet, this vessel must flex and change. It must be reshaped to other's needs. Our home turf - the solid piece of ground we adopt for a day or a lifetime - will always feel settled and unsettled, secure and threatened; a territory contested by elegies and visions.

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# 1 Killiney Rights of Way

*Paths through Killiney, some ancient, all with rich historical associations*

*Dave Alvey*



*I am a retired teacher living with my family in Dalkey. My 'territory' is a circular route along traditional rights of way starting in Killiney Hill car park and taking in Roche's Hill and the monastic site at Cill Iníon Léinin. My reason for choosing the route is that I see these right of way paths as a precious part of local heritage that deserve to be more widely used and conserved for the enjoyment of future generations. I am indebted to my friend, Dylan Ryan, a student of photography at IADT, Dún Laoghaire, for providing his photographs to accompany my contribution to the project.*

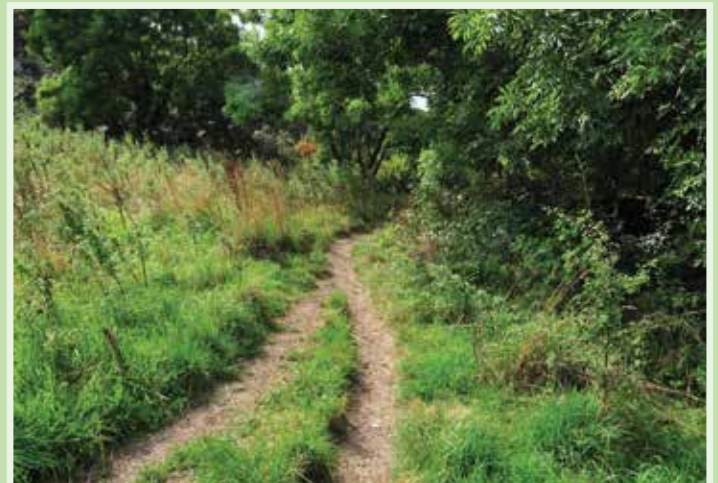
## Roche's Hill commons – a hidden gem

Dalkey Hill with its signal tower, and Killiney Hill with its obelisk, are familiar local landmarks. Both are to be found in Killiney Hill Park, a landscaped park crisscrossed with tarmaced paths. By way of contrast a third hill located outside the park, known locally as Mullins' Hill, remains un-landscaped, un-cultivated and un-tarmaced. The historic name of this third hill is Roche's Hill; its open scrub land is Roche's Hill commons. Paths through the commons are signposted as public rights of way. I would cite Roche's Hill as a place of both local heritage and natural beauty that deserves greater usage by the public.

The hill's historic name tells a story. Derived, not from a person called Roche, but from the French word for rock, *roche*, it dates from the time of the French speaking Normans, and is a fitting place name for the Dún Laoghaire area. Quarrying has been conducted throughout the area since the Middle Ages, not just on the three hills but also in numerous now depleted excavations between the hills and the town. The use of locally quarried stone in its built environment is an important element in the locality's visual distinctiveness.

Roche's Hill commons wears different mantles depending on the season. Yellow gorse in spring, green fern in summer, a smattering of purple heather during October and November, all intermingled with a variety of wild flower blossoms, some of them rare. Boulders composed of a combination of granite and mica schist obtrude through the foliage whatever the time of year. Some of the rocks on Roche's Hill bear the smooth imprint of glaciation, a relatively rare geological phenomenon.

One rock on the hill is of special interest. Known as the Mass rock, it has a small chalice sculpted into its side. The story goes that the chalice must have been chiselled by a craftsman working at Dalkey Hill quarry when Dún Laoghaire Harbour was being built. But was it made to indicate the site of illicit worship during Penal times or was it a latter day caprice? Like any item of historical evidence, it calls out to be seen and touched, researched and mulled over.



Photos: Dylan Ryan

The hill was worked as a grazing commons over many centuries under the manorial system. This points up another side of national heritage that most of us know little about: the system of cooperative land sharing known as commonage. The practice of commonage is not as archaic as it sounds. In 2009, the Nobel Prize for economics was awarded to Elinor Ostrom for her work on the use of commons as an efficient eco-friendly method for utilising scarce resources.

Dún Laoghaire has many gems, not least the unpaved right of way paths across the commons on Roche's Hill.

## 2 Bulloch to the Forty Foot

Patricia Byrne

*I chose the shoreline from Bulloch Harbour to the Forty Foot as my area. I walk here with my elderly father. It has the wildness of the Irish Sea on one side, and settled suburbia on the other. Bulloch, an active harbour with boat hire and crab and lobster fishing, is a little republic in itself. Sandycove and the Forty foot are popular bathing places. The 'rocks' in between are only accessible in one or two places; otherwise they are left to the seagulls and the seals.*

### Bulloch Harbour

My father's youngest sister, Ita, swam at Bulloch with Dalkey Swimming Club. The club doesn't exist anymore and I can't ask Ita about it. She is gone now. I know they raced outside the harbour from the long steps at the seaward side of the pier. A YouTube video from the 1950s shows a gala held at Bulloch. The pier was crowded with onlookers.

I talked to my friend Katie about Bulloch; her mother came from Dalkey and swam in the locality. Perhaps she would know some more? It came back then. Her mother was in the swimming club, and also knew my Uncle Peter. Her best friend knew him even better. She belonged to a breakaway group in the club. Inspired by the 1944 musical, *The Bathing Beauty*, starring Esther Williams and Red Skelton, they set themselves up as the Bulloch Bathing Belles, a serious group of water ballet nymphs. I like to think of them in the elegant swimwear of the 1950s - pinks and greens and yellows, their bodies all shapely and toned, diving off Bulloch pier into cold green water, and emerging in stellar shapes, fanning out with sixteen synchronised lifted legs, elegantly pointed toes and outstretched arms. Pirouetting under water, they emerge again with a flourish, and a head toss. Perhaps there is a brass band playing on the pier.

My father doesn't remember swimming here too much. We look over at the seagulls and I name them off; great black-backed gulls, herring gulls, and some delicate Mediterranean gulls with dainty red legs. 'I think there was only one type of gull when I was young', he says.

I count the benches. There are thirteen in all. Eight of them in a row face out to sea towards the rocks and the Forty Foot. Each one has a memorial plaque with the name of a loved one. 'Sit for a while and enjoy the view and remember Bill, and Joe and Wendy.....' Black cormorants sit on the large rock beyond the mouth of the harbour, their wings outstretched to dry.

Another row of benches could fit facing into the harbour, though it might overcrowd the pier. I would like to sit and view the ebbing tide, the slackening ropes as the boats sit on the muddy bottom. This way there is a view too of Our Lady's Manor, the nursing home, facing out to sea like a vast white ship ready to depart this world. Would it fit through the mouth of the harbour, and sail off, with everyone leaning out the windows, waving and cheering?

I sit with my father on the bench at the end of the pier, where the gulls congregate, waiting for the tide to fill.



Photos: Patricia Byrne

### 3 The Forty Foot

Jane Dillon Byrne

Jane Dillon Byrne attended night classes at NCAD in her twenties. She served Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council as an elected Councillor for forty years, initiating the Poetry Now Festival, and organising the Sculpture Symposium that led to the Per Cent for Art Scheme. Jane has also been a member of the Arts Council.



#### The Forty Foot

A line of old male farts sits on the concrete seat at the entrance to the public bathing place at the Forty Foot. Each one sitting on a sponge cushion: no cushions left for anyone else! They sit there to discourage the women from entering. A number of notices, old and ancient, also emphasize: this place is for the men. Or so it used to be.

The Forty Foot offers a number of spots to swim: depending on tide, and current, wind & sunshine. Sandycove Harbour might be sheltered from a harsh wind, or maybe that same wind will offer a turbulent sea at the actual bathing place between Elephant Rock and the Gully; where the stone steps need to be cleared of slippery green seaweed, every three or four weeks. Mrs. Manahan owns the area around the Battery, a gun emplacement. This is the spot for sunsets over Dún Laoghaire's three spires.

To view the coastline from the water throws a different perspective on the land. A current carries you along, headed for the narrow slip beyond the walkway past Joyce's Martello Tower. A gentle straight leg kick from the hip moves one along nicely. On a sunny day, the heat thrown off the large granite rocks raises the temperature of the water; lovely swirls of warm waves cover your body.

One autumn evening – warm and humid, a scurry caught my attention. Five baby rats were climbing the mallow, the beautiful purple plant that blooms through the summer along the sea wall on Sandycove Avenue. Now the seed clusters along its tall slim stem were perfect for feeding babies, teaching them to nibble and swallow.

Turnstones are my favorite birds – they flock amongst the Mediterranean gulls, the hooded ones, and the odd pigeon. They wade along the shoreline hastening along as the waves wash a fresh supply of shells to the beach. I watch for the white 'v' on their backs as they take flight at Easter. I miss them when they go.

One time as I listened in balmy seas on a return from one of the four buoys, three men dressed in light blue and white floating garments performed a baptism at the foreshore – total immersion as they waded out into some depth of water. Another time, three young folk tied a "line", a tight rope from the grass area to the far side of the harbour and spent two hours trying to walk across, without success.

And once, a party arrived with flowers and ashes to scatter over the sea, ashes cast to eternal contentment. And sadly, one young woman decided she had enough of life and left us all for good, in a place, a pale, which offers such joy to many.

"See you at lunch hour tomorrow", hail the women bathers as they take leave of each other at the water's edge.



Drawings: Jane Dillon Byrne

## 4 The Deansgrange Road (R827)

Berni Dwan

*No doubt, the earliest road signs on the R827 were written in Ogham – perhaps something helpful like ‘Hill of Tara this way’ or ‘ritual killing, first field on the left’. If the Tuatha dé Danann were in power, a neighbourhood watch slab might read ‘Beware of the Fir Bolg’ or, if the Melesians were in control a sign might read ‘Beware of the Tuatha dé Danann.’ No sign would ever say, ‘Beware of the Romans’, puzzling, when you consider how straight the R827 is. Suburban life can be dull so you might as well take a bit of artistic licence and be philosophical about it. The Deansgrange Road, or, for the more exacting among us, the R827, has been a neighbourhood of sorts for thousands of years. It’s my Pale and I am merely a witness to the latest in a long line of inhabitants. Why not picture that post-modern literary family - James Joyce and Flann O’Brien, cycling a tandem up the R827; Joyce shouting, ‘Faster, faster’ and O’Brien shouting, ‘The feckin’ brakes aren’t working!’*

[www.oldfilibuster.com](http://www.oldfilibuster.com)

### Hairdressing Salon– weekday afternoon

Sculptresses of tresses,  
trimmers of manes,  
hair is your element.

Your clientele  
rivals Shakespeare’s Seven Ages of Man  
when it comes to  
ruthless attrition.

You snip and shape and clip and curl,  
cover grey with colours  
more preposterously named  
than romantic novels.

Tired sixty somethings with traitorous roots  
leave with heads of their twenty-year-old selves —  
and with rings on their necks  
like Jack-in-the-Boxes,  
laughter lines beyond a joke,  
lips depleted of fulsomeness.  
Why bother?

But they do.

And the girls in black  
grow intimate  
with the contours of their heads,  
their preferred holiday destinations,  
the annoying habits of their husbands.  
They prattle about weight,  
hospital appointments,  
non-essential surgery  
and the girls in black nod emphatically,  
take on their pain  
for the duration of the styling session.

And always, always - pressing engagements;  
weddings, dinner parties, school reunions, girls’ nights out.  
Ladies betrayed by roots are drowning in a social whirl.  
The girls in black do their very best  
to make them presentable.

Crumbling damsels totter in  
Smiling, semi-apologetic;  
Thinning grey threads  
deftly rearranged  
by the girls in black  
ephemeral return trip to their crowning glory.  
They say ‘thank you’ more than they should  
Too polite to protest the water is cold  
or that they cannot hear  
over the rolling surround  
sound of ‘greatest hits’.  
They will see you this day next week  
weather permitting; God permitting.

And then the debutante crashes through the door  
reeking of freshness.

Her lush shock of brunette waves  
needs no intervention;  
sure isn’t it a rite of passage  
to sip your free cappuccino;  
share your impending excitement  
with the girl in black  
who is chomping at the bit  
to sculpt your locks?  
revel in the adoration of the time-worn and the care-worn,  
You have sprinkled fairy dust on their march of time.

### Old Hand

I saw you on a Dublin bus  
at the end of a faded giant’s arm  
of shovel-like proportions.  
You rested on a shaky plateau  
like a Komodo Dragon:  
archipelago of liver spots,  
fingers like Cuban cigars  
tipped with tarmacadam,  
veins networked like Spaghetti Junction.

The shards of your life  
lie buried near Birmingham’s M6;  
your services no longer required.  
The smokes and booze that dulled the pain  
for forty years  
have ravaged your body.  
I am ashamed to look into your rheumy eyes;  
their rivulets weathering trenches.  
I cannot ignore the rumbling volcanoes  
of your lungs.

Might your fourteen-year-old hands have  
resembled those of Oscar Wilde  
before his stint in Pentonville and Wandsworth?  
Your stint was longer, though you lasted the course  
and here you are on a Dublin bus  
a miraculous wreck; still breathing.  
Your hand betrays your past.

Maybe you’ll stop at the bookies  
Place a treble on the 16.10 at Fairy House  
I hope to God you win.  
Have a few pints with the lads  
And marvel at your good fortune.

## 5 Kinvara, Cameross

*Moving Memories*

*Denise French*

*As a child we moved house many times. The same old wooden sign, spelling out 'Kinvara', moved with us to each new home. We travelled together from Sligo to Navan, to various Dublin suburbs, landing briefly in each place, yet always living in 'Kinvara'. My grandparents named their home 'Cameross', after the townland in Co. Laois where my grandmother grew up. It was a happy and predictable place where I was always the centre of attention. Deep bass notes of quiet consistency and permanence provided a counterpoint to the dynamic melody of all the 'Kinvara's.*



### **Kinvara: Oil**

We thought the Nigerians were just for the summer.  
The Nigerians thought we were for the birds.  
'Kinvara for rent'  
and we could all head off to Curracloe for the summer  
to sizzle and swim in the sun.  
sizzle    sizzle    sizzle.

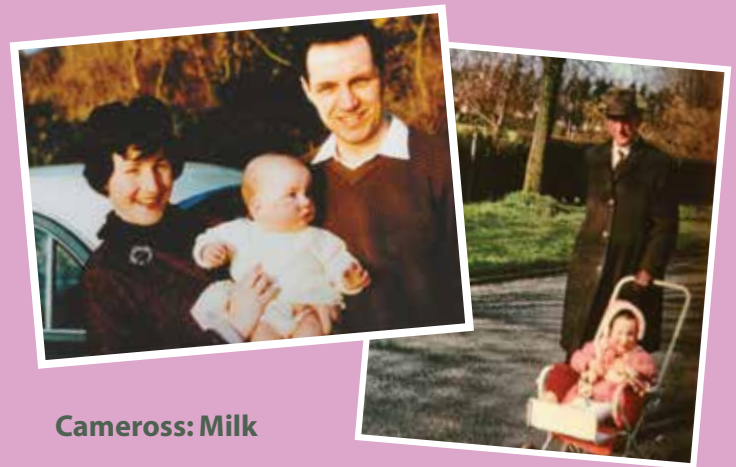
"Embassy seeks short let in Foxrock area," Mum read in the paper.  
How short is short? Nigeria is so far away, and so very hot;  
I wonder do they know about Curracloe in the summer?  
Sizzle    sizzle    sizzle

It all started with the skirting- style radiators;  
State of the art, until the oil crisis came along.  
1976 or '77, pushing cars in the queue for petrol on Brighton Road.  
The heat was OFF and no chance of a sizzle.

From Nigeria via Lisneys they came,  
No oil crisis in Africa – it's gushing from the potholes there,  
And no worries about skirting rads and the like.  
But not just to rent for the summer – to buy for good.  
The deal goes sizzle    sizzle    sizzle

The offers came and went; the price got higher and higher.  
The queue remained outside O'Connor's garage.  
Cars abandoned here and there,  
Like remnants from an old African war.  
Our radiators might never again sizzle    sizzle    sizzle.

Moving is looking increasingly attractive now....  
Money in the bank, petrol in the car.  
Off we go again to the next "Kinvara"  
We didn't really fit in with the ponies and the pools here,  
We didn't have enough sizzle    sizzle    sizzle.



### **Cameross: Milk**

The green door with the bumpy glass,  
Standing on tippy toes, nose to the letterbox.  
The colours outside wobble in,  
The view, a mottled mixture of green and blue glass,  
No sign of mum.  
She's just gone for milk.

Off to the park with Grandad and Pal,  
The rowers on the Liffey wave back.  
Chase and roll down the hills,  
Grass stains on my good frock.  
Climb the memorial monument,  
Watch the trains from the bridge.

Dark blue outside now through the bumpy glass;  
Pal lies across the door.  
Me and Nana sleep under the feather and down.  
Snuggled into blissful folds,  
Special smells and snores of comfort.  
Trains rumble at the end of the garden.

Suddenly the glass on the door turns pink and white.  
Keys jangle, presents rustle.  
Chatter and smiles of welcome and return.  
What a lovely tan after two weeks in Spain  
.... But she never got the milk.



## 6 Summerhill Parade

Sara Hanley



Sara Hanley is originally from Penarth in South Wales but has lived in Dublin with her husband and family since 1991. Sara graduated from IADT Visual Art Practice in 2011 and went on to study a Level 9 Diploma in Business and Cultural Event Management also at IADT, graduating in 2012. Sara has worked for Artscope Ltd., as a cultural event manager for the last two years and has recently started to explore her art practice again, regenerated by her experience with 'The Pale Project'.

### Where is my Pale?

At the moment, my Pale is Summerhill Parade, but it has extended to many places over my lifetime.

From Wales and my birthplace, to London until aged ten, then back to Wales before I took off on my travels, returning periodically, before galloping off on new adventures again.

I was born in Bridgend in 1964, five days before Christmas on a snowy night at home. My father was a sergeant in the South Wales Constabulary and my mother was a social worker. After twenty-five years serving as a policeman, my father left Wales with my mother and moved on to begin a new life in London as house parents in a children's home. I was three years old.

This is how I spent my childhood with my older sister, two years my senior, firstly in Essex, then on to Holloway, London N7. My memories are prompted by photographs. and as time moves on, I want to take ownership of them.

Bunk beds: a broken arm for my sister who took the top bunk; ballet and shopping for outfits in the West End; sitting in the gods at D'Oyly Carte performances of Gilbert and Sullivan, igniting a love of the musical I still carry with me today; plays at the local theatre and being babysat so that my parents could visit James Bond at the cinema.

Saturday morning pictures where we were deposited with a host of other youngsters to be collected afterwards, no parental supervision needed, thank you! A visit to the kiosk for penny sweets: flying saucers, shrimps, blackjacks and fruit salads - all you could eat for a penny. I lived to see the next episode of 'Here Come the Double Deckers' featuring seven kids whose clubhouse was a red London bus. Piano lessons followed with lemonade and a chocolate marshmallow cake given by the oldest lady in the world.

Several events changed all; my brother's arrival six years after mine meant my mother spend the majority of time in hospital due to several miscarriages and a prolapsed womb. We moved out of the children's home and into a big three story house that was designated for demolition in 1971, they called it progress?



# 7 Booterstown Marsh

*Veronica Heywood*

*Veronica Heywood, artist, environmentalist & arts educator, born in Australia, childhood spent in Hong Kong, secondary and arts education in England, came on a family holiday to Ireland in 1968, fell in love with the countryside & never left. Her passion for nature prompted her to join the Pale Project.*

## Mumbles



Veronica and her mother, 1942. Her father's first sight of his new daughter, sent by post to him at POW Camp 'S', Hong Kong.

My mother and I boarded HMS Strathallan for war-torn Europe when I was just a few weeks old. Japanese aircraft had just bombed Darwin, and having fled Hong Kong, she feared Australia would be next invaded. We crossed two oceans via the U-boat infested Panama Canal, in an unescorted, unarmed passenger liner. She thought it safer than staying put.

## Edwardo from Angola



Artwork: Veronica Heywood

Empty schoolhouse. Trees grow because there are no people there, everything is old. The fishermen left their boats, they had to save their lives. The country is empty, specially in the villages because of the war. Many people ran away to Luanda & some even went outside the country.

## Migrations

I am a gander, born on an island ledge in the vast stretches of the Canadian Arctic. My mother chose this spot to build her nest because there were no predators to threaten us. We fed on nutritious grasses, mosses and lichens throughout the Arctic summer. Our mother said we must gobble as much as we could to build our strength.

Early one morning, she signaled us to our perch and then took off, calling for us to follow. We obeyed, and circled around our ledge a few times until she got her bearings. Turning to fly eastwards into the rising sun, we formed a great V with Mother as the lead. I was behind my older brother.

It wasn't long before other families joined us; some tagging on to the end of our V, others forming their own. Soon the whole sky seemed to fill with our fellow geese; I heard the swishing of a thousand wings. Mother called back to stay close together and not to leave our family formation under any circumstances.

We flew higher than I had ever ventured before, higher than the sun, and the higher we flew the easier it became; it felt as if the wind was pushing us forward. Looking down we saw a vast pine forest, interspersed with little lakes, spreading to the edge of the world. There was such a great crowd in the sky, we nearly blocked out the sun.

It seemed as if we flew into the night. We could just see a great stretch of water glinting in the moonlight. When the sun appeared again, a range of very high mountains appeared. Our fellow flyers ascended sharply and it grew colder. I started gasping for breath, the air seemed very thin. My brothers closed in to support me if I fainted; and I found I could fly more easily in their wake.



Artwork: Veronica Heywood

At last we descended to a height where we could breathe normally. The humans call this mountainous island Greenland; though it didn't look green to me, just white and rocky. On and on we flew over waters spotted with mountains of ice. I was feeling tired and hungry and cried to my mother to stop and rest. She turned to fly beside me, and encouraged me to keep going.

Then we came to a truly green land. Flying eastwards around its northern coast, I saw the land and the sea entwine like human hands at prayer. She led us south till we came to a great sweeping curve of a bay, and landed. In this strange place, tucked between the railway line and road, we ate the green weed that grew in great profusion, and dozed until the tide turned. We had found our sanctuary.

# 8 Ballycorus Leadmines

*industrial heritage reclaimed by nature*

*Padhraig Nolan*

*In 1983, when I first arrived in Dún Laoghaire to attend art college, the chimney at Ballycorus was already a well-established local landmark. In the summer of 2006 I joined a guided talk on this former leadmine site, hosted by the Geological Society of Ireland and learned a little more of its heritage and context. The Pale Project offered an opportunity to spend time recording images, sounds, thoughts and impressions. Visits to this area now encourage a kind of mapping of seams and preoccupations within my writing and visual art.*



Images - Padhraig Nolan

## Skim

*up here is where I walk  
and walking it must be  
to get me to a place  
where I can see*

beyond spires, above trees  
I join with the sky  
open to the air

the roads below dwindle  
to threads, hemmed  
and neatly worn

beware : there is  
no mystic scale here,  
supernature not  
our destination

these rolling lines  
of gridded interchange  
are not landing strips,  
nor ichor spilt

all that can be  
seen from height  
is only that  
screed far below

## Indefeasible

A new republic's birth commands a price;  
to scrub away the interlopers' stain,  
beyond the pale the big houses  
went up in flames.

Householders slept uneasy, the threat  
whatever GHQ required; word, deed,  
bloodshed should the need arise  
but first - this callous signal - homes on fire.

Now that's all in the past, how soon  
dust settles back on history's face.  
Apart from here and there a guilty ruin  
we're cherished now, assured within our place

with every house a big house to the man  
perished in his sleeping bag,  
the children in their tinder caravan.

## Lead Mine Hill

We reached the summit baked and weary,  
resin-scented pines, Martellos hazy on the coast.  
I drifted from the others, raking over hillside  
recently burnt black; sedges cropped to stubble,  
gorse charred back to bone.

Eyes to the horizon, I almost stepped  
into this open-air exhibit; immaculate, not even  
singed, a meadow pipit nest upon the ground.

Beneath the open daylight, still as marble,  
three eggs rested; silken, speckled,  
pristine as when settled into place.

I hunkered down, uncertain. Could the flames  
have spared this clutch - for all, or one,  
might hope retain its hunger?

Or was this final, flawless shield invisibly breached;  
all life tongued off, flared into summer skies  
leaving only night within each pale clay-crystal caul  
instinctually aching to be slipped?

## 9 Foxrock Avenue

Catherine Griffin

*When my husband and I moved to Foxrock Avenue, I was sad to learn that our home had been built at the expense of several old estates in the area, like nearby Clonkeen House. Several original residents of the road were generous enough to talk to me about moving into the area as it was on the cusp of social and environmental change. My Pale became about the growth of a community in sympathy with the loss of the estates.*



### Mr Healy

In 1965, Jay Healy, a young school teacher, bought a house in an up-and-coming road called Foxrock Estate.

'I didn't think I could afford the house. I bought it unpainted with no central heating for a discount'. Neighbours were an accountant for Guinness, a distiller for Powers, a future chief executive of Bank of Ireland. For the first three years, he drove to Crumlin to the school where he worked. There was only one traffic light on the whole journey at Armagh Road. Gardaí manned the crossroads by Foxrock Church, directing traffic.

As houses were built by Coughlan and Gallagher builders, the need for a local school became urgent and Jay got a job in Clonkeen College where he later became principal.

Jay remembers how the builders left a pile of rubble and concrete in the back garden. He traded this to the people building the row of shops up the road and negotiated a lorry-load of topsoil from the site of Foxrock Church car park. Jay and his young son moved it into the back garden with only a wheelbarrow and then asked for more. The graveyard was to be extended right up to the back wall of Jay's house. As compensation, the council planted trees to block the view. The people four doors up poisoned the trees because they didn't want their view blocked.

The residents association were particular about living in Foxrock not Deansgrange. Some of the residents wanted to appeal the rates as they were higher than Deansgrange but others objected. It was a status thing. There are few original residents still here. It's not a place people stay. Once the children are older they move onwards and upwards. They come for the schools and then they leave because the schools' traffic is so disruptive.

*Catherine O'Donoghue chose Carrickgollogan mountain as the object of research for her part in The Pale Project. By climbing Carrickgollogan and walking the areas surrounding the mountain, Catherine engaged with the physicality of the area while exploring personal memories and stories connected with it. Throughout the writing process, Catherine encountered a creative space in which a blurring between person and place occurred. The poet drew inspiration from the fragility that often exists between memory and actuality. These poems explore the way in which place allows for a framework through which memory and thoughts can be understood and recalled. The mountain serves as both the stage on which memories are performed, as well as being an omniscient character itself, providing a constant physicality and presence in the otherwise gaseous realm of memory.*

**Blackberry Picking at Carrickgollogan**

Your lips are painted  
With hours of blackberry picking.  
Fingers, thorn-pricked and purple,  
Itch for respite.

The Autumn grass  
Holds the last  
Of the afternoon sun up  
To meet our backs.  
As we lie,  
Drinking in the mountain above  
And the sea below.

Tree tops frame a blue expanse.  
The sky, a clear eternity –  
Clean breaks us  
From our tasks below it.

Recharging, the energy  
Streams through our blood.  
Bees hurrying  
To the hive.  
We share a common origin  
The gas of stars.

When the chill comes  
It stiffens our hands.

We pick up  
Make our tired way  
Down the winding road  
Back towards the sea.

**Smoke**

You are just ahead,  
Turning each bend in the path  
As it reaches my sight.

My eye catches the wave,  
Of your long dark hair.  
Curling like smoke,  
It eludes my grasp.

I know you are there.  
I still glimpse  
The white trail of your dress.

**Wood**

Your head's a wood these days.  
Damp, mossy, hard to navigate.

Briars poke out  
From behind your ears.

Your eyebrows,  
Thick as sticks,  
Point upwards  
Toward a heavy sky.

Birds nest in your brittle hair,  
Breaking bits off,  
Restructuring.

The paths from the corners  
Of your mouth,  
To the dimples in your cheeks,  
Are well worn  
Well loved.

**Mapping Carrickgollogan**

Firstly, your feet find the cool, damp earth,  
Crunch wayward sticks into it.  
Forcing a rickety  
Cracking route.

The steep, temporary slope  
From the car park,  
Up to the pathway,  
Breaks your reverie.  
Wakes the heart,  
Urging the blood round.

You climb, walking on.  
Breath steadying,  
As feet find their rhythm.

Evergreens line your sight.,  
Your feet know the way  
They propel you onwards.

Old paths with new frames appear;  
Wooden huts with no occupants  
No hint of a fire – or food.

Each turn lends a different view  
Fields, dense woodland, the sea-  
How easy it would be  
To hide in this place.

Trees close us in,  
Direct us forward, blocking our view  
Of the outside world,  
Of society.  
Letting in only what the mountain  
And its guards allow.

You leave the car journey behind,  
You belong to the mountain now.

11

## Along the Luas green line

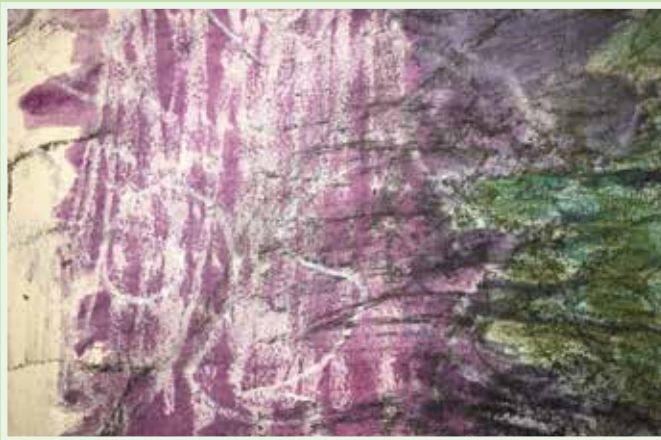
*Glenamuck Road to Bride's Glen*

Jane Robinson



*I am a writer and biologist, living and working not far from the abandoned Harcourt Street Railway Line. I chose to re-enter childhood haunts and examine the changes spearheaded by the Luas Green Line extension. The area, slated for development in the near future, forms a suburban edge-land with varied terrain including an ancient oak grove, the remains of an old mill, a river, a steep-sided valley, Brennanstown portal tomb and two circular burial grounds. Entry into this liminal space is tinged with sorrow over its transience and vulnerability.*

[www.janerobinson.ie](http://www.janerobinson.ie)



### From 'The Biology of Nowhere'

When I drive out in the car I'm separated from the earth by so many boundaries it is an embarrassment. Against my skin lie several layers of cloth. My feet are clothed in cotton, leather, soft foam, hard rubber. Under my right foot is the harder rubber of the accelerator pedal and, below this, the metal rod and gears. The car is suspended on metal springs; the air-filled tyres roll along a road made of tar, asphalt, gravel and finally under that, the earth, or more precisely, the subsoil or bedrock, for the top layers will have been stripped away to make the road. I count thirteen boundaries between my foot and the land it travels.

### Sketch Map of a Temporary Wilderness

To enter you'll pass fifteen bees feeding on ivy flowers, scramble up a steep mud mound blocking the gate and dry your mouth on unripe sloes.

Sketch a map with charcoal from a clear-felled willow copse – stones, road, hill, high cross, dolmen, open space. All field names have been forgotten.

I eat handfuls of seedy blackberries, purple my fugitive map with their juice. The eye in the sky doesn't see rabbits track through the spinny

where a fox has scattered pigeon feathers, Tully River loud as it enters the woods. Beside the ravine – graffiti, aerosol cans, barbed-wire tangles.

Someone's garden, someone's abandoned building site, a city planner's projection map, everyone's ride at the speed of light.

*(first published in The Level Crossing 1, Poems of Place, Dedalus Press, 2016)*



Photo: Jane Robinson

With 30,000 dwellings planned around the new town centre at Cherrywood, there is no way my temporary wilderness will not fall apart. When this happens I'll retreat to the Luas Park and Ride carpark at Carrickmines Station where the remnants of native forest are preserved behind the wooden fences: seven ancient oak trees and a rushing stream separated from the commuters. During the day when everyone is out at work - and in spite of the damage done to the earth's surface by layers of tar and gravel - this is an oasis of peace. Maybe I feel calm here because it's finished. Whatever was to be destroyed has already been destroyed. Some elements have been preserved and the presiding oaks are both habitat and a biological reservoir for the future.

*(extract from unpublished essay)*

# 12 Dun Emer, Sandyford Road

Sheila Robinson

*'A wish to find work for Irish hands in the making of beautiful things'*

Sheila is a designer by vocation and occupation. She has always been interested in the role of women in the craft and design industry in Ireland. As a child, she explored Dun Emer when it was about to be demolished. Dun Emer was the cradle for the creative practices of the Yeats Sisters and Evelyn Gleeson who together created the Cuala Press and Dun Emer Industries. This house on Sandyford Road provided creative employment and design apprenticeships for young women in Dundrum and Churchtown for several decades. It has continued to inspire Sheila in her own design career.

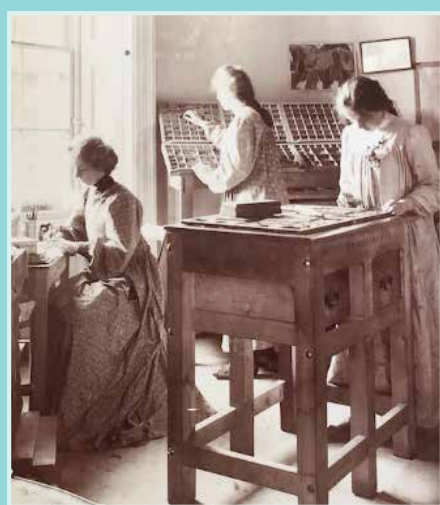


Photo: Printing room at Dun Emer (courtesy of BLI)

## Dun Emer I

If I should meet  
Miss Lily Yeats  
How would I address her?  
Would I say, "You're William's sis or Jack's,  
Or John Butler's other daughter"?  
Would she throw her hands up  
In creative desperation  
Because her sister has  
Displeased again their *consoeur*  
Evelyn Gleeson?  
And Lily tries to keep the peace,  
And Lily knows that she's the one  
to keep the thing in motion  
All the planning and the dreaming  
All the schmoozing and the scheming  
To print a poem, to sew a line and start  
A revolution.

## Dun Emer II

The Poet and the Artist present their marks  
Handmaiden sisters attend  
One selects and prepares the paper  
The other inspects the symmetry of their colophon

"Here ends 'In The Seven Woods', written by William"

The upturned triangle  
downwards  
pointing  
fin

Type is set in Caslon Old Face  
ems and serifs  
Carefully centred  
Symmetrically balanced  
On the Albion

Lay the soft white paper on the soft white felt  
Roll the ink black ink  
Back and forth  
Back and forth

Impress  
Emboss

Peg to dry like washing on a windy day  
in Windy Arbour  
One page complete  
Repeat  
Repeat

## Dun Emer III

All around Saint Nathi's  
Viking and Gael  
Norman and Anglo  
Drive by in their four by fours

This little crannóg  
An island of bones  
Floats on a lake of tarmac  
Suspended in a forest of steel

Deep dark cold  
In the shadow of the church  
A blackbird startled rises above  
Layers of dead below

Tall wet grass hides you  
But doesn't damp your call  
*Here I am please find me*  
Weeps the river beyond the wall

## Table

Saw-toothed  
Seasoned ash  
Chisel chamfer chisel  
Sweet shavings curl  
Sap released

Smooth by plane  
Match the grain  
Sand oil wax  
Its shapely legs

Counter sink  
To finish flush

## 13 Shanganagh Cliffs

Aoife Tunney

*Aoife Tunney is an independent curator, project manager and arts advisor based in Dublin.*

*My Pale had intense dichotomies. Strange ugliness and natural beauty, decadence and poverty, stood side by side. On our estate, houses were packed tightly together row after row facing one direction or another. Small stamp-sized gardens were allocated to each.*

*If I walked across the field and turned right I met a different type of housing estate. There were no laneways and the houses had more garden and garage space and wider streets with trees and flowers. 'Shanknam' didn't apply to this side of Shankill.*

*As a curator and artist, I think living here gave me an appreciation of community, architecture and nature and how people negotiate their lives within these contexts.*



Photos: Aoife Tunney

### Shanknam

We arrived in Shanganagh Cliffs the summer of my twelfth birthday, from the flat, quiet fields of Kildare. We called it "Shanknam," because some nights we came home to find cars burning in the field in front of our house.

I felt much older than twelve. I had just finished first year in secondary school and was wearing a bra I didn't need. My mother worked in a restaurant and when we visited her, my brother revealed the oranges I was supporting in my top to everyone.

A co-op of builders had employed a Danish architect to design a series of unusual houses at an affordable price. The low hanging roofs disguised the second storey tucked under the eaves. The liberal use of wood and glass, open-plan hallways and alternative garden storage under the low roof at the front, made these houses look odd for a nineteen eighties estate in Shankill.

Each house cost 35,000 Irish pounds but if your preference was to have one less bedroom, it was cheaper. We bought the house from a family who had designed the layout from the plans. There were plenty of options but you had to develop them yourself. We never got round to that. There was an en suite bathroom upstairs off my mother's bedroom with the base of a shower in the corner. The toilet was used but the base never became a shower.

A huge square window took up a whole wall of the sitting room. We had our own view of the sea. In the mornings, I watched the mood and movement of the ocean and let it influence my day. The window had a swivel mechanism which allowed you to open it all the way around. In the summer, we would jump in and out of it to get stuff from the kitchen during breaks from playing tennis on the road.

The carpets we inherited were either shit coloured brown in the kitchen, or the dullest grey ever imagined, in the hallway. The floor smelt of wet dog's hair and cabbage. The new house remained messy for a long time.

We slept on mattresses on the floor and there was a general lack of furniture. But it was ours and it was exciting and new, much like when you start school in the autumn with new books and pens.



# 14 Digging Up The Raj

*The Irish who lived and worked in India during British rule*

*Shabnam Vasisht*



*Intrigued by references to India on graves in Deansgrange Cemetery, Shabnam Vasisht decided to investigate. Scrambling through brambles and ivy with the Cemetery Superintendent, she discovered seventy-six graves relating to the Raj. The occupants had defended the Crown through wars and mutinies, administered in the Indian Civil Service, or converted those sun-worshipping heathens to 'muscular Christianity'. Some names were recognisable in India, but unknown in Ireland.*

*Thus began Shabnam's quest to bring these amazing lives to the attention of their own countrymen.*

## LIEUTENANT-GENERAL HENRY HALL C.B.

I 'exhumed' a true 'Blue-Star Family' from this grave. They all had remarkable military careers – from the man buried in it, to his brother, son, grandson . . . even his in-laws.

Henry Hall was born in 1789 to the Venerable Francis Hall, Archdeacon of Kilmacduagh in County Galway.



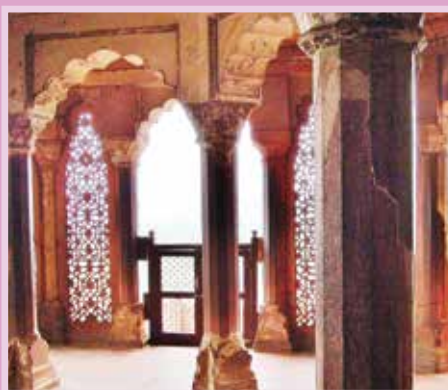
Hall started out in the Bengal Native Infantry as an ensign in 1805, quickly rising to Lieutenant. However, he was not appointed Captain until 1821 probably because, in the intervening years, he was rushing around the Bengal Presidency helping to capture an absolutely astonishing number of forts. The Presidency stretched from present day Bangladesh in the east, all the way to Afghanistan in the northwest, and half-way down India – an area the size of continental Europe from the French Coast to the Black Sea. There were an awful lot of forts to seize.

After subduing resentful Indian maharajas, Hall went on to serve in the Guide and Intelligence Departments, as well as dabbling in other political duties. As Deputy Assistant Quarter-Master-General, he was entrusted by the Governor General of India, Lord Hastings, with 'civilising the turbulent race of Mhairs' – a brutal and fearless tribe.

Hall led an inquiry into the legitimate ownership of the Mhairwara villages. But when he reported on the mismanagement of the Mhair districts ceded to the Government, it went down like a dead dragoon with Hastings.

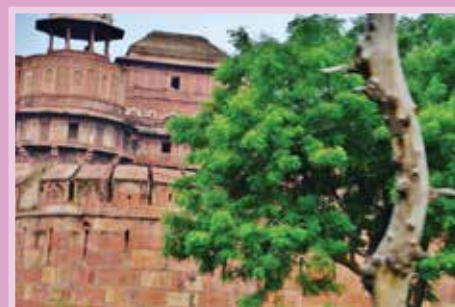
Young Hall quickly undertook to train a corps raised from a motley collection of tribesmen. So great was their loyalty to the Crown that during the Bengal Mutiny of 1857, the Mhairs saved the city of Ajmer from the mutineers and offered refuge to besieged British families.

Suitably impressed, the colourful Major General Christopher Fagan saw fit to give his daughter, Sara, in marriage to Hall, (twenty years her senior) in 1827. The young woman dutifully presented her husband with four children.



Flitting between military and civil roles, Hall also served as Justice of the Peace. During his watch, practices such as female infanticide and suttee dropped to an all-time low. But still, those ungrateful women continued to hurl themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres.

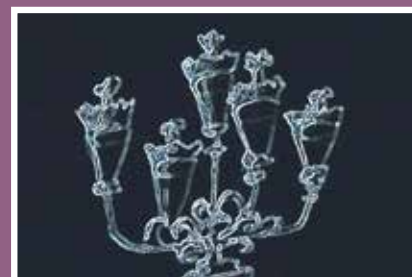
Hall's brilliant career won him fifty publicly-expressed commendations from his superiors, culminating in his investiture as Companion, Order of the Bath.



Upon his retirement, Hall bought a house called 'Merville' on Foster's Avenue in Dublin. The grand estate passed through many hands until bought by University College, Dublin, for student halls of residence.

Lieutenant-General Henry Hall C.B. died in 1874 at the age of eighty-five.

## DID YOU KNOW?



The Five Lamps pillar, at the junction of five streets – Portland Row, North Strand Road, Seville Place, Amiens Street and Killarney Street – in north Dublin, was erected in 1880 as a monument to General Henry Hall C.B.



*I chose Dalkey Island because it is set apart from the mainland, and is an isolated territory lying 'beyond the Pale': a phrase that indicates lawlessness, wildness, and the unknown.*

## Muglins

The sun turns its attention on them in the morning,  
You watch from Killiney Hill's leafy altitude -  
Reefs crouching in their grassless splendour.

Nothing rests beyond them  
Except the waves' limpid collision, and Dalkey  
Island, becalmed like a green leviathan,  
The final landmark for Irish reprobates:  
A portly Martello, east-facing stonework,  
Breakwater, a goshawk in angry flight, swivel guns,  
The Irish Sea baring itself to your sight.  
Yachts frolic on the water in frilled regatta.

Nature's masonry -  
Bone and hemp, rag and iron collar, grab your eye,  
A dank dissuasion. The immeasurable sea  
Does not care for maritime laws  
to be set in stone or coral.  
Neither wind nor sun touches your hair.  
You know by now that all storms  
Have their own colour: russet forest fire,  
Swarthy torrents, cyclones caught in brunette  
Seizure. A mutineer has no colour, though;  
Just his gibbet's rusty steel, leaden  
As an anchor, bones buffed with tar, a freshwater  
Drum roll drilling his ear, breezes stirring  
His slack feet to dance a sly hornpipe.  
The crows' hungry glee flaps through the dark.

Dusk kisses the tidal face. Sandbanks hide their spite.  
  
The moon is a crooked beacon, the seaweed a snare.  
Hard-nosed trawlers cruise the inlet,  
The rope's tightened groan tilts over the surface.  
From the pier, men cast lines for codling and dogfish.

Skeleton of Hibernia, sleep now in the sea that  
Won't remember you. No life-raft or seiner  
Shall berth in you. The cove is perfect for  
Salting away our swag, our shameful plunder.



Photos: Natasha Helen Croxall

## John de Courcy Ireland

Yours was the first low cadence of tides,  
A rusted bawley now sent to the breakers. Who  
Could follow you through soused everglades,  
Your phantom still set on cataloguing the slew  
Of uncharted alts, death-crooning mermaids?

And now the salty wonder-pill pushes away  
The database of names you'd so fussily gathered,  
Registries of men scuttled and unsung, the etymology  
Of barnacled weather-rail and waving oleander,  
The cut-glass Atlantic, washed fodder for history.

You organised Dún Laoghaire lifeboat station  
Like a man aloft, standing watch for a glimpse  
Of reef or risk, good and lost in the mirror-like ocean  
Whose urges you knew to exalt. The oily lamps  
Kindle half-measured miles, inked into a margin

Of your silver memory. This pebbly ledge  
Whitens at dusk. The oarlock's twirling glance  
Acts on your hand's bidding, your ultimate voyage

Too far off for gales to gag your response  
To our common and ignored heritage.

We islanders, oblivious to the cold blue element  
That is needed and fuels our need, have dived  
Past the porpoise's inshore library, the green ferment  
In an appendix of anemone, a luminous sea-cave

Immersed in plain-texts of sand, the acrostic hunt  
For bass or mackerel flavouring our hook.  
Your headstone, if you had one, would face the coast  
As pilgrims face Mecca, no matter how deeply brooked,

How deeply moored in soil you'd be. An offshore gust,  
Hard as the fact, bestows on us neither a look-  
Out's clarity nor strength enough to bear  
The burden forecast or the grey churn  
Of a maelstrom, our blindness made clear  
To the global sea that binds nation to nation,

As you had always declared.  
Your Argentinian hills bristle with uncut cypresses  
And her dissolving sky, with scuppers of cloud,  
Rams the rolling swish that calmed you, redresses  
An anchor feted with the shame of rust and seaweed;  
You are bound homeward, yet willing your mind always  
To frigid depths where prosperity may be trawled.