



Bray Head Cross

The Bray Head Holy Year cross was erected 70 years ago. Weather delayed the planned blessing of the Cross on the 17th September 1950 and it was postponed for one week. The previous Monday 11th September the cargo ship MV Cameo ran aground on the North Bank 14 miles from Wicklow Port in a strong gale. Edward Kavanagh coxswain of the RNLI Wicklow was awarded a bronze medal in his part of the rescue of the crew of MV. Cameo.

In 1950 Bray saw lots of construction projects in the town. On 5th September the Royal Hotel opened an extension to the Hotel which included a ballroom and 30 new bedrooms.

On Friday 15th September 1950 sad news reached Bray that Canon George Digby Scott had died. He retired in 1943 as rector of Christ Church, Bray after 50 years of dedicated service and went to live in Greystones. A memorial service dedicated to Canon Scott was conducted in Christ Church, Dublin on Sunday 17th September 1950. Canon Scott wrote the stones of Bray. In the early 1950's Scott Park on the Boghall Road was built and named in honour of Canon Scott. A new housing development at the site of Hudson Terrace had recently been named Fatima Terrace; another name that had been proposed was Rosary Terrace.

On the 20th June 1950 Rev William Breen addressed the Bray Urban District Council about a proposal to build a Holy Year Cross on Bray Head. The Cross would be 30 ft High and a span of 12ft. The full council gave their backing to the project.

The builder of the cross was Christopher Dodd & Sons from Bray who employed over 100 craftsmen; he also built houses at Palmero and at the Dog Track now Ledwidge Crescent. Over 20 labourers were engaged in building the cross on Bray Head.

WEATHER FORECAST

Ireland. — Winds becoming south-east to east, strong to gale force in south, fresh to strong in north; rain spreading north-east during day; rather cool; midday temperature 55-60 degrees F.

Further Outlook. — Strong winds, with rain at times, are likely in many places tomorrow.

Weather Forecast issued on Saturday 16th September 1950

BRAY HOUSING SITE

Bray Urban Council, at their meeting last night, decided to accept the offer of Mr. Thomas Fitzpatrick, Palermo, to sell them 17 acres of land at Old Connaught for £7,500.

Fergus Clarke a civil engineer designed the cross. He was the son of Joseph Clarke of Tros-y-afron-Terrace on the Strand Road, Bray. Lord Meath gave his permission to build the cross on Bray Head and allowed a horse and cart to carry equipment across his land. Sand and gravel was carried in a truck owned by Wally Byrne and other materials including the gelignite that was obtained from a store in Enfield Co. Meath, this was carried by Christopher Dodd in his truck. (Some 76 years earlier in 1874, dynamite was first demonstrated in Ireland at the Quarry on Bray Head).



A small hole was made where the gelignite was placed, it was then covered with planks, the blasting continued until the hole was 25 to 30ft in depth. Using steel rods the concrete was reinforced. A time capsule (a bottle) bearing the names of the workers and some religious artefacts was placed in the base of the cross. On the day the lighting rod was to be fitted to the Cross there was a gale blowing and Mr Dodd scaled the cross and fitted the rod. He was delighted to return to terra firma.

The cost of the cross was funded by local subscriptions, a concert held in the Little Flower hall and the school children of Bray gave their pocket money towards building the Cross.

On Wednesday 20th September 1950 local elections were held in Ireland to town, cities and county councils. Elected for the Bray area on Wicklow County Council was Peter Ledwidge, H. J. Byrne, Edward E Byrne, W. Lawless, P. Murdock and M. Brennan.

Sunday 24th September 1950, was the All Ireland Football Final day when Mayo beat Louth in Croke Park, Dublin. In Bray over 5000 parishioners headed by the Pipe Band of the St Brigid Youth Movement made their way up to Bray Head to witness the blessing of the new Cross. At 4pm Canon Andrew Moriarty cut a cord and blessed the new cross.



The population of the town of Bray in 1946 was 11,085. In 1950 the cross was given a life span of 70 years, it would be hard to imagine Bray Head without a cross.

Mr Dodd said "Bray Head would fall down before the Cross." There are a couple of unconfirmed stories regarding the construction of the Cross. One is that before the base concrete was dry, the wild goat's on Bray Head left their hoof marks in the concrete which led to some suspicion of supernatural interference. It was also reported in the newspapers of the time that the memorial overlooked the old farmhouse of Mr M Quinn on Bray Head where Mass was celebrated for many years in the Penal Days.

In September 1950 plans were at an advanced stage to have an aerial ropeway (Chairlift) on Bray Head, between Raheen Park and the Eagles Nest and it was opened in April 1952. The operator was Eamonn Quinn who ran the Red Island Holiday camp at Skerries Co Dublin. For the Bray Chairlift the charge was 1 shilling up and 1 shilling 6 pence down or an all in ticket for 2 shillings.

Other events in Bray in 1950 included the fire at the Bray printing works on the Main Street; this took place in October of that year. Canon Moriarty who blessed the Bray Head cross died in April 1952.

There are a number of tracks to reach the summit of Bray Head. About 1944 concrete steps between Raheen na Cluige and Eagles Nest were installed (in total around 147 steps).





Special thanks to Vincent & Christopher Dodd.

Bray Cualann Historical Society National HC