

The Cúl of the Rock: a glimpse of the past



Seamus Hayden

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“After my mother’s business – John McKenzie’s shop – was compulsorily sold to meet a claimed back-tax bill, and my mother and father had no option but to go to England, I was left at home along with my Aunt Eileen to mind the younger ones: Eileen, Barney and Declan. We rented Mrs Mooney’s bungalow in La Touche Close, just across from the Twamleys. It was Mrs Mooney’s husband Bobby that bought the stock and goodwill of the shop.

“The Twamleys were good neighbours and became good friends. And it was in their company, one evening some years later below in The Beach House, that this question of fishermen and the drying of the nets at Killincarrig got aired. Billy Greene just happened to have joined us. Billy worked in a bookshop in Dublin and travelled into the city every day. He was probably the most widely read, and perhaps even the most erudite person in the whole of Greystones.”

“Do you know, Jago, what that area over there is called?”

“ - he indicated vaguely in the direction of Rockport and the top of the slip –

“over by the rocks just beyond the fishermen’s huts!”

“The Cúl of the Rock!” I answered. I think it was Dr Eric Doyle was the first person to give me that name.

“How would you say that in Irish?” asked Billy.

“I didn’t hesitate with my next answer, it was so simple:

“Cúl na Carraige!”

“Isn’t that your Killincarrig?”

“That settled it. It put context on the claim by older men that the fishermen had the right to hang their nets along any wall in the vicinity of the harbour to dry them. There was nothing more to be said.”

- *Excerpt from ‘Tell My Mother I’ve Just Gone Fishing’.*

That memoir and two other books about my experiences at sea as a young fisherman - *The Cú Feasa and Other Misadventures* and *Jago Hayden - A Fisherman Who Wanted More* - came about after my brother Billy, who is more commonly known as Liam, asked some six or seven years ago if I would write something about ‘what the fishing was like in the old days’. I completed the entire enterprise in 2013 and had all three books formatted for e-reading by early 2014. Then, at a preliminary launch in Killybegs, I found

myself at a loss as I tried to explain to a number of colleagues from my later career in the fishing industry just what this place that had been called 'The Cúl of the Rock' was like before my time. There was nothing for it but to start over. So I set myself to piece together from the enormous amount of research data published by many others, notably Samuel French, Séamas Ó Sathraí, and Derek and Gary Paine - and not forgetting Jim Brennan and Aileen Short's account of the La Touche Family - a narrative of the development of Greystones harbour, but from a Greystones fisherman's perspective. A 'prequel', as it were, to my own memoirs.

Where my draft narrative came alive for me was in a particular series of photographs of Greystones that were taken by Robert French, the famous chief photographer of the Lawrence Collection, and that I accessed in Derek Paine's seven books of old photographs and documents of Greystones and north coastal Wicklow. They were almost enough. Almost, but not quite.

Old photographs

Now, my brother Billy and I each own all seven books published by Derek Paine, whom we have known since childhood, and have our own abiding memories of growing up in Greystones and the environs of the harbour. But while we and our sisters Kathleen and Eileen each contributed family snaps to Derek's publications and took the keenest of interest in each of the volumes as they appeared, there were times we wondered about some of the dates Derek ascribed to individual photographs. Inevitably, the questions that bothered me led to my browsing the digitized Lawrence Collection online at nli.ie; an avenue, I think, that was not accessible to Derek when he embarked on the publication of the first of his volumes of old photographs in 1993. It was a learning experience.

The digitized collection, I found, was really two: the Cabinet Collection, and the Royal Collection - and there was a reference to an earlier Eblana collection - and each started with plate number 1. Neither collection appeared to be anywhere dated, although it quickly became clear the Cabinet Collection predated the Royal Collection by some years in its beginnings; more of which in a moment. I was a complete amateur of course, and it was only later I was informed by Ms E Kirwan, Chief Archivist of the Photographic Collections, that there is yet a further Lawrence collection of some 19,000 images still to be processed digitally. She also e-mailed detailed advice for accessing the collections, for which I am grateful and will certainly take on board in any further foray into the archive.

What I learned, nevertheless, is that the first image in the Cabinet Collection is a later plate identified by the original W. L. name and number: Nelson's Pillar Dublin. 1.W.L.



All the trams pictured are electric and the tracks lead towards what was then the Carlisle Bridge - now O'Connell's Bridge. The overhead power lines are clearly visible. But while horse-drawn trams were permitted in 1871 and came into use in 1872, electric trams and the installation of overhead electric wires were only permitted by Act of Parliament in 1893. It seems probable, therefore, that the original 0001 plate was replaced using the same serial number in the mid-1890s.

This is more or less confirmed by the fourth image in the same Cabinet Collection:



Clearly numbered 4.W.L., this shows the Bank of Ireland and College Green, Dublin. A horse-drawn tram can be seen at the bottom of Dame St, and although tracks lead in the direction of Grafton St and Nassau St, there are no overhead wires. The image is pre-electric and therefore older.

The second image in the series may well hold the key as to when the first images in the Collection were created. Shot in Dublin, as indeed the first ten plates all were, it is a very busy photograph of architect James Gandon's Custom House, with much quayside activity on both banks of the Liffey. The camera was positioned just east of what I think was the only recently completed entrance to George's Dock, and the cranes mounted on a pontoon barge in the foreground suggest it may have been taken shortly after the swing bridge and lock gate were completed.

Beyond the barge lies a small schooner which is moored off the quay. Blurring of the spars and masts of the vessels and an apparent haziness about them makes one wonder if they were photographed separately and 'photo-shopped' into one. But this image is from a one hundred and thirty year old glass plate and I don't see how such a thing could even have been attempted. I can only conclude the shot was a timed exposure and the blurring was due to movement of water in the river.



Beyond the schooner on the north side, is berthed a larger vessel, which effectively obscures the general view of the quayside beyond it. This vessel is moored alongside a timber wharf outlying the Custom House quay proper, onto which it appears to have just discharged a cargo of timber planking, and the stack of timber obscures the view up-stream. More critically, it's not possible to see if there is a (steam) engine house on the timber wharf – the engine which powered the swing bridge that predated Butt Bridge, which was only completed in 1932. The swing bridge, an iron construction, was built in 1879. I rather think it's not there. If not, the image must definitely date from the 1870s.

I think the image of the GPO and Nelson's Pillar was re-photographed using the same reference number at a later date, either because the original plate got broken, or for purely commercial reasons. I rather think the latter.

As to the **Royal Collection**: Apart from the first plate, 00001, an image of the Presentation Convent, Thurles, the succeeding plates 00002 to 00010 are all exterior or interior shots of St Patrick's Cathedral, Thurles, leading one to speculate that these plates in all likelihood date from late 1884, or early 1885. The GAA had been founded by Michael Cusack and six others in Hayes Hotel, Thurles on Nov 1st, 1884 and Archbishop Thomas Croke gave the new organisation his approval and became a patron some weeks later (as indeed did Michael Davitt and Parnell in turn).

Other images and puzzles

Online, I chanced on three series of photographs of the Great Eastern at, respectively, Dublin Port, North Wall Dublin, and Arklow, that were particularly significant. All were

shot in Dublin, either from the North Wall, or from the eastern extremity of Sir John Rogerson's Quay (or Ringsend), and could be identified as such. None were shot at Arklow.

The 'Great Eastern Ship, Dublin Port' images are all from the Cabinet Collection and are numbered from 4208.W.L to 4220.W.L. inclusive, one of which is flipped to apparently show fishing smacks coming from sea.

The 'S.S. Great Eastern, North Wall, Dublin' images are from the Royal Collection and are numbered 426.W.L and 430.W.L.

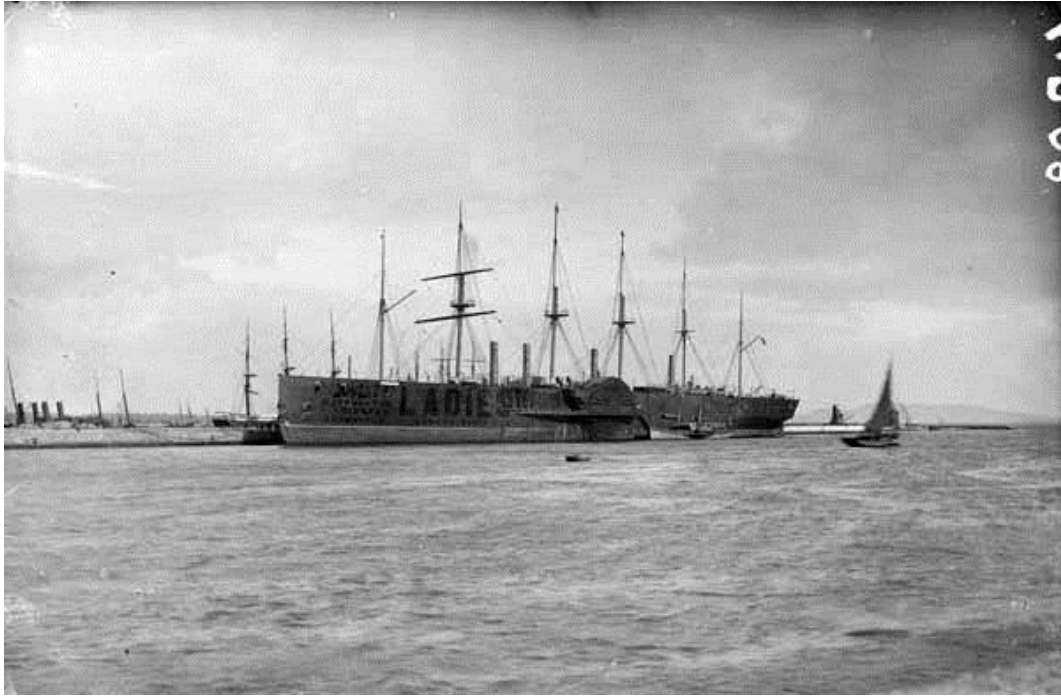
The 'Great Eastern at Arklow' images are also from the Royal Collection and are numbered, 420.W.L., 427.W.L., 428.W.L., and 431.W.L. to 435.W.L. Inclusive.

To confirm my belief that the Great Eastern could never have even attempted to dock at Arklow - it was, at 22,000 tons, the largest ship in the world at the time it was built - I consulted an old seafaring friend from Greystones who had married and settled in Arklow, and also asked Arklow historian Jim Rees. Both were in agreement. It never happened. The vessel's propellor alone had a diameter of 24 feet. It could never have made it into the river.

Why the apparent deception? I think the answer lies in many actual photos of Arklow that were taken about the same time; images of dereliction with many fishing smacks, and even schooners, simply abandoned and left to rot in the shallows. I believe the photographer - one presumes Robert French - or William Lawrence was so overwhelmed by the grim scenes that designating as 'The Great Eastern at Arklow' a handful of the images that were actually taken at Dublin could be interpreted as an attempt to add glamour to the historic County Wicklow port.

What the series does for us now, however, is to give a proximate date for Lawrence images in the Royal Collection from 400 to - say - 480; and in the Cabinet Collection from 4200 to 4300, perhaps. The Great Eastern was at a semi-permanent mooring at the North Wall abreast of what since became the Alexandra Basin, and just across the river from where the East Link toll plaza now is, from Oct/Nov 1886 until April 3rd 1887. What it, and the replacement no.1 plate in the Cabinet Collection, also do is alert us to the possibility that other images may too have been changed at later dates.

Great Eastern images



Cabinet Collection: 4208.W.L. Howth in the background



Cabinet Collection: 4212.W.L. The image is flipped

One of the images supposedly photographed at Arklow - all from the Royal Collection and numbered 427, 428, and 431 to 435 inclusive - shows the Pigeonhouse buildings in the background.



Royal Collection: 434.W.L. This photograph was clearly taken at the same time as the photo numbered 4220 in the Cabinet Collection, only from a spot somewhat closer to the ship.

Four Greystones images

Looking briefly at a handful of images from Derek Paine's 1993 book - his first - we immediately encounter a conundrum. On page 7 Derek has reproduced a Lawrence image, which was photographed from just south of the railway station and which looks straight up the Church Road.



Church Road with side-cars outside the station,
and no shops on either side of the road, 1900.

Three jaunting cars are pulled in tight to the kerb at the front of the station and a man appears to be leaning with his back to the side wall of the protruding entrance annexe. Three other men are in conversation at the other side of the road, adjacent to the wall of a plot where MacFarland's shop was later built. The building that became the Railway Hotel, and later Larkin's, is unpainted except for a sign that reads 'Hotel & Refreshment Rooms' above and to the left of a single Oriel window in the gable. The houses and plots beyond it on the west side of the road are walled and fronted with a footpath, beyond which can be seen a broad grass verge in which small standard trees are planted. The east side of the road is similarly walled and bordered beyond the station, but the nearest house, a fine two or three storey construction, is a considerable distance up the hill.

The photograph is clearly titled 'Greystones. Co. Wicklow. 481. W.L.' and Derek has dated it 1900. It has to be older.

On page 16 he has reproduced a similar photograph clearly taken on a later occasion. There is much more traffic about the street and a hansom cab stands together with the

other conveyances outside the station. A bicycle is leaning against the entrance annexe.



Across the road, 'A. McFarland's Burnaby Stores' stands proudly at the foot of the street. A man is standing beside a pony and cart to the front of the shop. The hotel is white-painted and the sign, also painted, now reads Railway Hotel. A crafted facade rising to the bottom of the Oriel window wraps the corner on the ground floor. The standard trees lining the street on either side are noticeably larger and additional houses have been built on both sides. There are no longer grass verges. Derek has dated it 1901 and the caption reads 'Church Rd. Greystones, Co. Wicklow.

What's puzzling is the Lawrence serial number; it also reads 481.W.L.

The earlier image has clearly been reproduced from a postcard in Derek Paine's possession, because it seemingly no longer exists in the Lawrence Collection. The second image does, and can be accessed online by typing 00481 into the 'find' box on the appropriate web page. A little further pretence at saving the image by right-clicking on the mouse will reveal that it is from the Royal Collection.

It seems to me that the first of the Greystones images in Derek's book was most likely published as a postcard from the original 481.W.L. plate in the Royal series, and the second was re-photographed using the same reference number at a later date.

Coincidentally, there is another photograph in the Royal Collection that also appears to be a later duplicate from the same time as the McFarlands photo. Numbered 480.W.L, it is a

general view of Greystones looking east from Jones' Hill - the hill at Greystones Golf Club that many people will be familiar with - and takes in the Grand Hotel and a steamship out to sea.



The number is at odds with the time zone of the general view; the Grand Hotel was only opened in 1894. The 400 range in the Royal Collection, as the Great Eastern images make clear, is from a decade or more earlier.

What is even odder is that virtually the same image was photographed for the Cabinet series just moments before the Royal 480 photo. Check the steamship out to sea in the image below. The Cabinet snap is numbered 3293.W.L, which is also a number from a much earlier sequence.



I believe both of these images were snapped on the same occasion as the ‘McFarland’s Burnaby Stores’ photograph, which Derek Paine dates to 1901.

The first image, that Derek dated to 1900, was most probably photographed in 1887.

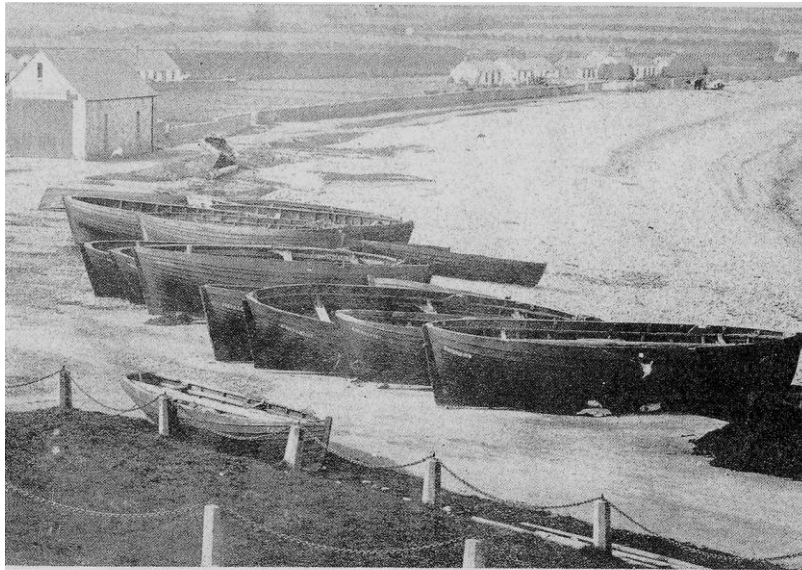
Back to Greystones Harbour - interrogating the image.

In regard to Greystones, the familiarity with the roads and houses that I absorbed in my young days doing paper rounds from the age of eight or nine for my Grandfather John McKenzie, and selling hanks of fish, crab and lobster door to door through the summer months, was an invaluable asset as I started to re-scan Derek Paine’s photographs – to interrogate them as it were – even though it is fifty years since I got married and moved away. That old familiarity returned and I began to see in them features I had skipped past when first I acquired Derek’s books in the nineteen nineties and later.

A handful of photographs that were taken at or about the harbour and that are scattered through the various volumes were of particular interest. It seemed to me that they were part of a series that had been photographed over a succession of days; which somehow made me think that they might therefore reveal a clue or clues as to the date or dates on which they were snapped. It was something I felt needed to be done; Derek had widely differing dates for some of them.

On page 102 of his first (1993) book he had reproduced what he describes as “a very old photograph of about 1860.” He is probably right. It appears to have been taken from the triangle that is still there today, minus the original grass, just level with the bottom of

Trafalgar Road, with the camera focused nor'nor'west.



This is a very old photograph of about 1860, and shows the lime kiln on the north beach. The lime kiln was later built up to house the Jubilee Castle. The boats pulled up on the road are called "Snuffs".

What it reveals is that the cottages at the Bawn have already been built, as have five or six other cottages further along the beach, but no two-storey house. The house named Alberta has not yet been built. The expanse of beach is broader than one would expect and the original railway embankment can clearly be seen, as can one end of the Crab Wall. In the background at the extreme left of the photograph stands a stone-built store of some kind, possibly a boathouse, and a straggle of 'Snuffs' have been pulled right up to the edge of the track or road way in the foreground. The most significant feature is that the gables on the building have a plain finish at roof level. There is no indication as to who took the photograph.

On the following pages he has reproduced a number of later photographs which most assuredly were taken by Robert French. They are numbered from 3291.W.L. to 3339.W.L., although not all the photographs in the sequence are included, and those that are, are mixed through others, as if Derek at the time he published the book was unaware of how they connected. He can hardly be faulted for that, however, because although the Lawrence Photographic Collection had been in the possession of the State for quite some years, I doubt if it had at that stage been digitally processed and made accessible on line.

It took me quite a while to get my head around the various surviving plates that make up the sequence, which may have been taken over as little as two days. The key was in the numbering, as well as in the photographs themselves.

The first, which is numbered 3291.W.L. and is the third of three photographs on page 107 of Derek's 1993 book, was taken from the green sod at the back of the rocks near the

flagstaff and takes in the two Sugarloaves and the north beach from the boathouse to north of the dipping tank.



The two-storey house named Alberta partly obscures some of the cottages of the Bawn and there is a cluster of perhaps eight cottages further north along the beach. All the cottages appear to be white-washed. A long dark-coloured skiff straddles the dried wrack line on the beach just below the the stone-built store from the previous photograph which has already become the RNLI Lifeboat House – check out the stone coping and the granite orbs atop the gables. The photo was taken some time after midday; the walls of both the Lifeboat House and that of Alberta facing the sea are in shadow and the gables facing south are sunlit. It seems to me that this was a trial photograph, taken perhaps a day before the others.

The next photo in the sequence that is still available is numbered clearly 3299.W.L. and it also is reproduced in Derek's 1993 book. It is to be found on page 103, the bottom one of two photos.

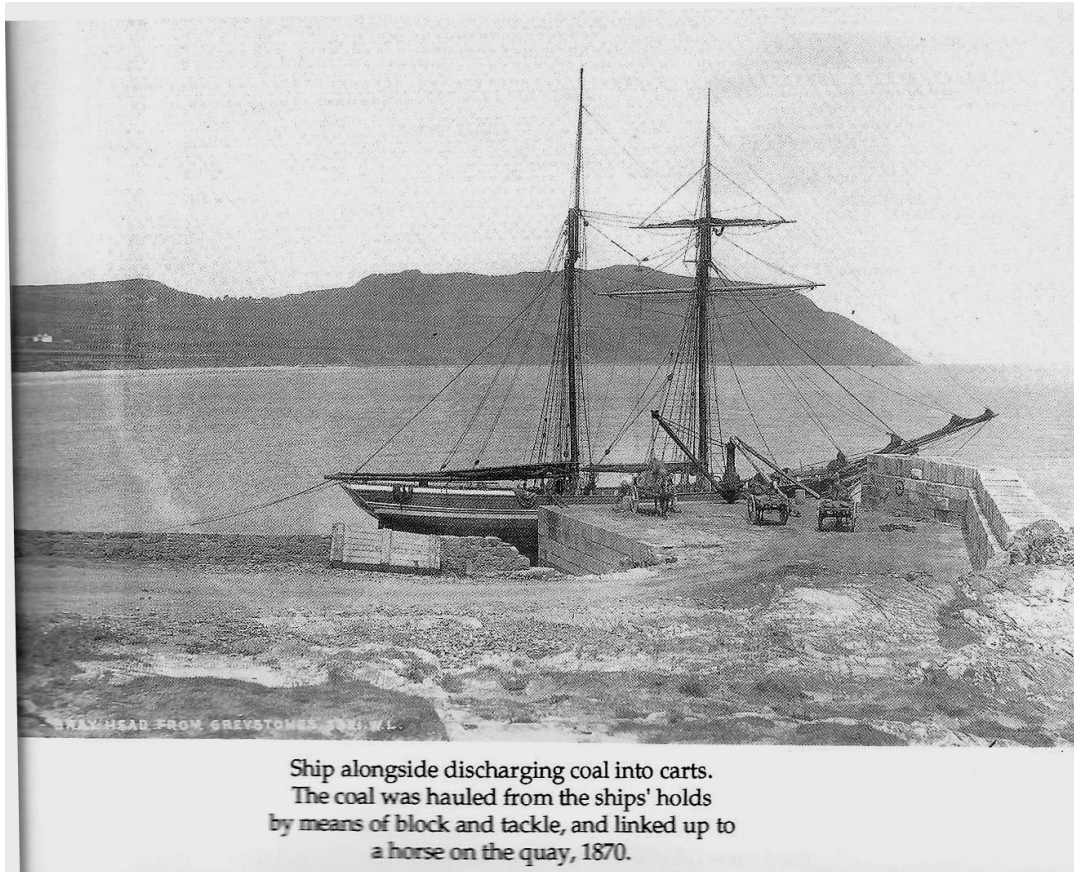


Speculatively, I believe it was taken early enough on the following forenoon. The gables of the only two cottages that are visible up the north beach are in shadow, whereas the fronts of the cottages are sunlit.

In the photo, the north end of the ‘crab wall’ is just visible and there is an excellent view of the shop that was McEntaggart’s then, and Dann’s in my time, and of Duncairn Terrace, the railway arch, the Lifeboat House and Alberta. Something over half a dozen snuffs are pulled up high on the beach, with a scatter of skiffs and smaller rowing boats just below them. Two transom-sterned boats, closer to the crab wall, are painted in brighter colours. The long, dark skiff below the Lifeboat House is still astraddle the line of wrack at the high tide mark, and what appear to be three men are sitting on the beach not far away; taking a breather, perhaps, after spreading herring nets out to dry. What looks like a spread of nets can be seen just beyond the skiff and the men on the beach. In the foreground a man looks over the round-topped concrete wall I vaulted over so many times in my youth, and below him, three young people are tending a half-skiff with four rowing thwarts that is just afloat alongside the long grey rock. One of them, a girl, is at the water’s edge. A boy, paddling in the water, holds onto the breast hook at the bow. The third, a youth, holds a sculling oar that is cupped atop a small transom at the stern. All in all, it is a peaceful scene. The photograph is clearly identified “At Greystones, 3299.W.L.”

The activity that all the photos revolve around is featured in the lower of two photos on page 105 of the same 1993 book: a two-masted topsail schooner is discharging coal at the nose of the jetty. The ashlar blocks used in the construction of the jetty and the back wall of the pier are very distinct, as are three horse-drawn drays. One cart is just being loaded while the other two await their turn to pull in under the sheerlegs. It is just about midday

or slightly before; there is a faint shadow on the near portion of the back wall on the side facing the shore. And it is summer time; the areas of light and shadow suggest the sun is high. Neither pier nor north groyne have yet been built. It is pre-1884.



The W.L. number at the foot of the photo to the left is too indistinct to read; it could be 3331, or even 3321.

There is a plate numbered 3321.W.L. in the online archived images, where it is incorrectly titled 'Church Road, Greystones', but what is actually inscribed on the plate is 'At Greystones. 3321.W.L.' It shows a small gig sailing in the bay north of the jetty and it belongs to this series of photographs I've identified above. Even the lone bathing box (a privy, perhaps!) on the beach in front of the cottages confirms it, as some photographs I've yet to come to will show.



Derek Paine's postcard of the schooner discharging to three drays, however, is a Lawrence image that may be unique to Derek. It does not exist in the Lawrence Collection, or if it does, I have not been able to find it. He dates it to 1870, but I feel in this he is mistaken because it is clearly an integral part of the sequence I have identified..

There is a plate numbered 3331.W.L. in the online archive, where it is inscribed simply 'Bathing Place. Greystones. Co Wicklow. Taken from the Marine Road, more or less opposite the gate of the houses that became Carrig Eden, it looks north across the cove to the flagstaff. The merest glimpse of the end of the protective concrete wall that was constructed at beach level in the cove, probably at the time the Grand Hotel was built, betrays it as dating to the 1890s; yet another photograph given an earlier reference number!

There are two other photos to consider also, both taken from the harbour side of the jetty looking generally in the direction of the coal yards beyond the crab wall. The first of them appears at the top of page 107 in Derek's 1993 book and the photo takes in the entire sweep of the houses on the south side of the harbour, from the house named Rockport to the house that predated Upton, with Wave Crest, Bayswater Terrace and Bethel Terrace in between, and the roadway to the pier and the rocks on which the slip was later built, in the foreground.



A man standing right in the bow of a rowing boat – the same boat that the three young people were holding just off the beach in the 3299.W.L. image – is doing something at the middle one of three iron stanchions that have been set into the stone at the very edge of the ‘Cool of the Rock’. Two horses and drays can be seen, either passing or just standing in front of the entrance to John Doyle’s coal yard below Bethel Terrace, one at each side of the gate which appears to be open. It is a W.L. photo but only the very tops of the four digits in the number are visible. It looks very much as if the number actually reads 3333. Derek Paine captioned it “Harbour Area, no dock, no slip, early 1880s.” I feel this date is the more likely one for the series of images.

The second of the photos that was taken from the jetty that day appears at the top of page 103 in Derek’s 1993 book and it is also available online on the nli.ie website where the online image displays the original number 3334.W.L. And it is from the Cabinet Collection. It too looks straight in along the rocks to Bethel Terrace, where the same two horses and drays appear to be stationary on the road in front of the gate to John Doyle’s coal yard. The house that predated ‘Upton’ is next; then J.C. McEntaggart’s. Beyond it are the two exceptionally fine two-storey houses of Duncairn Terrace. The boathouse is just visible at the extreme right, as is the long dark skiff which, if anything, appears to have been pulled a little higher. Only two men are now sitting on the beach in this photo; the third is standing at the bow of the skiff.

At the other end of the beach a single figure stands at the stern of the transom-sterned half skiff which now appears to be approaching the long grey stone, where another man is waiting to give the first a hand to beach the boat. Just above him and a little to the right, yet another man is standing between the two brightly painted boats that were more clearly seen in photo number 3299.W.L.



One extra detail is somewhat clearer in the online image. A small sailing boat appears to have come to the beach and has been pulled completely clear of the water in between the taking of the two photos; either that, or the men have just brought the gig to the beach and are getting ready to launch it. It can be seen between the two brightly painted transom-sterned boats just under the crab wall. A forward-leaning mast is stepped just forward of amidships and a small jib-sail is rolled around the forestay. The main is about a quarter raised and the boat is painted white, or some other very light colour. This is clearly the same small (Coastguard?) gig pictured in photo number 3331.W.L.

In the foreground to the extreme left of the photo the three metal stanchions set into the rock are clearly visible; they are even more so in the online image downloaded from the nli website, as are the two mooring lines that stretch right across the harbour from the (unseen) stern of the schooner moored at the jetty. The nearer of the stanchions brought back to me the substantial ring linked into a ringbolt that was set into the same roundy rock at the time the jetty was built, and that was still functional when I was a five year old; the time I slipped off the same rock into the tide and nearly drowned.

In the photo below: Jimmy and John Hayden are the two small boys walking up the slip, Derek Paine and Pat Kelly are sitting together, and Aleck Tucker, sitting on his own, is nearest to the ringbolt.



There is one further photo in the sequence and it can be accessed on the nli.ie website where it is identified on the photograph as “Bray Head from Greystones. 3339.W.L.” and as being part of the Cabinet Collection.



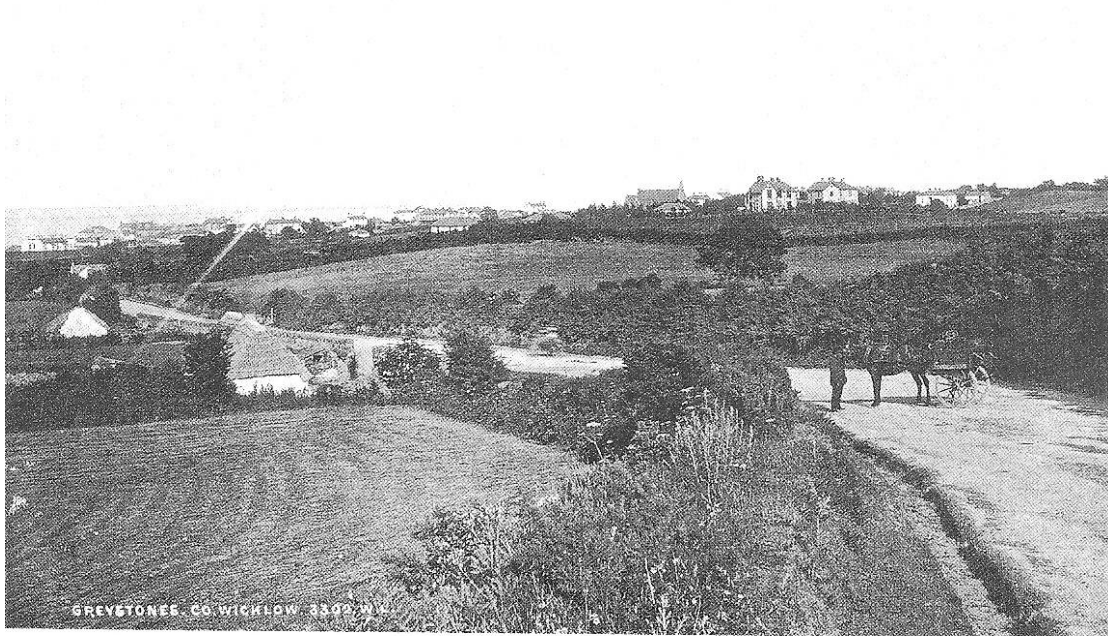
The image captured is of the same top-sail schooner still unloading at the jetty, the disposition of the rigging still the same as in the earlier photo. The whole picture is well lit. It is afternoon, and sunny. The banks and cliffs along the north beach in the background are also much clearer and I fancy I can make out the original ‘Gap Bridge’. There is only one horse and dray on the pier and a full lift of coal bags has just cleared the

hatch. A man stands in the very stern of a rowing boat alongside the port quarter of the schooner, which obscures all but the stern of the boat. Whether it is the same man and boat that was on the water earlier in the day, there is no way of knowing, but it's likely. What other images were captured in the two-day photo-shoot – some forty-odd plates by my reckoning – would be another day's work.

Errant plates

The errant plates niggled at me and I trawled through everything yet again. It was both fruitful and frustrating. I found some photos that seemed to fit the the pattern I had teased out, and others that were ambiguous.

The photograph that Derek Paine captioned 'Rathdown Road, and Jink's Hill, 1904' on page 9 of his 1993 book bamboozled me right to the end. It was so obviously an earlier photo, and the Lawrence number 3302.W.L so clearly in accord with the series I had identified, that I checked out the detail only to confirm that. But, there was more to it than immediately met the eye. It showed St Patrick's Church before it was lengthened, but most likely after the north transept was added in 1875.



Rathdown Road, and Jink's Hill, 1904.

Let me take you through it.

West of the church, the two fine houses of Killard and Knockdolian, dominate the skyline. Looking east, Duncairn and Burlington, the two houses of Duncairn Terrace are clearly visible beyond the railway embankment, as is J.C.McEntaggart's; there is no harbour as such that I can see and neither the Braemar Hotel nor the Grand Hotel have yet been built,

nor the houses in between. But the two houses predating Carrig Eden, and the tower, windows, and chimneys of the Coastguard Station are there. It would be helpful if Derek Paine's original postcard could be re-scanned – what I have reproduced here is only a scan of a scan – and it may be I have missed other telltale details. The two-storey house on the distant skyline to the left of St Patrick's Church, for instance, is almost certainly Malvern no.1 which I understand was built in 1875.

What really threw me, however, was what I failed at first to see in a further photograph I came across in the Lawrence Cabinet Collection online. Clearly numbered 3330.W.L and titled 'Bray Head from Jones' Hill', it showed a landscape remarkably clear of development. For a long while I thought that Killard was not there; it had it looked so substantial in the Jink's Hill photo. It was only when I checked the buildingsofireland.ie website that I realized how compact the original house looked when viewed from the south, and that the then isolated house in the photograph was indeed Killard.

Let me take you through it also.



The cottages of the Bawn are there as is the cluster of cottages up the north beach. The lime kiln is particularly noticeable. Even the thatch cottage at the bottom of Jink's Hill can be made out with the help of a magnifying glass. Re-roofed, perhaps even rebuilt, it was where the Sheeran family lived when I was growing up. There is a prominent individual tree that appears to be common to both images. St Patrick's Church appears as it was originally built - check out the Cabinet Collection plate 3329.W.L. which I will come to next - and Knockdolian is very distinctly visible.

Numerically, both images are co-elements of the series I have identified. But I believe the real purpose of the two particular plates was to showcase the two houses, both of which

had only recently been built. The publication *Greystones - its buildings and history Part 2* gives a very definite 1879 as the year in which Knockdolian was completed, while the Irish Architectural Archive has c.1880 for Killard. Together, they add the most positive affirmation yet to the 1880-ish date I have for the images captured about the jetty and the embryo harbour.

The 3329.W.L photograph of St Patrick's Church which I've just referred to, and that can be found on page 23 of Derek's 2001 book, is also a bit of an enigma in that he dates it to 1864. The actual building is clearly as he describes it - "as it was originally" - but the ivy growing on all the walls of the church that can be seen shows a growth of a considerable number of years; not just a mere seven. It even extends to the copings on the eastern gables. The image must be from a later date and my conjectured 1880-ish fits.



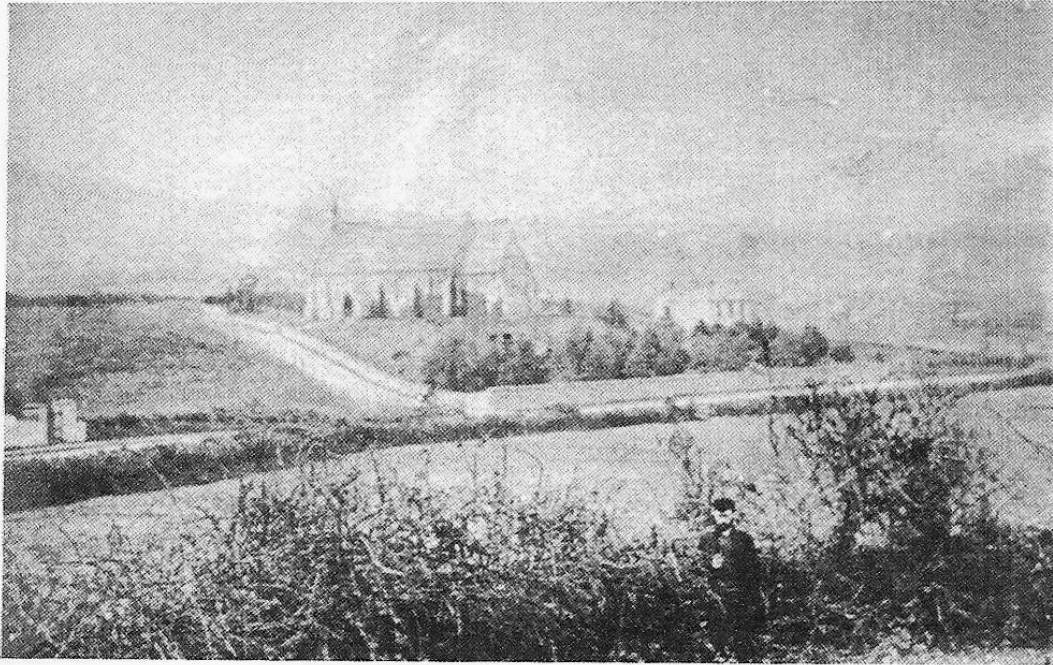
A different photograph - of a portion of the Church Road - on page 40 of Derek's 2001 book tends to confirm it.



Taken from a position just south of the top of the Turnpike Lane, it shows an unpaved road, with unpaved footpaths and gullies on both sides and what might now be described as ‘standard’ trees – i.e. somewhat stouter than saplings – planted on the verges. Only the the east gables of the church can be seen and they are somewhat blurred, even in Derek’s book. Viewed on page with a magnifying glass, however, the extent of ivy growth along the copings fairly matches the growth in the preceding photo. So I include this also in my 1880-ish sequence.

In contrast, there is a totally different image of St Patrick’s Church on page 15 of Derek Paine’s 1994 publication, his second book. He describes it as having been “taken from the area of the Turnpike Lane about 1885”. It is almost certainly much, much older; perhaps, even, the oldest of all his photos.

A dark-bearded man stands tight in against a hedge in the foreground. Beyond the hedge, which is roughly about head height, lies a totally bare field on which the mirror-image stone and redbrick cottages of Arva and its twin, Shamrock Lodge, were later built; a development *Greystones - its buildings and history Part 2* dates c.1870.



Very old photograph of St. Patrick's Church, Church Rd. and Church Lane, taken from the area of the Turnpike Lane about 1885. The Church is in its original state before being extended.

The main focus of the photograph shows the lower part of what became the Church Lane as a mere access lane to the gate of St Patrick's, the grounds of which are bare of trees or shrubbery except along the lower boundary wall. On the road below the church there is not a tree. Not as much as a sapling borders the brae on the Church Road, nor the Lower Church Road; something that's strange to me.

This was the route I traversed daily to school at the Convent from the age of three or so, and to St Kilian's Hall after I moved to the 'Brothers' in 1944. (Two over-spill classes from the old, overcrowded boy's school in Blacklion were housed in the supper room of the hall). After school I kicked my way in the autumn months through the leaves of both the Church Road and of the Church Lane, even detouring via the Turnpike to do so. Later still, I sold fish door to door and collected for the Lifeboat house to house along the same roads.

The image of the church shows the beginnings of a growth of ivy in places on the external walls. The three-bay two storey house to the right and somewhat lower down must surely be the Rectory. Above or about the church there is no sign of the house named Knockdolian; neither is there of any of the houses that were built beyond it when the Church Lane hill was linked to the lane from Blacklion. And who is the dark-bearded man in the foreground? A younger Robert French? Is this, perhaps, the first ever selfie?

Derek Paine dates it "about 1885", but this has to be older. In that sense of place that I

even still have, I feel this image is the photo that should be dated 1864.

Other markers

There were other markers that I spotted, and false leads also; photographs that were numbered as if they too were part of the 1880-ish sequence but clearly were not, and to better identify them I went back to the online collection and typed in every number successively from 03289 to 03340. I was principally interested in the results from the Cabinet Collection, but kept a note of those from the Royal Collection, also.

03289 is captioned 'Golfing at Greystones': there are just too many houses in the Burnaby in the background, I feel, for it to have been taken at the earlier 1880-ish date. In any case, the Greystones Golf Club web site states that the club was founded only in 1895.

(There is yet another photograph/postcard, numbered 3209.W.L on page 152 of Derek Paine's first book, "Playing to the 18th green"; but yet again there are too many houses in the Burnaby Estate in the background for it to be anything but 1900-ish.)

03290, taken from the area of the flagstaff and spanning the houses from Rockport to Kate Doyle's field is definitely part of the earlier sequence. There are snuffs on the beach in front of J. C. McEntaggart's. The boat house is the Lifeboat House. There is no 'harbour' as such.

03291: The two Sugarloaves form the background for this photo, which takes in the railway arch, the Lifeboat house, the Bawn, Alberta, cottages up the North beach and the lime kiln on which Jubilee Castle was later built. This is part of the sequence.

03293: This image is the later replacement photo taken from Jones' Hill showing the Grand and the Braemar Hotels that I've referred to already. One wonders what the original photo might have shown.

03294: From the beginning I instinctively felt there were too many people on the South Beach in this photograph. Could there have been as many families in Greystones in the early 1880s, and all so fashionable? Then I thought, 'What would I know?' and gave it the benefit of the doubt.

It was much later I spotted that the very stylishly dressed young woman in the foreground, standing as if posed at the foot of the steep path to the beach, also appeared in another photograph that was obviously taken on the same afternoon, and was similarly posed. This unacknowledged photograph appears at the bottom of page 27 of Derek Paine's 1993 book. It is a darker image than the first and the faces of people in the foreground of this photograph are generally in shadow, and I wonder if this is the reason it has not been acknowledged. There is yet a third, brighter photograph however - 3311.W.L. - that appears to have been taken within minutes of the second, and in it, the young woman can be clearly seen in all her finery.

The third image can be accessed in the npa online archive, where it is catalogued as a Cabinet Collection image; but the emulsion on the plate has been damaged, and details of the houses on the La Touche and Kimberly roads in the background are somewhat obscured. Notably, it's not possible to tell whether the Church of the Holy Rosary has been built, or not. The roofs of the other houses along the La Touche Road can clearly be seen, however on the darker, unacknowledged photograph.

Further forays into the online Lawrence Collections of the National Photographic Archive yielded even further connections, so that at the end I could confidently link at least nine of the later replacement images - and possibly more - to each other, and to the year in which all were taken: 1901. But it is a story for another occasion; one which very much needs to be presented visually, and I hope to come back to it.

It's almost superfluous to continue, but . . .

03295 which shows a schooner discharging coal at the pier with the Cúl of the Rock silted over is self-evidently later; as is . . .

03296 which looks north from the crab wall and shows early signs of subsidence at the newly built North Wall. Yarra Yarra has still not been built, but the 'yellow house' and the Jubilee Castle and all the houses in between are there. 'Derek Paine in his second (1994) book reckons it as late 1890s. The key question could well be 'When was Yarra Yarra built? One might well expect that Derek and I should both know; each of us lived for a time adjacent to Yarra Yarra, and I was born in Novara in Blacklion, next door to the bungalow in which Mr Jimmy Evans lived. It was he that built Yarra Yarra. But all I can do is conjecture - post 1901?

(The images in the Royal Collection for this last sequence of numbers, by the way, were all taken in Sligo, round about Lough Gill in general.)

It might seem almost superfluous to continue, so compelling is the combined photographic evidence in both Derek Paine's and the Lawrence collections, but there are a few images yet that are worth a reference.

The Cabinet Collection image for the next number in the sequence, 3297.W.L, is mistakenly titled 'Staigue Fort' in the online archive, but is inscribed on the plate 'Coastguard Station Greystones.3297.W.L'. It was taken from the shallow rocky basin just north of the cove, near to which a young spastic boy named Meldrick drowned in my time, when he climbed down the rocks while playing hide and seek with his brothers and was unable to climb back again. What the image shows, however, is the first of the houses on the seafront, the coastguard store and rocket apparatus shed, together with the Coastguard station and the house that was Fanning's when I was young. There are bathing huts in the cove, but they are set on the stones of the beach. (The concrete rampart wall that was built later is not in evidence; a construction that dates, I feel, to the building of the Grand Hotel in 1894 and which shows very stylish bathing huts atop the

rampart in a later image). The 3297 image, however, is part of my sequence.

The Cabinet image for 3298.W.L. on the other hand, a general image of the town taken from Coolagad Hill, is from much later. It depicts St Kilian's Church in Blacklion after a transept was added in 1886 and shows, yet again, far too many houses in the Burnaby.

So it continues; some clearly belonging to the 1880-ish sequence; others seemingly part of the same numerical series, but obviously taken much later. I haven't yet got my head around this apparent irrationality in numbering other than what I observed already: that Robert French for William Lawrence revisited locations at various times to re-photograph more up to date scenes while retaining original reference numbers.

There are two images I came across, however, while trawling online through various sections of the Lawrence archive that are titled and numbered simply 'Bray Head 3319.W.L.' and 'Bray Head 3320.W.L.' The first shows the fine broad embankment of the original railway line approaching what is now the 'second' tunnel, i.e. the Cable Rock tunnel; and the second, taken from a little further south, shows the cliffs seaward of the



track between the Gap Bridge and the Burrow to be in a parlous condition. The rampart wall further north appears intact, but a lesser section of protective wall that originally ran some couple of hundred yards to the south of the stream at Morris's road cannot be seen.



A detailed account of the history of the railway around Bray head by K.A.Murray which Derek Paine reproduces on pages 48 to 57 of his fourth book gives a date of 1888 for the ‘Rathdown Deviation’, when the track that crossed the original Gap Bridge was moved back somewhat from the crumbling cliffs. It just seems to me that Robert French would have been interested enough to trek up along the line at the time he photographed the topsail schooner, and took those other shots of both harbour and town, to record the impending destruction of the original railway line; so I rate them 1880-ish also. A paragraph from K.A. Murray’s account on page 55 of Derek’s book adds credence:

“From this time (1879) onwards, attention had to be given increasingly to the southern side of the Head, where the storms were becoming a serious menace to the soft material of ‘Morris’s Bank’ - the steep hillside of clay in Rathdown Lower barony. In 1882 an act was got for another diversion, which however was not made until after the powers for it were renewed in 1886. This was the ‘Rathdown Deviation’ of 1888-9, 7 furlongs and 220 yards (sic) long, and it included a new stone underbridge at Redford, replacing the original ‘Ennis’s Bridge’.”

There are still more:

A cropped image of great clarity on page 65 of Derek’s 2001 book depicts three men who have either just come ashore, or are about to put to sea in the same white-painted gig that Robert French photographed in the image numbered 3334.W.L. that was taken from the jetty. Bingo! It’s a pity that Derek hasn’t included the reference number: it could have helped to clarify the sequence in which the photos were actually taken. He dates it, however as being taken in 1879, a date that’s almost believable. But I think the year in which Killard was built is closer.

Another image, taken from north of the cottages on the north beach, is reproduced in a

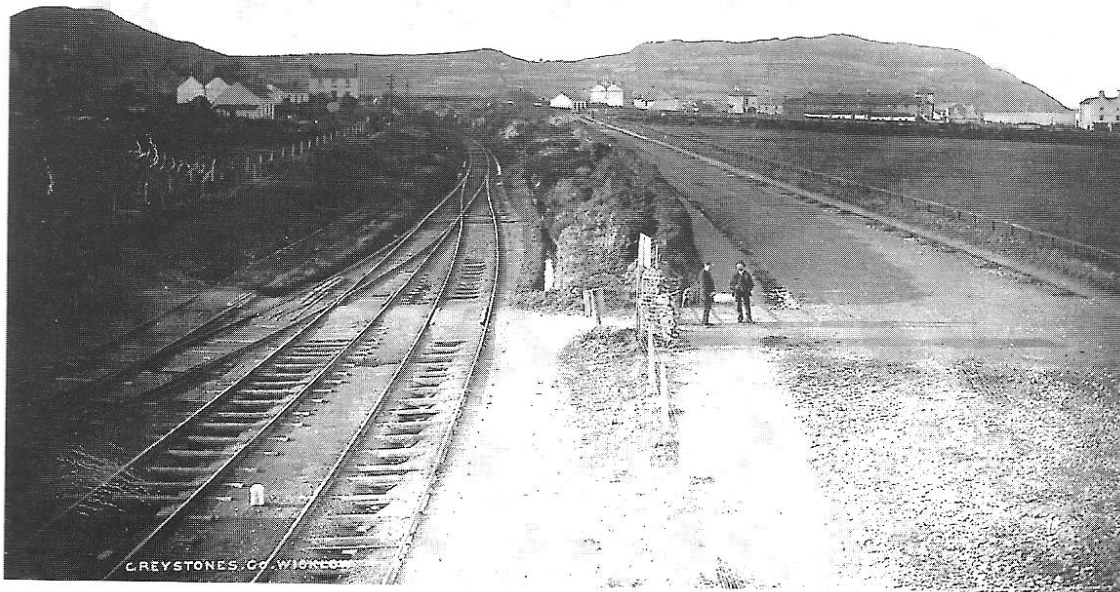
cropped-to-fit-the-page panorama, on page 107 of Derek's first book, but without a number. The details of the topsail schooner at the jetty, the long skiff straddling the tide mark, the Lifeboat House, McEntaggart's, Alberta almost screening out Duncairn and Burlington, and a lone bathing box (or privy) in front of the houses on the beach, however, match those of the other photos. And on that same day, Robert French snapped three images of boys and donkeys at virtually the same place. They can be checked out online.

On pages 66 and 67 of their 2001 book Derek (or Gary) has cropped and enlarged three sections of yet another photo that was also taken on the same day from the grassy sward about the flagstaff. The sections include the snuffs and boats pulled up onto the beach in front of J.C. McEntaggart's and the seven or eight cottages built further north along the shore, and both the photographer and Derek Paine have gone to some trouble to show the lime kiln on which the Jubilee Castle was later built. Unfortunately, again, the Lawrence reference number has been omitted. And on the top of page 68, there is yet another photo that is un-numbered, but that was most likely taken on the same day, also. The men sitting on the beach adjacent to the long dark skiff straddling the high tide wrack mark in front of the Lifeboat House are still there but in this photo a man and a woman are standing near to the water's edge, not quite directly in front of them.

The photograph on the top of page 234 in Derek's sixth book (2005) is one further image from that day on which Robert French photographed the snuffs with the two brightly painted transom-sterned boats in the foreground, near to the crab wall. In the background J.C. McEntaggart's name can be read above the shop that later became Dann's in the 1930s. Up at Blacklion on the hill behind them, the fine house named Ashley, just where the Rathdown Road joins Blacklion Road, is clearly visible, as is St Kilian's Catholic Church on the hill above it. The image of the church is yet another thing that brackets the likely dates for the photographs. A transept was added to it in 1886; but in the photograph, the church is as it was built originally in 1867.

One extra:

There is one rather extraordinary photograph on page 137 of Derek's 1993 book: an image of the level crossing that predated the footbridge at the lower end of La Touche Road, on which not a house has yet been built, but shows in the distance both the house that was Fanning's in my young days, and the Coastguard Station and terrace. There is not a single obstruction except for a low hedge near the current boundary of the Church of the Holy Rosary. Everything about it speaks of it being a 'Lawrence' photo, but the exact number is unreadable, even on the printed page.



Excellent view of the railway from the station with no buildings between the station and the coastguard station in 1870.

What it suggests, whether Derek Paine's date of 1870 is correct or not, is how limited was the development of that end of the town at the time the photo was taken.

A page accessible at www.buildingsofireland.ie gives the date of building of the new coastguard station as c.1875, as does Volume 1 of *Greystones - its buildings and history*. Derek Paine, however, in an entire section dedicated to coastguard events and actions in his 2005 book, gives an earlier date. Under the banner GREYSTONES COASTGUARD STATION, a subheading on page fourteen reads: "*Officers house and 7 cottages erected by Board of Works in 1872.*"

These 'cottages' are not to be confused with the earlier coastguard dwellings of Kenmare Terrace which were erected by John Doyle in 1843, but are the individual residences in what we knew in our time as 'The barracks'. A cursory scrutiny of the chimney stacks, even today, will find two pairs of chimney pots on each of the four stacks.

Regardless of whichever year it was, the significant building in the photograph is the three-bay, two storey house at the left of the bridge: Malvern no.1, which I believe was built in 1875.

At first glance, it seemed that the two coast guard stores that housed the Rocket apparatus in my time were not there. But a closer scrutiny of the printed image in Derek's book with a magnifying glass reveals that they are; and that just might give us a more proximate date for the photograph.

Two letters in the O.P.W. files in the National Archives may refer to the building of the stores:

The first pertains to an uncompleted contract, possibly for the construction of the sheds.

Greystones Coastguard Station. Co. Wicklow Office of Public Works. Dublin. 27 July 1877.

Sir, The rented boathouse of this station is so bad and damp that it is impossible to keep the Government stores in serviceable order, there is also a Rocket apparatus. It is in a very dilapidated state. There was a contract with the Board of Works to build a new house and slipway early last year and a dispute arising between the fishermen and the landlord, or Board of Works, about the site, the work was stopped there has been nothing done since then.

I would beg leave to request you would be pleased to move the proper Authorities to have the said boat-house and slip built as the station is very much in want of them.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant. Richard Doherty. Chief Officer.

To Commander E.M. Dayrell RN. Kingstown.

Reference; O.P.W. file 16839/80. No. 13325. National Archives. Dublin.

The second looks for payment. (For the stores?)

Greystones Coastguard Station. Co. Wicklow. Office of Public Works. Dublin. 8 September 1877.

Sir, I reported to you that the work was completed at Greystones Coastguard Station and wish an inspection as soon as possible, as I am in need of money. Thomas Evans. Contractor.

Reference; O.P.W. file 16839/90. No.15871. National Archives. Dublin.

What a pity the actual serial number of the photo cannot be read, because the image does not appear to exist in the online collection. As to the year: could it be 1880-ish?

Samuel French in his 1964 booklet, incidentally, refers to the period between the ordnance sheets of 1864 and 1889 as *“the period during which most of the houses on Church Road and Trafalgar Road were built.”*

Then continues, *“A road - i.e. La Touche Road - from Trafalgar Road to the Station on the sea side was constructed to connect with another new road along the seafront.”*

followed by, *“All this is shown on the ordnance sheet of 1885.”*

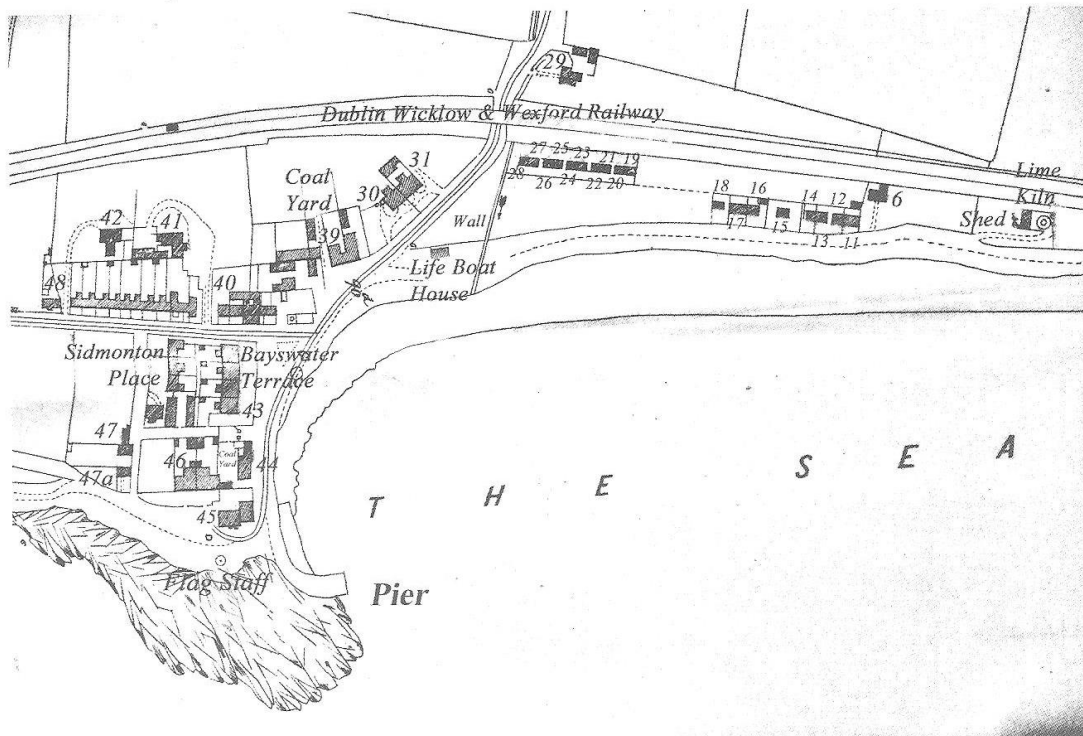
To conclude:

Back in 1870s Greystones it must have seemed that it was all happening. Arthur Evans opened his second coal yard at the back of J.C.McEntaggarts in 1871. The RNLI Lifeboat House was opened and the pulling lifeboat Sarah Tancred was installed on station in 1872. A substantial new Coastguard station was commissioned early to mid-decade. And in 1876 an application for permission to create a piped water system was made by the then incumbent of Bellevue House and Demense, William Robert La Touche.

The map accompanying the application is reproduced in Derek and Gary Paine’s 2007 book. Unearthed in Gary’s painstaking research, it has every appearance of being based on an earlier Ordnance Survey map; but which revision? the complex of buildings fronting the ‘Coal Yard’ must surely delineate earlier structures; not the substantial building of J.C.McEntaggart’s time, which Rosemary Raughter dates to c.1850 and attributes to John Doyle, who died in 1855.

1876

The houses and buildings in the immediate vicinity of the harbour are shown on the town plan below.



Nevertheless, this is the first map detailing the jetty and approach road most people will have ever seen. It also depicts the general area of the Cool of the Rock as it may have looked originally.

This was the “notable fishing place” of which William Wenward Seward said in 1795:

“The herrings first brought into Dublin are usually taken by the fishing boats of this place”,

and that A. Atkinson referred to in 1815 as a “*half-formed harbour*”.

This was the wave-scoured deeper channel edging the lee of the Gray Stones that became the kernel from which the town fanned out and grew.

This was the place, also, of which a Fisheries Inspector named Mr J. Irvine, echoing the experience of local fishermen, reported in the 1820s,

“Every heavy gale from the northward fills up this harbour and the next year’s southerly one opens it up again,”

and then continued his recommendation in support of what the local fishermen wanted:

“The opinion therefore of the fishermen also is that if a mere breakwater of loose stones was run out from the beach towards the eastward with a return to the southward it would not only protect them from the northerly gales which are most prevalent and dangerous but would also prevent the partial choking of the harbour which then takes place.”

And then, a ‘wheen of waiting’.

Within five years of it being photographed so comprehensively by Robert French some sixty years after that report, the Cúl of the Rock was already silted over due to the construction of the pier in the mid eighteenth eighties, and was gone within the next decade as a consequence of the inadequacy of the north groyne completed in 1888/89.

It was at this very spot, where once a half-transomed boat with four rowing thwarts was sculled to shore by a lone figure standing in the well of the boat, having tended to the mooring lines of a top sail schooner moored at the face of the jetty, that we daily baited our lines in 1951, the year I first fished the longline with my brother Billy; when I was fourteen, and he was eighteen and had just completed his first year at university.

It was here, after we had moved to Mrs George Archer’s cottage at number two in the Bawn for the summer months, as we had done for many years previously - although Billy lived with our Grandfather McKenzie in the shop next to Samuel Ferns’ draper’s shop in front of the Holy Faith Convent - that we stripped and ‘gowed up’ the hooks after coming from fishing and spread our cotton lines to dry.

And in the evenings, or on days we didn’t go to fish, when by then the ‘Cúl of the Rock’ was just a broad shingle bank, we played ‘quaits’, pitching flat, palm-sized, rounded stones picked from about our feet from one ‘motte’ to another set twenty paces away, in a game that was pretty unique to the fishermen of Greystones in our time.

The extract from my memoir *Tell My Mother I’ve Just Gone Fishing* that I read at the start of this dissertation was drawn from a chapter headed ‘The Cúl of the Rock; the beginning’. What is ineffably sad now is that, when the opportunity arose in the recent

award-winning harbour construction project to restore the depth of water tight into the lee of the rock that was at the very heart of the original vision of a harbour that could offer safety to all seafarers coming to shore, to acknowledge it for posterity as being the seed from which this town grew, it was instead irrevocably in-filled and the basin and the rock were buried.

I hope that the generations which now succeed us will find that delight in adventure and exploration that we experienced in our time, and from it develop that same fascination with all things marine that we did. It would be a shame not to.
