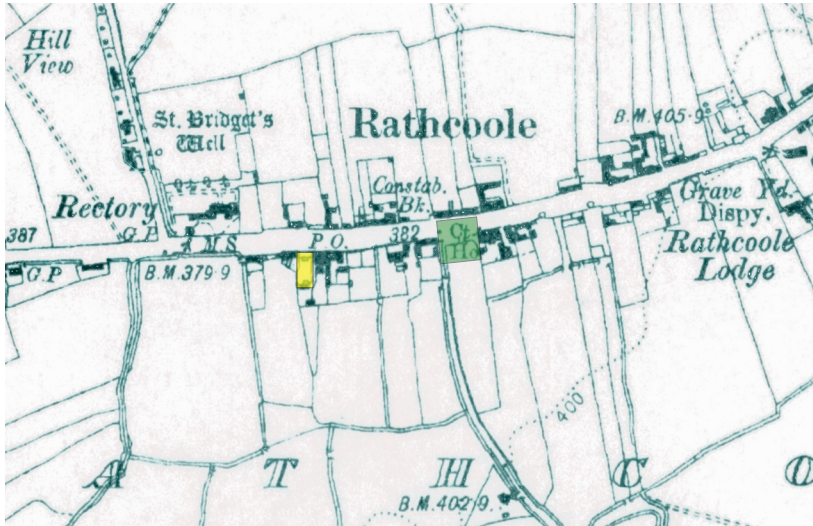


OLD COURTHOUSE HISTORY

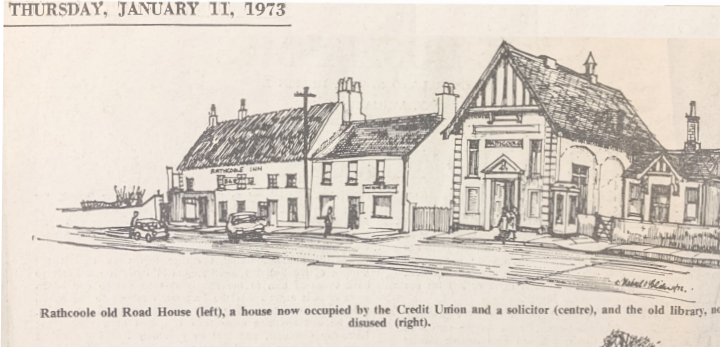
MAY 16 2024
ALAN FAIRMAN



1912 Map Of Rathcoole

Showing:- The location of the Original Old Courthouse marked with a Green Box.
and marked in Yellow, the location of the vacant site for the New Courthouse built in 1914.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 1973



Rathcoole old Road House (left), a house now occupied by the Credit Union and a solicitor (centre), and the old library, now disused (right).

Drawing ref. The Irish Times archive 11 jan 1973.

BACKGROUND

By 1912 in County Dublin Irish Nationalists were in the majority in Dublin County Council and significant American (Carnegie Trust) funding for investment in social improvement projects was available. After intensive lobbying by a Local Rathcoole and Saggart Committee for a Town Hall or Library together with local Judiciary complaints re the unsatisfactory state of the present Courthouse, which was a rented facility over Jacob's shop on Rathcoole Main Street, the Council agreed in Jan 1913 to the funding of a new Courthouse which could also be used as a Town Hall. The County Council also authorized the purchase of a site for the building, which at the time was part of the Rathcoole Inn grounds then leased by the Senior family from the Mary Mercer Trust.

The building was designed and built by the Dublin County Surveyor William Cullen and was completed and opened in 1914.

USE AS COURTHOUSE AND TOWN HALL 1914-1924

The Courthouse was only briefly used as a courthouse and then for minor offences only. (Court of Petty Session was the equivalent of current District Court).

By the time the building was completed in 1914 the "Dublin Lock Out" (Larkin and Connelly Vs Murphy re. ITGWU recogniton) had occurred. War had broken out in Europe with many locals leaving to fight in World War 1. However, County Council records show that the Rathcoole Courthouse in addition to being used as a local court building was used for Town Hall events organized by both Catholic and Church of Ireland clergy and local groups. The events of 1916, the subsequent Civil War, the new Government's removal of all existing Justices of the Peace and Magistrates in 1924 (The Courts of Justices Act 1924) and their replacement by a new system of District Judges had a major effect on the use of the building. The District

Judges were not local and fewer in number and reported directly to the Government. This major change put pressure on the courthouse system to reduce number of Court sittings. Unfortunately for Rathcoole the new judges complaints of poor ventilation leading to issues with smoke filled courtroom and its relatively remoteness led to the Court sitting being moved to Lucan. Some of the Local Committee members had always wanted a Library in Rathcoole and lobbied Dublin County Council to agree to its conversion to Local Library in 1924.

1925 - 1998

When the library was opened in 1925, Miss Mary Frances Sheil was appointed Honorary Librarian and Mrs. Coogan became caretaker. Every day the Library was opened to the public with all daily and evening papers, weeklies and periodicals, including Farmer's Journal and Good Housekeeping. Meetings of all kinds were held there, also dairy and craft classes. A local girl, Lily Dowdall, took first place for butter-making at the Belfast Show in 1926. Concerts held there regularly, including one in 1927 when Jimmy O'Dea led a group of entertainers and singers, in aid of the building of what is now Newcastle Old School. Mrs. Dowdall, local teacher, organised school and adult concerts. Rory O'Connor, the famous Irish stepdancer, was there too. There are newspaper reports of a concert during the First World War when it was the Courthouse and a Troops' Entertainment during the Second World War.

First Aid Classes, Scouts, I.C.A., A.R.R., Local Defence - the Library housed them all and in the 1950's the Rathcoole Players, directed by Martin Dempsey and Sean Tunney T.D., put on many highly successful plays and shows. And it was in the Courthouse that the Rathcoole Residents' Association was born, later to become the Community Council.

The Library itself was very popular, with plenty of up-to date novels, a splendid children's 'books section' and a very extensive technical section with books on engineering, motor mechanics, carpentry, building etc., including sets of Local Government approved plans and specifications to encourage the young men to build their own homes. In the smaller room to the side - originally the Judge's robing room - a large bookcase, glass on top, held a very comprehensive range of reference books. The enclosed cupboard underneath contained all the most precious books, donated by local people, some of them we have been told were sent to the National Library when the Rathcoole Library was closed down. Books for students were procured from the Central Library on long-period loans. In fact, the Librarians responded to every need or request, including crafts and cookery. Locally the building was often referred to as the "Rathcoole Library" and photographs exist with the Courthouse sign covered over with wooden sign saying 'Library' did cause confusion. When she died in 1962 the Library was wound down over a number of years and closed around 1970. Since then a mobile book service is all that has been available. However the Courthouse Building's role as a Town Hall and meeting place for the community continued as strong as ever, Rathcoole Pipe Band practicing there and with Rathcoole Players putting on many performances until the New Community Centre with better facilities was built by the local community.

The Community Council Involvement

Newcastle became a separate Parish in 1974. In the same year, at a public meeting in the Old Courthouse, the Rathcoole and District Residents' Association and the Community Centre Association united to form the Saggart and Rathcoole Community Council

under the Chairmanship of John Nolan of Crookshane. The primary objective of the new body was to promote community welfare. Throughout Dublin, Community Councils that were non- sectarian and non-political were coming together. The Community Council met with Government Departments about matters of local concern, and with Dublin County Council and later with South Dublin County Council on matters such as amenity grants, housing developments, playing fields, public lighting, roads, etc. and with private individuals as the need arose.

1998 TO PRESENT DAY

The Courthouse Building continued to be used as a Town Hall and for Community Council events particularly at Christmas time and large social occasions and SDCC Road Department used the rear portion of the site as local area offices, but the slow deterioration of the building fabric, lack of good heating system and limited toilet facilities prevented full use of the building itself. We are delighted to see that investment now being made to bring the building back to its original state and function.



References "A History of Saggart and Rathcoole Parishes" by Maeve Mulryan Maloney book published 1998. (Maeve was a historian and teacher who taught in The wwHoly Family School Rathcoole for more than 20 years)

"South County Scrap Book" by Mary Mc Nally

Dublin County Council Meeting Minutes and with thanks to Fingal County Council custodian of Dublin County Council digital archives.

Irish Times Newspaper Archives.

THE IRISH TIMES

Friday, January 3, 1913

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WIDESCREEN

DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL.

An adjourned quarterly meeting of Dublin County Council was held yesterday at the offices of the Council, Rutland square, Mr. Joseph O'Neill, J.P., presiding. The following members of the Council were present:—

Patrick Baggot, John Bagnall, James Collins, James Doyle, Michael Dunne, J.P.; E. N. Montgomery, Archdale Graham, J.P.; Christopher J. Hanlon, John J. Lawlor, J.P.; Matthew M'Allister, Francis M'Bride, J.P.; Charles P. O'Neill, J.P.

Mr. E. Montgomery moved, and Mr. Hanlon seconded, a resolution to the effect that the County Surveyor's report as to the proposed courthouse at Rathcoole, be adopted, and that, accordingly, the Law Agent be, and is hereby, instructed to take the necessary steps to acquire the site recommended by the Surveyor, and to report to the Council thereon, and that a sum not exceeding £800 be expended in providing such courthouse.

Mr. Francis M'Bride, while concurring in the opinion that a courthouse at Rathcoole was necessary, moved, as an amendment, that the sum to be expended should be £500, instead of £800, the amount fixed in the resolution.

Mr. Collins seconded the amendment.

After some discussion the amendment was rejected, and the resolution adopted.

Tuberculosis Prevention (Ireland) Bill.

Mr. John J. Lawlor moved:—

That the County members, Mr. Clancy, K.C.

by Crommelin. Hodder

RECEIVED

Alice Deane. Dublin:

CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY. London: Macmillan. 198. quo of Judgment. ed the Sea. By Prof. John Watkins, ed. MR AN LORAIN, SON OF