

ROUNDWOOD PURE MILE 2015



The 2015 Roundwood Pure Mile starts at Synnotts Corner which is located at the junction of the R755 to Glendalough and the R765 to Kilcoole and ends on the East side pathway of the Vartry Reservoir at the boundary of the townlands of Knockraheen and Knockatemple. Roundwood village is less than half a kilometre to the south on the R755 which is one of the busiest tourist routes in the County and at an altitude of 238 metres above sea level.

The majority of this report takes the format of a narrative of a leisurely stroll taken by two Pure Mile residents Elizabeth Belton and Alice Rapple on the 25th of July. It includes their local and natural history knowledge. Enjoy!

Synnotts Corner is in the townland of Togherbeg, 'togher' meaning path or causeway over boggy land and 'beg' meaning little or small. Pre 1860s maps show no houses in the area of the corner or in the fields stretching down to where the old road bridge crossed the Vartry until a few buildings are shown to the north, beside the old road in the townland of Knockraheen. The Reservoir planned by Gray in

the 1860s, flooded areas of Togherbeg, Knockraheen and Knockatemple in the 1870s and 1880s on construction of the dams. More lands were partly flooded when the Upper Dam on which work started



in 1908 was finished. The early maps show the lines of the old roads, parts of which can still be seen and the old narrow three arched bridge over the Vartry becomes visible when the Reservoir water level drops.

The 1901 census shows two houses only in Togherbeg and eight in Togher, the modern Roundwood. In Togherbeg, House no1 lists Ellen Walsh and her three children, as well as Christopher and Mary Doyle. House no2 had Wm Keane , James Kane and a female servant by the name of Kerfoot. In 1901 Togher (the modern Roundwood) is listed as having eight houses (names footnote1) including a Margaret Clarke old enough to have lived during the Great Famine of the 1840s. In 1911 Togherbeg is shown as having three houses whereas Togher is listed with seven houses one less than the 1901 census.

House no1 in Togherbeg has Michael Hayes aged 18 and a servant Joseph Synnott, the first mention of the name by which the corner is now known. House no2 has James Brady, James and William Keane, and the 67 year old servant who is now listed as 'cousin' and now spelled as Kerford rather than Kerfoot. Given that it is probable that James Kane the person listed in the 1901 census, is the same person as James Keane it is likely that Keane may have been pronounced as 'Kane' giving rise to the naming of Kanes Bank on the Togherbeg (nth side) stretch of the R765 bordering what is now the

Rapple and Doherty properties. (footnote 2 re possible house site). House no3 has Christopher Doyle, brother of Ellen Walsh aged 80 years and her son Hugh, Mary Moore and a boarder Wm Mckevitt. In 1911 Togher is shown as having seven rather than the 1901 census list of eight houses, (names footnote 3).

The Synnotts Corner we know today is named after Synnotts shop (pictured below) which was built on the corner that now bears its name, it is possible that Joseph Synnott aged 16 in 1911 or a relative with that name owned the shop. Synnotts shop—a general store—was built in 1910 to cater for the numbers of workers attracted to the locality by the building of the Upper Dam which was started in 1908. The Synnott family, who also had a shop in Newtownmountkennedy, stocked everything from meat to coal, and from cane sugar that was weighed out from hessian sacks to bicycle parts, the business managed by Michael Hayes for many years. Given the flammable nature of the stock, the fact that it had no electricity and was lit by 'petrol' lamps and seems to have been a timber building, it was unsurprisingly destroyed by fire in the early 1940s. (For details of people who worked in the shop footnote 4).



Now ten semidetached late 1940s cottages, arranged in a line that curves around the Corner are set back from the busy R755 by an attractive green area on the site of where the shop would have been. They have the usual good sized gardens of that time and four properties still have the original gates and gate piers. They face across the road to what was originally farmland owned by the McCabe family where bungalows from the 1970s to the present day have been built and where Phillip McCabe and family and their beautiful garden carries on the tradition of great gardening reminiscent of his late father Bill, a small farmer who was also a gardener for the Reservoir grounds. A mid 20th century barn is visible in what was McCabe land.

Looking south towards Roundwood village the left (east) side footpath is bordered by a stand of mature beech trees on Keenan's farmland leading to the Coach House originally run as a small hotel -- for people fishing and game shooting locally--by the Keenan family in the early 20th century, and later run as a successful pub by the family until sold. The mature beech trees 40 or so years ago were a roosting area for crows when the evening sky would be almost darkened by the huge numbers of birds flying in to roost. Now a pathetic handful of birds return there at night.

Towards Roundwood on the west side the land is more open with the road entrances to Vartry Heights, Djouce Meadow and the Doyle family home, said to be a twin of the parochial house built by the Merrigan brothers of Glenmacnass on the south side of Roundwood village. The mountain further west is Scarr.

In 1964, the local garda Sgt., Gregory Allen, with the help of local residents including WS Doyle of St Kevin's Bus Service, (footnote 5 for full list), did an excellent job of landscaping the Green area at Synnotts Corner. A tree planting ceremony took place on Arbour Day 5th October, 1964. Among the guests of honour on the day was the newly crowned world champion ploughman, Charles Keegan of Enniskerry (pictured below).



The local sculptor Frank Morris designed the seats and a low stone table built to invite locals and tourists alike to linger for a while. Grass and good paving which has stood the test of time was put in and gives a well thought out setting –under the guidance of Frank Morris, -- for the bullaun stone –of unknown providence-- on its granite column approx 22 inches tall, and a decorative mushroom stone which adds interest, (footnote 6).

Among the first people to volunteer to help Sgt Allen were stone masons whose skills were no longer required in an era where the concrete block had become cheap, quick and easy to use and the men were forced to turn to forestry work for employment. A boulder inscribed as a memorial to the I.C.A 's 50th (in 1996) anniversary is also located at Togherbeg.

At the R755 and R765 junction on the southside, a slight setback has been planted –a really difficult site for a flower bed-- by nearby residents and well maintained with shrubs and flowers at the start of the footpath south towards Roundwood village centre. The line of the old narrow roadway to Roundwood

may be seen over the ditch creating an area which unfortunately attracts litter which we removed to the best of our ability. There was a serious rat infestation here (since resolved!) in Spring which hindered the clean up work.



This area was neglected attracting graffiti, which is not of Banksy quality! The graffiti was removed as part of this project.

To continue along the Pure mile we turn east away from the R755 onto the R765 and take the right hand side of the busy road opposite the very attractive and well kept cottages, passing for example those of the Hayes families whose names appear in the 1911 census. The road slopes gently down towards the Water's Bridge and to the right (south) stretch the farmlands of the Keenan Family which are still actively farmed whereas the two fields to the North have become mostly houses and gardens.

The road still has the timeless character associated with the traditional Wicklow stone and grass banks on either side rich with ash, hawthorn, holly, elder, brambles—valuable source of vitamin C for wildlife and humans alike-- wildflowers and ferns which give shelter to those who still walk and experience the joys and biodiversity of this part of the Wicklow uplands.

On the right hand side about midway down towards the Waters Bridge two late 20th century steel farm gates lead further in to the Keenan's land which is still a working mixed farming enterprise. The upper gate leads to a narrow area not presently cultivated but which has become a valuable area for wildlife conservation with a good variety of native grasses and wildflowers crucial for the survival of bees and butterflies. In 1997 Ciaran and Brenda Keenan built their attractive house and garden with its wonderful views towards the Reservoir on family land. Ciaran and Brenda's environmental interests show in their having one of the first windmills for electricity generation in the area, (footnote 7). The Keenan house is the only building presently on the south side of the R765 until it crosses over to Knockraheen beyond the Water's Bridge. Asked about field names in the area Ciaran Keenan was not aware of any such names.

On the North or left side of the road Noel Kelly's is the last of the attractive cottages that make up Synnotts Corner. The next house was built in 1971 by Pat and Marie Kavanagh and is now owned by the Belton family. Both William and his wife Elizabeth (nee Kavanagh) are from families local to the area eg: Castlekevin, Knockraheen and Trooperstown. In springtime the Belton's roadside grassy

banks are full of primroses and in the summer cornflowers can be seen along the bank. A purple acer, a blue grey spruce are among the cherry, silver birch and ashtrees which can be seen from the road in their beautifully kept garden. A shelter belt of well maintained cupresses to the rear was planted in the mid 1970s.

The next house is a bungalow built by Alice and John Rapple, who purchased the land stretching from Noel Kelly's boundary right down to the wall adjoining the reservoir pathway in 1967. For some years it was regarded as the 'new bungalow' and the post would arrive safely with only that address! Although without any connection to Wicklow they loved and spent time in the area and then bought the site. They eventually sold the site of the Belton's house to Pat and Marie Kavanagh in the early 1970s and the site of what is now Doherty's to a Dutch couples—Min and Ken Olver-- for their retiremant. In the late 1970/1980s Min and Ken sadly died before either reached retirement and so the site was eventually sold on to the Doherty's by the Olvers' family.

The Rapple family have tried over the years to make their bungalow blend in to the landscape as much as possible. Old field trees were preserved and native trees such as ash, birch, hawthorn, alder, holly etc., have been planted including a fine specimen of an Irish golden yew, and their aim was and is to work with nature not to force a suburban ethic into what is a rural setting.

A little way further down towards the bridge a hand forged pedestrian garden gate painted traditional



green was designed and made by Karl Rapple --a qualified artist blacksmith--as a present for his mother, Alice in 2010. In the 1990s Karl built a blacksmith's working forge at the rear of the house but a back injury put a stop to his swinging a hammer. He is still involved in ironwork but now is a specialist lecturer and consultant in historic ironwork.

Passing the Rapple's paddock which gives an unobstructed view north, a view towards Djouce can be seen. The high grassy banks have ash, gorse, hawthorn and holly along both sides of the road as it continues to slope down towards the Water's Bridge.

The boundary of Dohertys' property starts at a very tall telephone pole on the left and a cypress hedge runs north towards Djouce to mark their boundary. The Dohertys' roadside boundary has a wonderful mix of blackthorn, hawthorn, bramble, gorse and wild rose reaching about 10 to 12 feet in height and at the base of the bank can be seen a variety of ferns, bracken, foxgloves and other wild flowers, the wonderful wild grasses and numerous wild flowers give shelter for wildlife, and a screen for the house

which cannot be seen from the roadside. A benchmark stone denoting the altitude for the Ordinance Survey is at the base of the bank, and should not be moved. At the Dohertys' entrance a modern mild steel gate and granite wing walls match the adjoining 19th century walls of the waterworks area.

On the Pure Mile walk from Synnotts Corner it is noticeable that no verges have been sprayed with noxious chemicals and residents have worked hard to preserve the character of the area unlike other areas where chemicals are used liberally to 'tidy up' and indigenous wildflowers are rooted out!

Just about opposite Doherty's entrance on Keenans' side of the road there is a short stretch of 19th century stone walls over which traces of the old road can be seen which would have led down to the old bridge until it was submerged by the filling of the Reservoir. The causeway leading to the Water's Bridge has beautifully built 19th century walls on either side.



Hand forged 19th century iron gates painted traditional green, with massive piers of ashlar masonry capped with rusticated

capstones lead to the waterside trackways on the west side of the Reservoir. The capstones are irreplaceable as they are of native Wicklow Granite, hand cut in a 'monumental' style which would be impossible to replicate now. Stiles give access to the waterside pathways which on either side continue to attract the walker away from the busy and ever increasing traffic's danger and noise of the busy road. The attractive stiles in living memory did not always invite access, as local people –now

grandparents—said that when they were growing up they were warned that the bailiffs would and did chase them out, they also remember the pathways been raked so that not a footprint would be seen, they said how much joy it has given them now to be able to freely wander the area.



Walking towards the Water's Bridge across the causeway extensive waterscapes and landscapes open out on each side. Dublin Corporation in the 19th century landscaped the entire area with scots pine, larch, oak, sycamore, wonderful beeches, alder etc now almost 150 years old. Stone embankments, boulders marking the boundaries of the waterlines, handcrafted walls built by master masons have survived to be now facing an uncertain future.



As you walk along grebes, waterhens, swans, varieties of duck, herons, kingfishers if you are lucky—and sometimes little egrets can still be seen. Snipe,

larks and curlew are heard occasionally. Signs of hedgehogs and badgers are often spotted along Pure Mile. Sadly a red squirrel was killed recently in the area but proof they are still resident in the area.

Native orchids, flowers that are extremely rare and seldom seen, had survived in the area, and bloomed in 2015. The fragility of the wonderful habitat of the Reservoir is often not recognised or appreciated by all visitors and users. Disturbance of habitat can destroy indigenous wildlife if not done with extreme care.



In July and August pink waterlilies stretch out from the western bank (northwards to the left) in sheets of colour. The walls of the causeway have wonderful lichens, clovers, wildflowers and miniature succulents. As you walk further towards the Bridge, views to the north are of Djouce and the White Hill and past the midpoint you will see the Sugarloaf on the same side. The boats of the Wicklow Anglers may be seen, with men quietly fishing and fly-fishing from the shore is allowed under permit.

As you walk along the causeway you may notice on the sloping sides of the stone embankments that small saplings are rooting into the fabric. It is likely that the drastic reductions in the numbers employed in maintenance by the authorities will eventually lead to problems that should be tackled now. Walls are showing signs of failing and increasingly heavy traffic on the road (designed for 19th and early 20th century usage) is 'hammering' along at speed causing structural failure where the Water's Bridge abutts the causeway walls. Extending the 50kmh speed limit to the Knockraheen side of the

Water's Bridge and most importantly enforcing it may help to stop further structural damage. Measures to slow the traffic are urgently needed also for the sake of walkers who use the road in increasing numbers. The group are liaising with Wicklow Co Council and Irish Water (Dublin City Council) on these issues. Wicklow Co Council has agreed to install a footpath from Synnott's Corner to Water's Bridge in August.



On the Water's Bridge notice how the fine ashlar masonry contrasts with the 'rubble' style of the causeway walls. Two of the four capstones on Water's Bridge's are missing. The remaining two are beautiful examples of Wicklow granite worked with skill and pride. It is hoped that the cap stones are in the water below and the group have some

divers organised to check for their presence below. The challenge will be to get them out of the water below if located.

The Wicklow Co Council town plan for the area mentions the Reservoir's importance as a wildlife habitat to be preserved which we can see and sense as we walk along. Of equal importance is the wonderful built structures, fantastic historic stone and ironwork of the Reservoir's infrastructure; it too must be protected as valuable heritage.

On the Knockraheen side of the Water's Bridge the old maps (before the dams were built) show some small buildings in the area of what is now the Moody property and the house demolished when the recent Loughlin house was built. It is possible that some of these shown were pre Great Famine

structures, and may be survivors of a bigger group, and a few of these may have survived into the 20th century. On the same side there is a small triangular meadow beside the water. A hand forged field gate which is not to the same design as the one on the opposite side of the road, with very fine granite piers, uncapped (or perhaps missing the granite capstones), and a little further on a hand forged pedestrian gate again with massive granite piers with no or perhaps missing capstones lead to the waterside pathway north to the upper dam. A little further on a very small disused gateway with an old timber pedestrian gate once led to the cottage of Julia Timmons.

Continuing on the Pure Mile, we cross the stile on the south side of the road, if we look immediately left having crossed the stile, the line of the old narrow road was plainly visible before the recent tree felling. The old road would have continued on to cross the little three arched bridge over the Vartry River to the south of the present Water's Bridge, which locally is believed to have been designed by General Holt who had an engineering background.



In 1798 the little bridge was the scene of some tragic events. Two local insurgents were returning after a skirmish in Newtownmountkennedy and were caught by the militia and without trial hung from the bridge. The bodies were left at the bridge as a warning, until after a week, in the middle of the night, some women dressed as ghosts removed the bodies for burial. It must have been a grim time then for local people (footnote 8)



The waterside trackway south, follows the boundary --to the left --of the Woodstock Connemara Stud owned and run by the Galligan family, and takes us through the mature woodland. According to local information the former owners of Woodstock House were Sean Kavanagh and family. The first field on the left is Bridie's Field. A small rudimentary granite cross, pictured above is set in a section of the field wall built of a type of sandstone. The wall is in a poor state and a portion of it has disappeared. Why the cross was set here is open to question, it may have been as a memorial but when it was done and for what reason is unclear (footnote 9).



Cowslips in Bridie's field

Mature scots pines and larch border the trackway, 19th century walls divide the fields and meadows from the path. Horses graze peacefully in the paddocks. A variety of grasses, birches and ash trees make a corridor under the canopy of the mature pine and larch that stretches into the distance attracting

exploration. Each season of the year brings a glorious variety of indigenous wildflowers with cow slips in May and meadowsweet scents the air in July. Looking west across the water we can see a stone embankment supporting the trackway on the Keenans side, and Scar can be seen in the distance over the Keenans' land.

The entire Reservoir has a wealth of field walls in a variety of styles of stonework which are disintegrating day by day. As part of this pure mile project the walls are to be photographed and documented as evidence of skilled local craftsmen, now long gone, (footnote 10). In these days of reconstituted paper thin stick on 'stone' veneers masquerading as walls these walls are a neglected heritage.





To the right of the waterway track boulders and rows of stones mark the high levels of the water and a curiosity of the place is the numbers of self sown alders, birches etc that root

into the stony shore when the water is low, survive and then when the levels rise they appear to be trees growing in water.

Any season of the year walking the waterside pathway is a real pleasure, people come from near and far and really respect the sense of place, fresh air, the calm tranquility, the light shimmering on the water, birdsong, cloudscapes, waterscapes and landscapes, like the couple from Kilcoole who walk a circuit about once a fortnight, always equipped with rubber gloves and plastic bags to pick up and take away other peoples' litter.

There are some areas which seem to attract the type of people who litter, for example some motorists still throw out cigarette packages, sweet wrappers, fast food packaging etc along the roadway. The Water's Bridge is a favourite spot for late night snacking and packaging is put on the Bridge walls and not always taken home and eventually falls into the water where the wind consistently causes a litter build up at the Knockraheen corner. In warm summer weather the Bridge attracts swimmers who despite the notices that no swimming is allowed, jump off the walls into the Reservoir and inevitably, bits of clothing and stuff are left behind and becomes litter. An idyllic spot near the little granite wall cross at the Bridie's field has been a perfect place to watch the sun going down over the water with the result that a recent small fire, and a cutting back of shrubs exposed very old bottles. So over the years whether people were allowed to or not, locals gathered at this attractive spot and one hopes that they

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will continue to do so but remember to bring their rubbish home!



Most people are charmed and enjoy the tranquillity. A love of the place and learning to appreciate what a valuable and rich space we have will help to mitigate vandalism. A further joy of the waterside trackway which continues way past our Pure Mile is the biodiversity of the vegetation, which is crucial for the survival of the wildlife of the area and also the well being of those who walk and appreciate the space, away from traffic and the hassle of 21st century life.

Our Pure mile takes us further to where the land curves around, passing on our left the Lake View Field and the Sand Pit Field to a natural bay with a marshy area where in July the marsh grasses are 6ft tall and the meadowsweet is heavenly. The stream marks the townland border between Knockraheen and Knockatemple. Some drainage ditches have recently been dug which hopefully will not degrade the habitat. Just before the sli na slainte sign the old maps show a rath –one of the three shown in the area – of which there no visible evidence.

Returning north and retracing our steps Elizabeth Belton spotted the perfect site for a seat. Facing south over the little bay, sheltered to the north by an old wall, with the marshy area to the east the view stretches across the water towards Diamond Hill and a 1990s house set in open countryside, going back

to look at the proposed site, a pair of swans were almost posing for a photograph in the water.



The return journey opens up the views of Djouce, White Hill and Scarr to the North and West until we go back over the stile on the R765 to the noise and bother of 21st century living.

Cultural/Built/Social Heritage

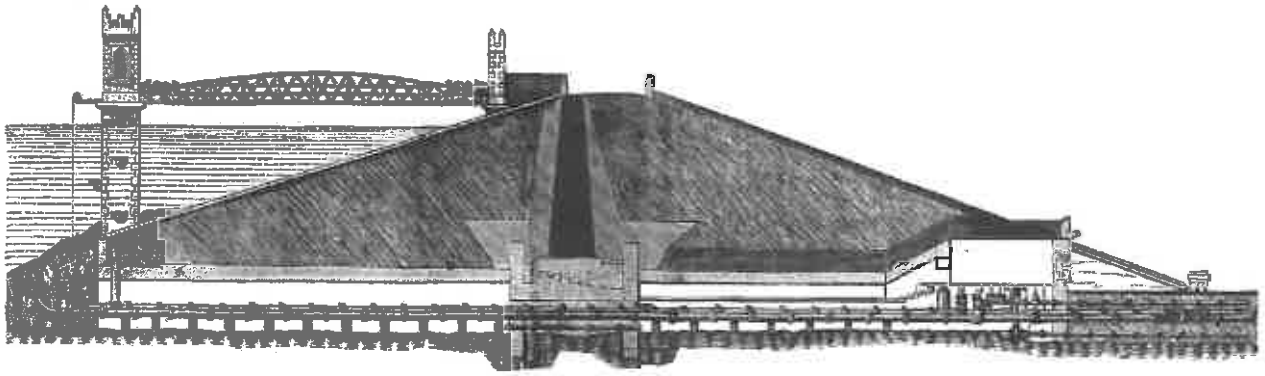
Landmarks

Again our mile features the Roundwood's famous Vartry Reservoirs. It is thought that the word Vartry derived from the territory called *Fertir or Fartry* meaning *fortress* or large rath. According to Liam Price this could refer to a large rath or fort recorded at Glasnamullan or another structure long since destroyed. The Lower Reservoir was constructed between 1862 and 1868 by damming the River Vartry valley. To provide additional storage, a second dam, 3.5km upstream was completed in 1923 forming the Upper Reservoir. Ned Fleming of the Vartry Waterworks alerted us to great video footage of just over 1.5 minutes available on the British Pathé News website of the official opening of the new reservoir issued on the 20th of December 1923. It is available to view on

<http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=20301>



The provision of such a water scheme in the 1800's was considered very ambitious. Both dams are earthen embankments with waterproof clay cores and have a stone facing on the upstream slope to prevent wave erosion. The Roundwood earthwork dam (See diagram overleaf) was so highly acclaimed that a report on its construction was included in an American Scientific Journal in 1887 by a Mr David Gravall.



However the dam was not without problems as a leak developed after construction causing pandemonium in the down stream village of Ashford when *'word was sent to the inhabitants in the valley below to evacuate their homes and move to higher ground'* (see copy of 'The Vartry Reservoir Leakage' by Padraig Jenkinson, Ashford and District Historical Society no 3 July 1993). It took two weeks for the engineers to lower the level of the reservoir to a safe level to allow the inhabitants to return to their homes in the Vartry Valley. A further eighteen months passed before the dam was repaired. Although there may have been concern regarding the dams during Hurricane Charlie in 1986 there have been no further scares that we are aware of since February 1867 – not a bad track record!

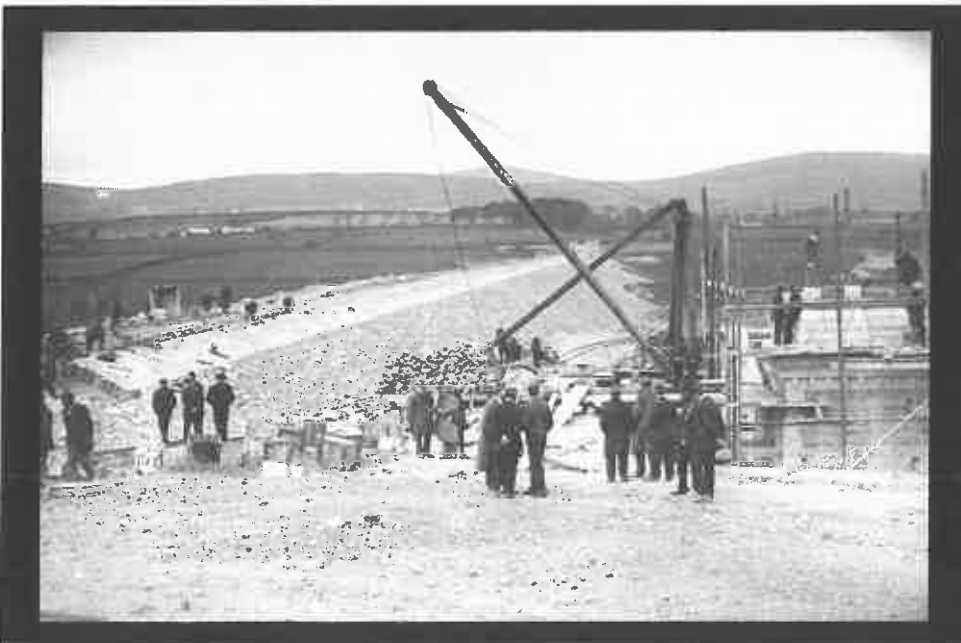
When a drought in 1887 caused major concerns about the future water supply, Mr J. A. Walker, Chairman of the Waterworks committee wrote in 1894 that *"So constant had been the Vartry service, so abundant in quantity, and so excellent in quality, that the inhabitants of the city and townships believed it to be inexhaustible, and in that belief they were satisfied to rest content"*. Mr J. A. Walker's report is enclosed. It would appear that even then we took for granted the water that flows through our taps!

Upper Vartry Reservoir Dam & Tower

Dublin Corporation purchased the lands for the Upper Reservoir between 1899 and 1903. Construction of the Upper Dam started in 1908 but was not completed until 1923.



Upper Vartry Dam cut off trench excavation



Upper Vartry Dam & Tower Construction

The purpose of the Tower is to enable water be drawn off at different levels. There are 3 intakes in all, each at a different depth and all controlled by valves within the tower.



The bell-mouth shaft and tunnel is an overflow. When the reservoir fills, the excess water spills down the shaft through the tunnel to the Lower Reservoir.

The construction of the Reservoir in those times did provide some local employment. The puddle for the embankment was drawn from Mick Connolly's farm (further north in Knockraheen) from what was called the Puddle Field. Local farmers were paid for the use of their horse and carts to draw materials. A system of tracks was constructed to facilitate the movement of materials to the location required. These tracks are visible in the photographs taken during the excavation of the cut off trenches (shown on the previous page).

The operation of the Vartry Reservoir by Dublin City Council continues to keep pace of modern technology some 150 years on and has recently received an award from Sustainable Energy Ireland. In 2008 Vartry Waterworks received a highly commended award in the Sustainable Energy Ireland's Category B - Renewable Energy Project for commissioning and installing a small hydro generation project. The treatment plant and filter beds are situated below the reservoir and because of this the pressure of the incoming water must be reduced before treatment. Vartry Small Hydro Project consisted of the installation a turbine on the water intake to convert this excess energy to electricity. The turbine selected regulates the incoming flow to any required pre-set level by means of hydraulically operated guide vanes linked to a flow meter. Water treatment at all times takes precedent over power production. To ensure the water supply is never interrupted, gravity operated body valves are incorporated to provide automatic failsafe operation of a bypass in the event of the turbine stopping.

The turbine was commissioned in November 2007 and has been operating continuously since early 2008. The generator capacity is 90kW and average plant usage is 35kW with surplus power exported to the National Grid. The project will have an estimated payback period of approximately 8 years. The turbine both regulates the incoming flow to the treatment plant and harnesses a renewable source of energy previously destroyed. It will result in a net reduction in CO₂ emissions of 380 tonnes per year.

Water is abstracted from the Lower Reservoir through the draw off tower and conveyed by pipe under the dam to the water treatment plant. The water treatment plant treats 80 million litres of water daily and supplies large areas of Dublin, north Wicklow and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown with drinkable water. The annual fluctuation in water levels is in the order of 4 or 5 metres. Lowest levels are generally reached in September/October, and maximum levels between February and May. Dublin City Council regularly monitor the Vartry Tunnel system which was constructed in the 1860's. This tunnel is a critical artery for the supply of water to the Dublin/Wicklow area. Its daily flow of 80 million litres represents some 25% of the total of Dublin City Council Supply to the Greater Dublin Area. This tunnel must be maintained. Failure of the tunnel would lead to the loss of water supply to vast areas of South Dublin/ North Wicklow, much of which cannot be serviced, even on a temporary basis, by any alternative Dublin supply source. Interpretation panels at the dam at the Lower Vartry Reservoir explain the water treatment process.

Although we see the Roundwood Reservoirs daily, and often drive over their bridges on our way to school and work many of us are oblivious to the workings of the reservoir and all that is involved in getting that water to the taps of the houses in South Dublin and Wicklow. In adopting this stretch of road as our Pure Mile one of our aims was to educate ourselves and those in our community on the working of the Roundwood Reservoir and their important role in providing water to homes in Dublin and Wicklow. The 6th Class students of Roundwood National School walked to the Filter Beds along the shore of the Lower Reservoir, via the Slí na Sláinte route.

Researching of field names

Yes – names of the fields were researched as outlined in this report.

Natural Heritage

The Vartry Reservoir is a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). It is the basic designation for wildlife and generally it is an area considered important for the habitats present or which holds species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection. Although it is an artificial lake, the Vartry Reservoirs have, over time, developed a diversity of habitats, from wetland vegetation to heathland and woodland. The presence of some plant species which are relatively rare in eastern Ireland adds further interest to the site.

Birdlife

The reservoirs are known for wintering wildfowl. The site is counted every year for the Irish Wetland Bird Survey (or IWeB's for short). This survey aims to monitor wintering water bird populations and their wetlands in the Republic of Ireland. This objective is achieved through regular monitoring of the main wetland sites between September and March each season. I-WeBS is carried out during all seasons since 1994/95. The Vartry Reservoir is of national importance for their populations of little grebe (as per the report entitled Irish Wetland Bird Survey: Results of water bird monitoring in Ireland in 2005/06). Good numbers of duck can be seen in the winter with the most common being mallard, wigeon and teal. Other duck such as pochard, tufted duck and goldeneye occur in small numbers. Waders, like lapwing and curlew are commonly seen around the shores of the lake and on adjoining agricultural land. Mute and whooper swans were present on the reservoirs during the winter. Other common species regularly spotted include cormorants and grey herons. A pair of great crested grebes and a small flock of long tailed tits were observed at Water's Bridge in early March. Four grebes were spotted at Water's Bridge during the litter pick on the 30th of April. They are currently nesting very close to Water's Bridge at the start of the Pure Mile (see photo).



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Little egret are known to breed on the Reservoirs also, although they have not being reported this year to date. The fishermen using the lakes regularly report seeing kingfishers in the quieter areas.

Long eared owls chicks were heard calling in the evenings. They are the commonest owl in Ireland, with a scattered range throughout the country. The actual numbers of Long-eared Owls in Ireland is unknown - they are extremely difficult to survey as they are strongly nocturnal and usually very quiet when hunting. They are found in woods, copses and coniferous plantations adjacent to open grassland where they hunt mice, rats and shrews. This is the type of habitat along our Pure Mile. They may be heard calling for a mate in early spring with a low-pitched 'hooo'. Long-eared Owls nest almost exclusively in the old stick nests of crows, magpies, ravens and sparrowhawks or in a squirrels' drey. The young can often be very noisy when calling for food later in the year -their calls sound like a squeaky gate being opened. Long-eared Owls typically lay 3-5 white eggs from late March onwards and these are incubated for 25-30 days. The chicks typically hatch out over a period of 10 to 12 days and fledge at about five weeks. They remain dependent on their parents until about two months old. Taking into account this information and from listening to recordings of the long eared owl we believe we heard the food call of long eared owl chicks.

Many common bird species are regularly found here. Species include wrens, longtailed, coal, blue and great tits, robins, blackbirds, tree creepers, dunnock, finches, wood pigeons, thrushes, magpies, rooks, etc. Pine trees in particular provide good nesting sites and shelter for roosting birds- such as Goldcrests and Redpolls.

A wide variety of mosses and fungi can be found along the road. Ditches and verges provide an excellent habitat for liverworts and mosses while the older trees along the road exhibit a diverse variety of lichens.

Hedgerows

Historically, many of our hedgerows would have been planted from the 18th century onwards, following the enactment of legislation requiring landowners to enclose their land. They have enormous aesthetic value in rural landscapes. They help to form local and regional landscape character and are part of our historical and cultural heritage. As marginal land is reclaimed for farmland our hedgerows have become a vital refuge for our native bird and animal species. There is little native forest in Ireland so hedgerows are an important substitute for woodland edge habitat. They host a wide range of insect, bird and mammal species and provide networks within which animals can move in safety from one habitat to another. Hedgerows are chosen by a sizeable number of common bird species for nesting and roosting: 55 of the 110 bird species recorded regularly in Birdwatch Ireland's Countryside Bird Survey use them during the breeding season. These include the linnet and yellowhammer, two species which have declined in Ireland. The base of the hedgerow, with its leaf litter and dead branches and twigs contains invertebrates, and the birds and mammals that feed on them, such as wrens and hedgehogs. The under-storey of the hedgerow provides nesting sites for birds, such as robins and yellowhammers, as well as seeds and berries. The trees provide another niche for invertebrates, as well as nesting sites and song posts for birds and a further supply of food. The associated ditches, banks and verges provide shelter and food for a still wider range of animals. Many mammals avoid open country and use hedgerows as links between burrows and feeding sites or feed in close proximity to hedgerows. Birds show reluctance to cross open fields, or, in the case of the kestrel and the barn owl, hunt along the grass verge of the hedgerow.

Local community involvement

Residents got behind the initiative by improving the aesthetics of the area and their properties by painting fences, etc. washing road sign and repairing the benches at Synnott's Corner

Also a new sense of pride has been instilled in the area at Synnott's corner with regular clean ups.

Sign cleaning & painting





Other initiatives

- New seat to be provided by Sean Pierce to be erected at the point chosen by Elizabeth and Alice on their walk on the Slí na Sláinte
- Hedge cutting was organised before the 1st of March. Safety was a priority of this fast section of road.
- Wood for the refurbishment of the seating area at Synnott's corner was donated by a local company, Wolohan Timber Homes
- Brian Doyle, a Moneystown resident routed the Synnott's Corner on a replacement seat back and is replacing the seats that are rotten
- PJ Kavanagh is repairing the seats by welding an upward support. The steel in the seats is very old and tough compared to the steel nowadays apparently!

Roundwood Historical Society Vartry Reservoir Exhibition

Highlighting part of the Roundwood Pure Mile and as an event in the Roundwood Festival, the Historical Society held an exhibition on Saturday the 1st of August 2015 in the Parish Hall. The exhibition consists of photographs on the Vartry Reservoir, articles of local historical interest, old postcards, old farm implements which would have been used, etc. The event was well attended being open from 12 noon until 6pm.

Roundwood Tidy Towns Group

c/o The Forge
Roundwood
Co Wicklow

06/07/15

A Chara

As you may be aware the Roundwood Tidy Towns Group in conjunction with some local residents has entered the Pure Mile Competition 2015. This environmental initiative aims to foster a greater appreciation and awareness of our country roads by rewarding and acknowledging local community efforts. This is achieved through keeping a mile stretch of road and the immediate environment litter free, while simultaneously considering the preservation and careful maintenance of the flora and fauna, ditches, hedge-rows and any other natural or man made features of the area.

The stretch of road this year starts from Synnott's Corner along the Newtown Road, across Watter's Bridge and onto the Slí Na Slainte walk. It's a very fast section of road but hopefully the improvements undertaken as part of the Pure Mile competition will make it safer for all road users. Lots of work has taken place to improve the appearance of the mile and to research the history of this scenic area.

An important aspect of the project is to educate and highlight the importance of the 'reduce, reuse and recycle' principles. With this in mind our group are seeking your help in minimising the use of disposable cups in the area which will hopefully reduce the amount of coffee cups and lids littering the approach roads to the village. Working in conjunction with retail outlets, customers may be given the opportunity to purchase thermal mugs. Anyone presenting a thermal or reusable mug at the outlet can avail of a special discount on hot drinks. This discount will be at the retailers' discretion.

If you have any queries on this initiative please do not hesitate to contact me

Thank you for your time and attention.

Is mise le meas

Residents of Roundwood Pure Mile 2015

ROUNDWOOD PURE MILE

**HELP US REDUCE THE NUMBER OF
PAPERCUPS& LIDS USED &HELP REDUCE
LITTERING ON
OUR COUNTRY ROADS BY SUPPORTING
ROUNDWOOD TIDY TOWNS PURE MILE**



**USE YOUR THERMAL MUG HERE
FOR DISCOUNTS ON HOT DRINKS**

ENQUIRE WITHIN

Great Roundwood Run



**THE GREAT ROUNDWOOD
RUN / WALK (7.2km)**

around the lower reservoir

Family barbeque afterwards €10 Adult €5 Child
in the adjacent Roche's Field where cars can also park

Proceeds are going to The LauraLynn Foundation
& The Keshminton Path Project

Friday 5th June
Meet at Diamond Hill
(where the Diamond Hill road meets the Sli na Slainte)

Run starts 7:00pm; Walkers 6:30pm

ENTRY FREE OF CHARGE

Organized by
Roundwood & District Athletic Club

supported by
The Irish Times

To highlight the fantastic amenity and the beauty of that is the Vartry reservoirs the Roundwood Athletics Club with the Community Council organized the great Roundwood Run/Walk/BBQ. 450 people took part in the event which was free. A BBQ took place at the end point. It was a hugely success event with people of all ages taking part some from outside the area. Over €3000 was raised for the restoration of the Vartry Walks Project and LauraLynn through voluntary donations on the evening. Many people who took part had never walked the Sli na Slainte before and the event raised awareness of our Pure Mile, the Vartry Reservoirs and was a wonderful community evening.



BBQ area



Participants setting off with buggies

Improving entrances into farmyards, fields, etc.

The surface of the Sli na Slainte route was greatly improved for this project. There were many tree roots exposed which were serious trip hazards. The Community Council are embarking on a project to improve the walks in the area. The walks will be graded. The Sli na Slainte it is hoped will eventually be totally accessible for wheel chairs and buggies without urbanising it. Other routes will be more ruggedly and therefore more appropriate to more seasoned walkers.

Meetings

How many people were involved in the Pure Mile – Following the decision to enter the Pure Mile we had monthly meetings from February with an average regular attendance of 5. Notes of our meetings are attached.

What actions did your group take in relation to Litter Management?

The Pure Mile 'no littering' signs were erected



Organise litter picks – if so, how many

The residents of the road continually picked litter as they brought their children to and from the school. In all there were 3 'deep' litter clean ups where we delved into the hedges before the spring growth to remove 'old' litter. One of which was during An Taisce's Spring Clean. Wicklow Co Co allowed us put the bags of rubbish collected in their skip at Raheen Quarry.

Did you contact Pure to remove rubbish

No – no large volumes so Pure was not required. Wicklow Co Co allowed us put the bags of rubbish collected in their skip at Raheen Quarry.

Did group do any other cleanup projects, e.g., scrap collections, etc. – how much was collected, etc.

We undertook a number of measures to curtail littering along our mile by asking the local hot beverage outlets and asking them to give a discount to people who took their coffee/tea, etc in a reuseable container rather than a paper cup.

Education

In conjunction with the National schools in the area and the Roundwood Festival 2015 the group organised a comic strip competition for different age group as follows

Junior and Senior Infants

1st and 2nd Class

3rd and 4th Class

5th and 6th Class

Awards will be given for:

Funniest

Most exiting/ interesting

Most artistic

Pure Mile award for best environmental theme

There were 186 entries in total. Ian Davis, Pure Manager adjudicated the entries – thank you Ian. The winning entries were displayed at the Craft Fair at the Roundwood Festival on August 2nd where the prizes were awarded.

Please read the report in conjunction with the information posters along the road

We thoroughly enjoyed researching and working on the Roundwood Pure Mile as a group of neighbours and friends. The initiative helps to improve the aesthetics of our area, raises awareness of our social, natural and cultural heritage— it also gathers us as a community.

Thank you for your time and attention.



FOOTNOTES PURE MILE Walk 2015

Footnote 1

In 1901 Census eight houses are listed for Togher, the modern Roundwood.

No.1; Patrick and Catherine Mahon and 9 children. No2; Michael and Anne Fitzpatrick.

No3; Kate Geoaghen and 5 children. No4; John Mahon and his 3 sisters.

No5; Michael and Catherine Fitzpatrick and 7 children. No6 Myles and Annie Clarke and 4 children and Aunt Margaret Clarke aged 88 yrs. No7; Edward Clarke and son. No8; Ellen Clarke.

In the 1911 Census all of the above surnames reappear.

New names appearing are in house no3 Charles Hearn. No4; Patrick and Sarah Costello, and 4 children, No6 a son surname Brennan described as the eldest son of Cath Geoghan (now without the extra 'a' of the 1901 name).

Footnote 2

We have Kane's Bank mentioned as being the field boundaries of the Rapple and Doherty road bank which were originally two fields stretching from the now R755 down to the Reservoir. At the point where the two fields were divided, there is some evidence of what could have been a small cottage with a gable wall to the now R765, with what would have been an entrance to same which would have formed a 'street' e.g.; the space running in front of a cottage in the 18th and 19th centuries this may have been a house owned by a member of the Kane (Keane) family..

Footnote 3

See second part of footnote no1 above.

Footnote 4

The information on Synnotts shop (1910 to early 1940s) comes from an article by Michael Hayes whose father Mick Hayes was manager of the shop for many years, which was published in the R.D.H.F.S., kindly supplied by Mr Nielson to E.Belton. It lists the names of people who worked there as; Kit Brady, John Ferguson and Tom Timmons. Mick Hayes describes how 70% of the business was on credit so there was a very great deal of bookkeeping!

Footnote 5

Martin Timmons kindly supplied a description of Arbour day in 1964 and how it came about. Sgt Allen had been influenced by the community efforts country wide for the An Tostal celebrations in the 1950s so he was instrumental in starting the Roundwood Development Association with local people. Together with WS Doyle, Eddie Heatley, Andy Kavanagh, Pat Malone, Jay Doyle, Tom Timmons, Michael Fanning, Julia Power, Nancy Connolly and Mary Pierce they gathered to create a 'meitheal' and sought sponsorship and good will from local businesses, County Council people, Vartry Waterworks' Supt Larry McAllister etc., all gave their support.

Sgt Allen wrote some 40 years later the stone masons (with no demand for their skills they were now forestry labourers) were the first to give their support On the Arbour Day itself former President of Ireland, Sean T O'Kelly was there, a Gorey fife and drum band, as Sgt Allen wrote 40 years later '.....on a damp Sunday in Oct as the sky darkened people from every townland flocked to the village for the celebrations.' Later the parish hall was packed for a 'glorious free for all' by musicians of Comhaltas Ceolteoiri Eireann, (the Irish Times, 11/12/2000 Irishman's Diary). Some of the granite used was from Glenmacnass (Timmons).

Footnote 6

Bullaun stones, originally a form of stone where material such as grains etc could be ground, served many uses for hundreds if not thousands of years, are impossible to date. If found in securely dated strata in an archaeological site the date established will only be of when it was there not how old it was. They were much more common than was thought earlier in the last century. For example there were 2 bullaun stones lying about on lands in the village 30 years ago seen by D. Kennedy exploring the area as a teenager.

Footnote 7

Before electricity officially arrived in the village, a hydroelectric generator was built and operated by the Keenan family which supplied not only their own house, farm and pub but other premises in the village also.

Footnote 8

Source Darren Kennedy who has read extensively around the 1798 period and had access to Gen. Holt's papers (originals not facsimiles) while in Australia, is supplying book refs.

Footnote 9

It is impossible to date the stone cross set in the wall, as the wall itself is in such a poor condition. Carbon dating does not work with stone and we would need a larger section of the wall or walls on either side so as to some conclusions as to whether the granite stones of the cross were part of the original build (likely late 1860s or 1870s) or inserted later, nor do we know why it is there unless somebody comes forward with the information.

Footnote 10

There is a fascinating variety of stone walls all around the Reservoir, different materials and styles can be seen. They deserve to be documented urgently as they are an ignored heritage that is being allowed to crumble away, that the skill and the craftsmanship of these wonderful stone masons is ignored says a great deal about lack of an aesthetic education in Irish schools. By the time in the future when and if people realise how much of our built heritage we allowed to disappear they will look at our era with sorrow for what we allowed to be lost.