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DALKEY -Deilginis 'Thorn Island'
(Irish Heritage Town)

NEWSLETTER NO. 361

Volume 13

Feabhra(February) 2007

February: Latin for “Februa” a ceremonial feast of purification held by the Romans centuries ago every February 15th. The early Saxons renamed February “Sol-Monath” - sun month because of the returning sun after winter

A WET FEBRUARY, A WET SPRING
St Valentine’s Day - Wednesday, 14th February
Our love is like the misty rain that falls softly –
but floods the river. (African proverb)

Flower:Primrose & Violet

PLEASE CHECK THIS DATE

**LAST DAY FOR ARTICLES TO BE INCLUDED IN NEXT MONTH'S NEWSLETTER :
Monday 5th March, 2007**

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Ms. Peggy Comerford Retires!

We wish to inform our readers that the irrepressible Peggy Comerford has retired from the Community Council after more than thirty years of loyal voluntary service for the benefit of Dalkey. We wish to thank her most sincerely on behalf of the Council and, indeed, the residents of Dalkey on whose behalf she has campaigned on many issues over the years

The DCC monthly meeting for December was held on Monday 4th Dec in OLH.

The Chairperson welcomed us all to the last meeting for 2006.

Tidy Towns: At the National Tidy Towns presentations for the area on 30th November DTT chairman Terry Wheatley collected a cheque for €700 for 'Best Large Town' in the county. It was agreed the Hazardous Waste collection arranged for the two Saturdays in November was well run and very useful to the community.

Sports: The DCG Area Secretary and Elaine Feely attended the Dublin Community Games AGM on Tuesday 7th November in Carmichael House. DCC gave Conor Patton the Athletics Manager €1,000 towards the training of group leaders and he sent his appreciation to the Council.

AOB: The two plays that were performed in honour of Hugh Leonard's eightieth birthday were a great success and both Drama Societies expressed their gratitude.
As there was no further business the meeting ended.

The DCC's first meeting for 2007 on Monday 8th January in OLH

The Chairperson welcomed and wished us all a Happy New Year.

Matters Arising: It was agreed that the Lighting of the Christmas tree ceremony was a huge success.

Correspondence: Among the items of correspondence was a copy of a letter sent from DLRCC to Meals on Wheels re the parking problems that are occurring at Kilbagnet Close. There was also an email from a resident in the town bringing to the notice of DCC the anti-social behaviour that took place over the holiday period. This topic was discussed at length and it was agreed that DCC should research possible actions.

AOB: Our Chairperson had the sad task of announcing that Peggy Comerford was retiring after more than thirty years' hard work and loyal service to DCC. She will be missed as she has always worked very energetically for the town of Dalkey.
The meeting ended.

New Year Blues

Christmas is an emotional time of year. It is a time for family, friends and faith; for celebration and joy. But, it can also be a very stressful time. Sometimes, we feel sad when we remember those who are no longer with us. Or we can find it hard to cope with the pressure and strain that the festivities themselves can bring. Christmas is different for everyone.

Short-lived feelings of sadness can be expected this time of year for numerous reasons. They may be just New Year blues! However, one in every five individuals will suffer from depression sometime in their lives. Depression is the most common mental illness and is affecting more than 300,000 Irish people at this moment. Depression can be described as an overwhelming feeling which dulls thinking, impairs concentration, saps energy and interest in everyday activities. It can disrupt sleep. Depression rather than blues would usually last longer than two weeks. With proper care, either a talk therapy or medication can help depression.

If you have queries contact your GP or Aware. Aware is a group dedicated to helping people defeat depression. The helpline number is 1890 303 302. www.aware.ie

Catriona Kelly - Psychotherapist. 087 272 8185
www.therapy.ie

DALKEY TIDY TOWNS COMMITTEE NEEDS YOUR HELP **c/o 3 Railway Road, Dalkey.**

Email: enquire@dalkeytidytowns.com Website: www.dalkeytidytowns.com

DALKEY HAS EVERYTHING!

Beside the sea, with harbours, islands, abundant wildlife, parks, heritage, a Community Council, Sports facilities. Clubs for most interests and all ages groups. Dalkey itself has what it takes to win The National Competition but do the residents?

The aim of Tidy Towns is to improve the environment for all of us and to make our towns and villages more attractive.

In Dalkey the Tidy Towns Committee and volunteers contribute to this by implementing a series of improvement projects, by helping to reduce litter and by working with the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council to give priority to our needs for Dalkey.

Dalkey Business Association originally founded Dalkey Tidy Towns.

Their continuous support is gratefully appreciated. New lights for the Christmas Tree and Lighting central Dalkey over the Christmas period. Year-round floral street decorations and Granite Heritage Signs in Dalkey.

THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF ACHIEVEMENTS IN RECENT YEARS:

2004

National Tidy Towns Awards **Best Presented Shop front to Sorrento Lounge**

An Taisce Clean Coasts **Clean Beach Award for White Rock**

2005

National Tidy Towns Awards **1st Place in County Award for Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Section**
DLRCC Tidy Districts Awards **1. Overall Winners and 2. Best Presented Large Town Award**
National Tidy Towns Awards **Best Presented Shop front to McDonagh's Public House**

2006

National Tidy Towns Awards **1st Place in County Award for Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Section**
An Taisce Clean Coasts **Certificate of Merit for outstanding contribution**

DLRCC Tidy Districts Awards 1. Overall Winners and 2. Best Presented Large Town Award And also Best Presented Restaurant to The Guinea Pig

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES IN LAST THREE YEARS

Planting 800 daffodil bulbs around the trees in the Eurospar / DLRCC car park

4 new granite Heritage Signs erected at entrances to Dalkey

Each year organising Christmas tree lighting, live crib and arrival of Santa in conjunction with Dalkey Community Council.

Restoration of Ramparts Picnic Area – grass cutting, cleaning of steps & repair of seating.

Presentation on Kitchen & Garden Composting to both Gardening Clubs affiliated to DARA (Dalkey Active Retirement Assoc.).

Entering Dalkey for the All Ireland 'Pride of Place' Competition

Refurbishment of St. Begnet's Graveyard in conjunction with Dalkey Heritage Centre, An Taisce and Dalkey

Community Council Limited.

Litter Patrols twice weekly in summer and monthly in winter

We have also cooperated with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council on various projects

PROJECTS PROPOSED FOR 2007

- 1) St Patrick's Square - repairs and improvements in support of the excellent residents' efforts.
- 2) Rear of Our Lady's Hall - Landscaping and hard surfacing.
- 3) Eurospar / Council Car Park Entrance - Upgrading of the area.
- 4) Site opposite AIB - Upgrading of the area.
- 5) Coliemore Harbour – Promote a memorial to Dr. John de Courcey Ireland to be included as part of Drainage Project Completion.
- 6) Condition Survey - of Street Furniture.
- 7) Street Furniture – To be cleaned, repaired and painted.
- 8) Information Signage - Two sites initially, e.g. Wild Life and History.
- 9) Green Schools - Develop the concept within Dalkey.

Dalkey Tidy Towns is very dependent on volunteers to help keep the town looking well and to tackle special projects. If you would be prepared to help in any way please indicate with an X below what would suit you. Remember no contribution is too small.

- 1) Help whenever possible in weekly litter patrol (about 1 hour) ,
- 2) Participate in “special cleanups” such as Ramparts (no minimum time) ,
- 3) Help to organise local litter control (e.g. your own block or Street) ,
- 4) Help with projects (painting of litter bins, repairing of seats, etc.) ,
- 5) Provide specialist assistance in Public Relations, Graphic Artistry, ,
School Liaison and Grant Funding.

We would propose to keep all volunteers informed of plans on an ongoing basis and everyone can then decide what they want to be involved with.

If any of the above appeals to you please indicate and provide your details without commitment:

To facilitate contact please provide:

NameTelephone (Home and/or Work)

Mobile Email

Dalkey Tidy Towns needs the community to be involved

Please drop the above into Dalkey Pharmacy at 3, Railway Road, and somebody will then contact you.

If you think that you have anything to offer in any way whatsoever, or have any suggestion for the improvement of our area, please contact us.

NATURES CURES

Spring is here again and the cowslip *Primula veris* is a sight for eyes dulled by winter. The name *Primula* comes from *Primus*, meaning first in Latin, as it is one of the first flowers to appear in spring. It remains in full flower during March, April and May.

Both the roots and flowers contain various active constituents including saponins, which are the most

active principal and found principally in the root. The saponins give the plant its expectorant qualities. As an expectorant it may be used for any irritable or chronic cough, whooping cough, bronchitis and catarrhal congestion. It may be used internally and externally for treating rheumatism. In old Herbals the root was called Radix arthritica for this reason. The root is also mildly diuretic. The leaves have similar qualities to the root but are weaker in action.

The flowers have sedative properties and are recommended for insomnia and restlessness and are particularly effective for over activity and sleeplessness in children. The root and the flower combined make an excellent remedy for an irritable cough in children when associated with excitability and insomnia. An infusion from the petals can be used for headaches brought on by nerves and migraine. One of the best homemade wines may be made from the flowers. The petals may be used to decorate a spring salad to which the vitamin-rich leaves may also be added. The flowers and leaves are best gathered in spring, early in the morning.

Traditionally cowslip was used for convulsions and vertigo and specifically for paralysis. The physician to Louis XV alluded to it being a traditional cure for stammering and claimed he had successfully used it to treat paralysis of the tongue!

Cowslip has long been reputed to preserve beauty and reference to the old belief that the flower held a magic value for the complexion is found in *The Midsummer Night's Dream*. An ointment of the flowers apparently removes spots, wrinkles and freckles.

Cowslip, a member of the Primulacea family, is a perennial herb found in meadows, woodlands and hedgerows across the British Isles, Northern Europe and extending as far as North Africa and South Russia. It appears as a basal rosette with unstalked, irregularly shaped leaves, and drooping apricot-yellow flowers rising from the centre on long hairy stalks. Cowslip is well worth cultivating in the garden as it is an endangered plant in the wild. The plants may be propagated by root division during flowering or in the autumn. Bear in mind some of the roots may be retained to make a cough remedy!

Cowslip should not be used when pregnant and care should be taken if taking anticoagulant drugs.

Ginger

As we venture further into winter there are less medicinal plants that may be harvested apart from roots, which are always a bit trickier to deal with. I therefore decided to talk about ginger *Zingiber officinale* as it is a root (rhizome to be exact) and a familiar kitchen spice widely available either as dried root, powder or as the whole fresh root.

Ginger has been used as a pungent spice and medicine for thousands of years. Its medicinal uses have been recorded in early Chinese and Sanskrit texts and ancient Greek, Roman and Arabic medical literature. Originally native to Asia it is now cultivated throughout the tropics. Fresh ginger root will produce many new roots if planted in moist compost in warm conditions. It is propagated by dividing the rootstock and the rhizome is unearthed when the plant is roughly 10 months old. Those of you with green houses may try to grow your own! The fresh root has a pungent and slightly lemony taste.

Ginger is rich in resin and volatile oils which contribute to its therapeutic actions. Gingerol, an oleoresin, is the constituent which is responsible for the herb's hot taste and stimulating properties. As the plant dries the shogaols (also oleoresins) are formed which are more strongly acid and irritant than the constituents found in the fresh plant.

In India and other countries with hot and humid climates ginger is eaten daily and is a well known remedy for digestive problems. It is not only popular for its flavour but also for its antimicrobial and antioxidant properties which help preserve food. It is an excellent remedy for digestive complaints in general including indigestion, nausea, wind and colic and is an effective appetite stimulant. Its antiseptic qualities also make it beneficial for gastro-intestinal infections including some types of food poisoning. It is highly effective for preventing and treating travel sickness, nausea during pregnancy and post-operative nausea.

Ginger is an excellent circulatory stimulant. It helps improve peripheral circulation as it helps blood flow to the surface making it an important remedy for chilblains, cramps and poor circulation to both the hands and feet. By improving circulation it may also be used to help lower high blood pressure. As a diaphoretic it helps increase sweating therefore helping reduce fevers.

An infusion of the root with hot water and lemon is a tasty, simple and effective remedy for treating many respiratory conditions including coughs, colds and flu as the high content of volatile oils are warming and soothing. Keep covered when infusing the herb to retain these oils. Externally it is an invaluable rubefacient and is used as the base of many topical treatments for conditions such as muscle sprains and arthritic aches and pains.

If a serious condition is suspected consult your doctor or a qualified medical herbalist.

Jennifer Derham BSc (Hons) MNIMH MIMHO Dip. Coun.

Tina Dunne

Website: www.tinadunne.com

Ditch the salt- be generous with garlic in 2007!

Garlic was traditionally advocated by the Native North Americans, the Romans and the ancient Egyptians as remedies for various ills, ranging from colds, bronchitis and throat problems to arthritis and gout. Garlic is particularly high in Potassium. It also contains calcium and relatively high concentrations of the amino acid Tryptophan- which aids concentration. As the weather changes many of you may experience sinus problems or throat challenges. As a home remedy crush a garlic clove, mix with a dessertspoonful of honey and a squeeze of lemon juice dissolved in a cup of hot water. Take three times a day. Garlic yields a vital compound – allicin which is best released by crushing but may be destroyed by cooking at high temperatures. For best results eat raw.

Roasted Root Vegetables

Serves 4

2 carrots, peeled cut in half lengthways

2 parsnips, peeled, cut in half lengthways

1 baby fennel cut into 2cm thick slices

2 tbsp. olive oil

2 tbsp. honey

1 tbsp. wholegrain mustard

1 tbsp. boiling water

4 garlic cloves, peeled

1 bunch fresh coriander leaves

1 Pre-heat oven to 200degrees C. Cut carrots and parsnips into 10cm lengths. Place into a greased roasting dish with the fennel.

2 Combine olive oil, honey, whole-grain mustard and water. Pour over the root vegetables and ensure they are well coated. Sprinkle over the coriander leaves and whole garlic cloves.

3 Roast for 35-40 minutes, tossing every 15 minutes until golden brown. Serve with a piece of oven baked fish or chicken.

Next Taste Programme February mid term. Book now

MY GARDEN - Philippa Thomas

If you ever happened to walk through The Village Gate grounds you may have noticed a smartly dressed, quietish man simply doing his own thing; which was sometimes edging a grass patch or digging out and preparing a newly-requested bed. He knew the simple rules: - plan, dig, turn over, in order to aerate the soil and then, within a few weeks, it would be planted up with the greatest of care and attention. His absolute passion was the green area, i.e. our grass – and yes, he was a golfer! He liked to see it weedless and somewhat similar to a green, velvet carpet. So occasionally, over the past years my telephone would ring and he would say: "Today we have the perfect conditions for spraying the grass." I would help him mount the cylindrical container on his back, the straps of which he secured around his chest. Every square inch of grass was accordingly sprayed with his special choice of weedkiller. I used to stand there beside him in awe at his zeal and zest. Finally, mission accomplished and job done, he gave a big smile of delight and satisfaction. Dick (Richard) Connor was one of the Foundation Stones of the Village Gate. Sadly, we lost him recently. His presence will be truly missed but not forgotten.

On a lighter note, didn't Dalkey look absolutely fantastic this past Christmas? I just love our tiny cream Christmassy lights that seem to almost 'float' effortlessly like icicles over the eaves of our rooftops and the buildings along our streets. I think that they are so much more attractive than those coloured lights that we so often see stretching across the streets of our other towns. That Blue Cedar tree, too in the Church Car Park on Castle Street looked superb with its little coloured twinkling lights giving a wonderful Christmas effect.

On walking up the Flags today, I couldn't help but notice how the tree trunks of our Scots Pines, Birch, Hazel and Blackthorns are all beginning to swell and grow. The planting at the rear of EuroSpar too seems to be over-wintering remarkably well and so, by late spring, should look ever so pleasing. Likewise, there are some promising treasures peeping though at the entrance to Old Quarry Road.

Our snowdrops, crocuses, miniature daffodils, etc., that have struggled through out winter can be rewarded now with a little sprinkle of some decent, dry fertilizer. So too with lilies, tulips, etc. leave a collar of horticultural grit or sharp sand in order to keep their necks dry. This is the perfect time to wipe dusty house plant leaves with a warm moist cloth so as to let the light get at them and thus stimulate their growth.

My shrub for this month has to be Mahonia Japonica. It seems to be able to take an insurmountable battering of gusts of wind and preforms extremely well here in Dalkey. My favourite species is Sweet Charity, height 8-10', spread 6-8'. Its tiny bright yellow flowers are scented like Lily of the Valley and form long ascending racemes amongst the most attractive evergreen foliage.

Until next time.....happy gardening!

Dalkey Castle and Heritage Centre

email: diht@indigo.ie

Website: www.dalkeycastle.com

Living History Programme for National Schools.

Dalkey Castle & Heritage Centre and The Heritage Office of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council are presenting a programme of Living History for national schools in Dalkey Castle & Heritage Centre from January 22nd –March 29th 2007.

Viking, Medieval and Victorian times in the county will be brought to vivid and colourful life with actors from Deilg Inis Living History Theatre Company.

The Living History presentation involves professional actors, from Deilg Inis Theatre Company, in full period costume bringing the history of the late 14th/early 15th century fortified town house (Goat Castle in Dalkey) and the wider area to colourful life. The company portrays characters from Viking, early Christian, through Medieval to Victorian times.

The defensive features of a medieval townhouse/castle are illustrated. The Murder Hole is activated theatrically and participation by the students is encouraged.

One of the archers who defended the castle from the notorious O'Byrnes and O'Tooles of Wicklow demonstrates the use of the longbow. A medieval merchant barter with the participants and a medieval maid enlightens them on the food and social conditions in medieval Ireland. The history of the area is covered in a colourful, engaging and memorable manner.

Last but not least, the King of Dalkey presents each student with a personalised scroll as a memento of his/her visit. Worksheets are available for classroom activities. The entire presentation lasts over two hours.

Early booking is advisable. The programme only runs from Jan 22nd to March 29th.

Contact details: 01 285 8366

School Years revisited - Seán Ó Gormáin

Many visitors came to the school in the more than thirty years I was there. All of them were welcomed but

some remain in my mind as memorable and special. The following is a selection – in no particular order – and each visitor was a treat for the pupils of the time.

In the mid-70s Dublin won the Sam Maguire. I don't know how many primary schools there are in Dublin but a school year wouldn't be long enough for the cup to be taken to each school. But, surprise, surprise, Sam arrived in our school one Spring morning. Two famous Dubs came with it: Paddy Cullen and Pat O'Neill. Lessons were abandoned as pupils touched the trophy and begged for autographs as they held out their pieces of paper and biros to the two Dub heroes. A photograph taken at the time shows me, a Westmeath man, holding the Sam Maguire in the schoolyard. A dream?! Sam revisited in the 1980s and this time a local Dubs hero, Mick Holden, was greeted with roars of "Cuala".

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council has an artist-in-residence scheme for schools. On the second occasion that I applied for it for the school we were delighted to hear we were successful. As the new school year started in 2000 we met a gentleman called Joonas Servio, an artist from Finland, who was going to be with us for the first term. First we discussed with him what the project would be. We mentioned that the school would be celebrating its centenary in January 2001. He then mentioned how impressed he was by the redbrick exterior as he approached the school that morning. "What do you need?" we asked. Each class then became involved in bringing in ring-pulls from soft drink cans, tea bags, nuts and bolts, cigarette paper from boxes and even shells from the seashore! The Parents Association supplied paint, glue and long wooden planks! The boys supplied vast quantities of materials and the room began to take on the appearance of a recycling plant. As teachers passed in and out, heads were shaken in disbelief that all this could end up as something artistic! Each day different classes got their turn working with Joonas. Slowly but surely a beautiful work of art took shape on the bare wooden frame. When Centenary Day came it was ready and hanging on the wall for all to admire. It was worth going to see in the Assembly Room in the school. Thank you Joonas.

History is part of the school curriculum. I was teaching 6th Class and it was probably in the early 1980s. During that school year I met a gentleman on Convent Road and we talked. His name was Mr. Armstrong and he lived on Convent Road also. He was an elderly man and during our chat I told him I was teaching in the local school. He said he would love to show the boys a wonderful historical object that he owned. We arranged a day and date. The day came and Mr. Armstrong came into the room carrying a long pole with the top covered. He removed the cover and there before our eyes was a pike. The class had come across pikes in their history books. Mr. Armstrong told us that his grandfather had been a bodyguard of Daniel O'Connell, the Liberator, and that this was the weapon he carried to do his job. Incredible, but true and all part of Dalkey. We were privileged to meet this resident of Dalkey and it just seemed to the boys he had stepped right out of their history books to talk to them. I hope you enjoyed reading about people who visited our school at different times but left memories for us to treasure.

NATURE CORNER - Michael Ryan

Night Vision

I met a resident of a house in Coliemore Road whose wife had had the pleasure of having an owl perched on their balcony railing early one November evening. They weren't sure what species it might have been but the laws of probability would make a Long-eared Owl the most likely suspect. Our most common breeding owl and a very handsome bird Long-eared Owls are seen regularly if not commonly in the Dalkey/Killiney vicinity. Another possibility would have been a Short Eared Owl usually seen as winter visitors. A Barn Owl could be possible but increasingly rare and easily identified that wasn't too likely.

But as I found out soon after it wasn't any of the above. I got a call late one Sunday from another resident in Dalkey to say she had an owl in her garden which seemed distressed. She said it could fly ok but was calling all the time. I rang Niall who works in Birdwatch wondering would he have a number for anyone who might take in the bird. He told me they'd had lots of calls in about the same owl in people's gardens. He told me it was an escapee and it was in fact an American bird, a Great Horned Owl. I went to see if the bird was still there and when I found the house since it was late I rang the occupant to say we were outside. She said she'd come out and I thought at least the owl must still be there anyway. And it certainly was, perched on their side door calling continuously and not the least bothered by people a few feet away. We took photos of it and all it did was blink.

Eventually the resident had to close the door and the bird flew on their neighbour's bedroom window where it began to call again. I wouldn't like to wake and find it looking in the window at me but felt sorry for the poor creature. Unfortunately neither of us would be qualified to handle such a bird and didn't have anywhere to take it. Owls can be dangerous and the long talons it gripped the door with were very formidable. We found out later the owl belonged to a chap in Ballybrack who had tried unsuccessfully to catch it a few times since it escaped. Apparently the owl was a pet, hopped around his kitchen floor and watched television!

Great Horned Owls occur all over the United States and most of Canada, and southward to Central and South America to the Straits of Magellan. Great horned owls are big and bulky (3-4 pounds), standing 18-25" tall with a wingspan of 36-60" long. Males and females are similar in appearance, except the female is the larger of the two. Great horned owls eat a wide variety of prey, both small and large. Cottontail rabbits seem to be a prominent food, but the owls will take squirrels, mice, weasels, snakes, bats, beetles, scorpions, frogs, grasshoppers, and a wide variety of birds, from small passerines like sparrows to wild ducks, grouse, pheasants, and even other owls. It was subsequently reported from a number of gardens in Dalkey and a couple of times perched in the trees around Castle Park School playground but I don't know whether it was ever reunited with its owner.

Killiney Bay (well worth a) watch

On Christmas Eve I was speaking on the phone to a friend and knowing he is very interested in Cetaceans (dolphins and whales) I mentioned I'd twice seen something in Killiney Bay which I was sure wasn't a porpoise. Porpoises aren't uncommon and all you usually see of them is a brief glimpse of a fin as they break the surface. What I'd seen just off White Rock beach looked bigger and was spending more time on the water surface. My friend said by coincidence he'd just been down at Scotsman's Bay where he'd been watching two bottle nosed dolphins that had been spotted earlier that day. Later I saw a letter in the Irish Times from a chap who'd seen, from his boat, five adult and one baby dolphin behind Dalkey Island.

Since the following day was the day the Forty Foot gets packed with hardy Christmas Day swimmers it would be interesting to know if anyone saw the dolphins.

By the Light of the Silvery Moon

Getting up in the dark to take the dog for a walk can be an effort sometimes especially on cold dark winter mornings but I'm rarely sorry I've made the effort and sometimes it can be very rewarding.

In early December a very bright, almost full moon lay very low in the western sky and as I walked up to the junction of the paths that run around the two hills the moon sat just above the horizon in an almost cloudless sky. Then, from the trees on the left, a fox appeared, walking nonchalantly along the skyline sharply silhouetted by moonlight. Suddenly it froze, ears pricked, evidently aware of our presence. For the seconds it stood there backlit by the moon; it could have been an illustration from a children's book before turning around and making a swift retreat.

The day after the next full moon in early January it was a much cloudier sky with a cool wind blowing but the moon again very bright in the west and light fleeting showers. The dog took off into the bushes on the left, possibly after a fox and as I looked left I saw in the sky the unusual phenomena of a lunar rainbow. Not the corona which often forms in the clouds around the moon but a full size replica of a daytime rainbow stretched over Killiney Bay pale and colourless but well-defined. I found out from the internet lunar rainbows (or 'Moonbows') only occur within one or two nights of a full moon and to be seen the moon has to be lower than 42 degrees with light rain falling between you and the rainbow and the moon behind you. They have the same colours as ordinary rainbows but the colours are not as visible at night though some observers have seen them as washy pastel colours. I'd been lucky enough to have seen them before, twice from the kitchen window at home and once while driving in county Galway when we stopped the car and all got out to gaze in wonder. Apparently they're regular features in some of the earth's largest waterfalls including the Victoria and Niagara falls when they can regularly be seen on full moon nights forming 'moonbows' in the spray.

Day of the Grey?

I've written many times about the Red Squirrels of Dalkey and Killiney hill and my fears of the imminent arrival of Grey Squirrels which ultimately nearly always result in the extinction of 'reds whenever they move into their territory. Sadly Greys have started to appear in the woodlands of Killiney Hill as a couple of people had reported to me in November and then I saw at least two there over the Christmas break. Huge efforts are being made in the UK to remove Greys but Red Squirrels have disappeared from most of the country although they're holding out well in Scotland.

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