

The Larch Hill Story





P. PELLERIN '91

FIRST SETTLERS

The first settlers in Ireland arrived to a land covered with dense forests mountains and marshes. They lived by hunting and gathering, not by farming and so the landscape was not hugely altered by their arrival. Their successors were known as Neolithic (New Stone Age) people anywhere between 2,000B.C. - 3,500 B.C.

During this time there was a considerable amount of activity around the foothills of the Dublin Mountains. In the Kilmashogue valley and mountain side, Tibbradden Mountain and Rockbrook area. Today, we can see some of the remaining structures build by the people of this time.

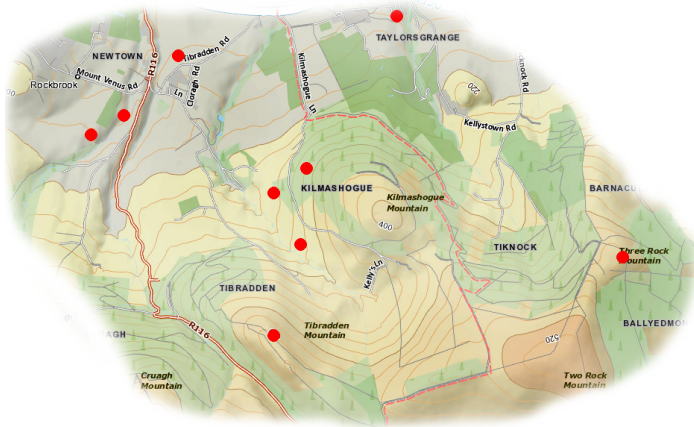


Early settlers hut - can be seen in Wexford Heritage centre

There are standing stones in the fields at Rockbrook, a number of passage tombs can be found – one in Kilmashogue wood, another on top of Tibbradden Mountain and Fairy Castle Mountain and dolmens exist in Larch Hill and on Mount Venus. At Tailors Grange there exists what is called locally as the ‘Druids Chair’ that was once the entrance to a large passage tomb much like today's Neolithic structures at Newgrange and Knowth. What is referred to as the ‘Druid Chair’ was the entrance stones to this tomb.

This area would have been heavily wooded at this time and a good area for hunting. Its location on the mountain side allowed magnificent views across the plains. The higher hills could be seen as well as the River Liffey, Dublin Bay and northwards coastline.

The location of these tombs and dolmens suggest that the tribe of people who lived in this area may have controlled large areas of land



Red dots show location of stone age tombs, dolmens and standing stones in the area surrounding Larch Hill



towards Dublin and beyond. The tombs placed so that the ‘ancestors’ could view their domains. Behind them was the wilderness of the Dublin and Wicklow mountains.

There are 190 dolmens in Ireland and dolmen sites tend to fringe the coast and travel inland was difficult. In Larch Hill and close by on Mount Venus there are dolmen sites and others exist along the Dublin foothills and mountain tops and in the Dublin area.

The builders of these large stone monuments lived in communities of up to 3,000 people, hence the belief that the dolmen was built for the community and not as a resting place for a king. People became engaged in the landscape and the monuments they built became a focal point for their activities.

The dolmen illustrates how ingenious early settlers proved to be. They managed to lift the huge capstone, estimated to weigh over 25 tonnes, into position

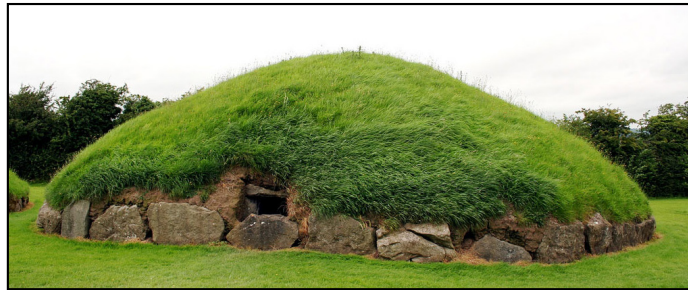
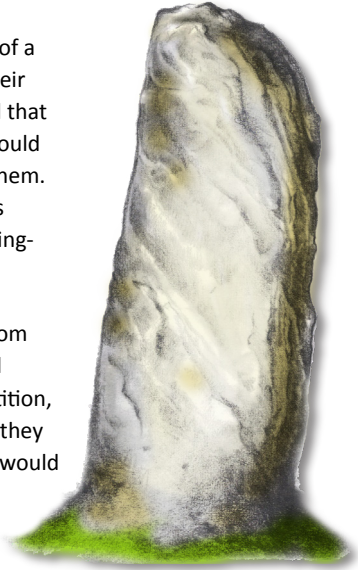
The dolmen or portal tomb located at Kilternan (10 miles from Larch Hill) is one of the largest in Ireland and dates from the Neolithic period or New Stone Age, dating from 4,000 BC-2,500 BC. The granite covering stone of the dolmen measures approximately 7 metres x 5.18 metres x 1.83 metres. The rectangular chamber beneath measures 15 feet in length and 10 feet in breadth.

Wedge tombs were built during the early part of the Bronze Age – an example can be seen in Kilmashogue wood a short distance from Larch Hill. Wedge tombs are smaller in size.

Standing stones

Standing stones are something of a curiosity, as little is known of their intended function. It is believed that rituals and other ceremonies would have been carried out around them. Possible uses of standing stones include way markers or as rubbing-stones for cattle.

However, some are no doubt from the remains of graves or indeed stone circles. Hence the superstition, people believed that as long as they were still standing, no bad luck would befall them.



The Dolmen field

The Dolmen Field as you see it today was in fact a boulder filled field till the creation of the field layout of larch Hill in the late 1790's. If you walk uphill, to the forest, inside you will see many granite boulders and slabs. This boulder collection also exists across the Kilmashogue lane on the hillside of Kilmashogue. The builders of the dolmen did so within the Dolmen field. The stones they required were nearby and by careful selection boulders of the right size and shape could be selected. The pillar stone at the back of the dolmen may have been a special stone that was created using stone tools to make it square sides and shape.



View of Larch Hill dolmen

Dolmens required a large amount of people power to pull the stones into place and slide the capping slab on top. Little is known about how these stone structures were created and engineers have speculated on possible methods used.

The construction would have taken some time to complete and the builders and their families would have lived around Larch Hill, probably camping on the same spaces we now camp on near the stream below.

The Larch Hill Dolmen

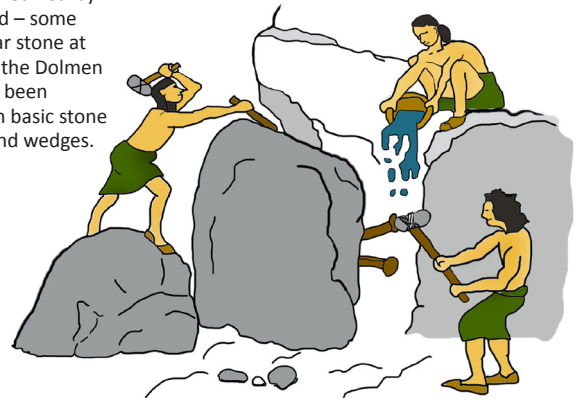
(description by Rev. M.H. Close, MRIA late 1861's)

"It is surrounded by a circle of six stones lying half buried. Four stones of the dolmen are still in place, and there are two smaller blocks near, which evidently belonged to it. There are two side stones, measuring respectively five feet six inches and six feet in height, one of which is still upright, while the other has succumbed to the weight of the cap stone. The latter (cap stone) measures twelve feet four inches long, eight feet four inches broad, and two feet thick. Its upper end is a distance of two feet nine inches from the side stone. It appears utterly impossible for it ever to have touched this side stone and then slipped back to where it is"

"At the back of the side and top stones stands a pillar stone, measuring nine feet ten inches in height, with almost square sides, averaging three feet five inches in thickness. This pillar resembles an Ogham stone, but appears to bear no inscription"

(background information from Dún Laoghaire - Rathdown library service [ask about ireland.ie](http://askaboutireland.ie))

The huge stones required would have been identified nearby and selected – some like the pillar stone at the back of the Dolmen would have been shaped with basic stone hammers and wedges.

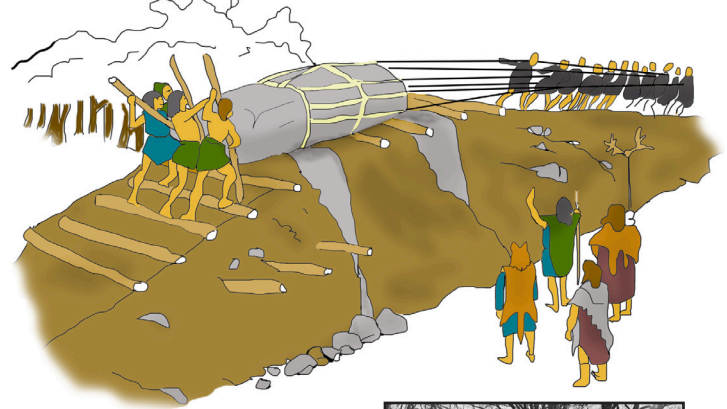


A series of large holes would be dug in which the supporting rocks would be placed. Levers and ropes would then be used to place the blocks in an upright position in the holes.

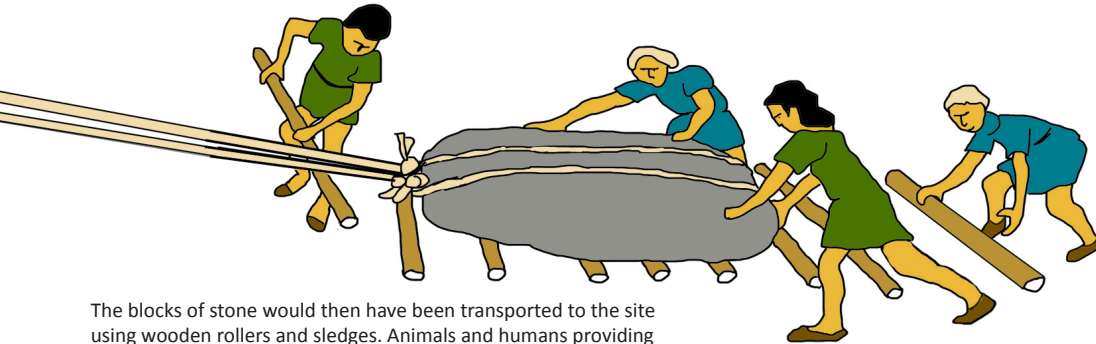


An earth ramp was then created around the supporting stones so that the cap stone could then be pulled into place.

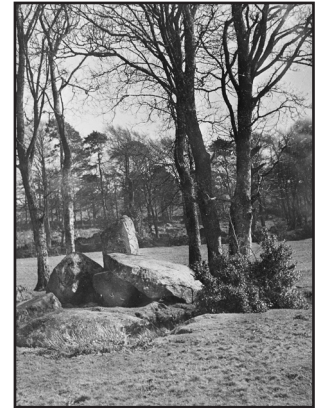
When the cap stone had settled on the supporting stones the earth was taken away from the site and the Dolmen stood proud in the landscape.



Large ropes would have been made over sometime for the pulling and lifting tasks from local plants and tree bark fibers.



The blocks of stone would then have been transported to the site using wooden rollers and sledges. Animals and humans providing the pulling and lifting power to move the blocks.



FRONTIER LAND

After the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland, Strongbow granted the lands from South Dublin to Arklow to his companion Knight Walter de Rideleford. These lands included the foothills of the Dublin Mountains where Larch Hill is situated.

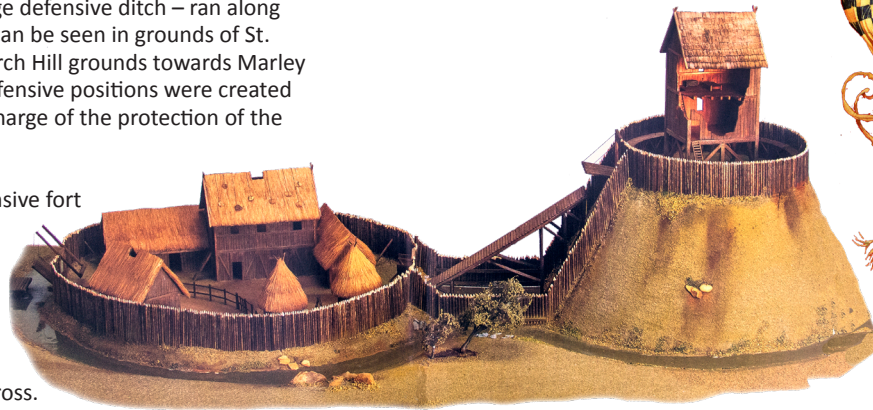
In order to protect Dublin city and the lands around Dublin, from native Irish tribes, a Pale (or protected area) was created around the city. The Pale ran along the foothill of the Dublin mountains from Dalkey on the coast to beyond Tallaght and then towards Newcastle and the River Liffey and beyond towards Swords and back to the north coast. (roughly following the line of today's M50 motorway)

A section of the Pale defenses—a large defensive ditch – ran along the north face of Kilmashogue. This can be seen in grounds of St. Columba's College situated below Larch Hill grounds towards Marley Park. Along the Pale, a number of defensive positions were created and trusted Knights were placed in charge of the protection of the Pale along its length.

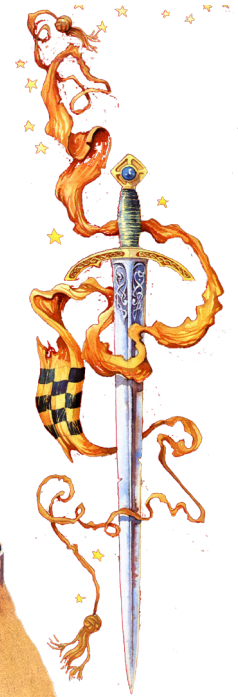
Sir John Harold, Knight, had his defensive fort near the Taylor's Grange, at the back of Marley Park and he and his clan protected an area that extended as far as Tallaght on one side and Carrickmines on the other and the lands towards the Dodder river and beyond towards Harold's Cross.

This clan, is thought to have been Danish in its origin, and may have been descended from Saxons who came over with the Anglo-Norman invaders.

The Archbishop of Dublin owned the lands from Dublin City towards Harold's Cross and it is said that he erected a stone cross to indicate the start of his lands and as a warning to the Harold clan to not trespass or try to take over his lands.



Motte and Bailey





Motte and Bailey with improved defensive tower and stockade

Motte and Bailey

Defensive forts

The first protective fort that was first created was a motte and bailey. The Normans introduced the design into England and Wales following their invasion in 1066. Motte-and bailey castles were adopted in Scotland, Ireland, the Low Countries and Denmark in the 12th and 13th centuries. The design consisted of a large mound on which a small fort was created, and at a lower level accommodation and stables. Surrounding the mound a defensive ditch was also built and overtime a wooden stockade.

Later, once a protection zone was created, the motte was extended further to include a protective area that could include within its area, stables, workshops, accommodation blocks. In large defensive areas, small villages and markets developed around the motte creating the villages we see today around the countryside.





The Pale boundary consisted of a fortified ditch and rampart built around parts of the medieval counties of Louth, Meath, Dublin and Kildare. The northern frontier of the Pale was marked by the De Verdon fortress of Castle Roche, while the southern border roughly corresponded to the present day M50 motorway in Dublin.

The following description is from *The parish of Taney: a history of Dundrum, near Dublin, and its neighbourhood* (1895):[7]

In the period immediately after the Norman Settlement was constructed the barrier, known as the "Pale," separating the lands occupied by the settlers from those remaining in the hands of the Irish. This barrier consisted of a ditch, raised some ten or twelve feet from the ground, with a hedge of thorn on the outer side. It was constructed, not so much to keep out the Irish, as to form an obstacle in their way in their raids on the cattle of the settlers, and thus give time for a rescue. The Pale began at Dalkey, and followed a southwesterly direction towards Kiltarnan; then turning northwards passed Kilgobbin, where a castle still stands, and crossed the Parish of Taney to the south of that part of the lands of Balally, and thence in a westerly direction to Tallaght, and on to Naas in the County of Kildare.

Within the confines of the Pale the leading gentry and merchants lived protected lives not too different from those of their counterparts in England, save for the constant fear of attack from the Gaelic Irish clans.



Extract from the History of Dublin Parishes

About the year 1247, we find Sir John Harold, Knight, witnessing a deed with regard to the outlying lands in Whitechurch parish, and mentioned as owner of the lands of Kilgobbin ; and towards the close of that century we find Sir Geoffrey Harold, Knight, also witnessing deeds referring to the same locality and acting as collector for the Crown in the Vale of Dublin. Then at the beginning of the next century Peter, son of Geoffrey Harold, is mentioned as owner.

Like the Walshe's of Carrickmines, the Harolds became responsible for the protection of the Pale in the neighbourhood of their home, and in their own self-interest they discharged faithfully their trust. However, they were themselves a lawless people, who did not scruple to levy blackmail at times on those whom they were supposed to protect. So in 1462, three of them imprisoned the Archbishop of Dublin, Michael de Tregury, and in the following year another of them descending on the lands of Dunderum, and after killing eight of the King's earls, driving off 600 cows, 40 plough horses, and 100 sheep.

In 1518 John Harold, "captain of his nation," built a watermill on the Kilmashogue lands; and in 1567 Redmond Harold, whose son Edmund probably gave his name to the adjoining lands of Edmondstown, on which, in 1582, he was residing.

After the dissolution of St. Mary's Abbey (Dublin) the lands then known as Harold's Grange, on which there were a small castle and a water-mill, were granted by Henry VIII to Barnaby Fitzpatrick, Baron of Upper Ossory. At the close of the sixteenth century, owing to the absence of the owner, the tenants of Harold's Grange suffered severely from the visits of soldiers, who rifled their houses beyond mercy. This treatment was due to the non-payment of county charges, the Harold's claiming that the lands, as originally monastic property, should be free. The clan was involved in frequent troubles with the Government and in 1566, many of them joined the mountain tribes in rebellion and proved 'troublesome neighbours to Dublin both by burning and preying'. Although the Harold's continued to hold the lands of Kilmashogue until the rebellion of 1641, when they were forfeited by John Harold - the ownership having passed to Sir Adam Loftus of Rathfarnham.

At the time of the Restoration 1660 - the Harold's' castle at Kilmashogue, which is stated to have been thatched, was in ruins, and owned by the families of Loftus and the King.



CREATING LARCH HILL

Throughout the eighteenth century land ownership was the preserve of the privileged classes. This minority was almost exclusively protestant with only about 5 per cent of land in catholic hands. The typical Irish estate was centred on the 'big house', the landlord's country residence; it was surrounded by the demesne. The demesne usually included a home farm which allowed the big house to be self-sufficient; a kitchen garden to service the family's needs; gardens and lawns for ornamentation and leisure purposes; woodland for the rearing of game: parkland for grazing of cattle; and a wide variety of out offices for the housing of animals and for the use of demesne employees such as gardeners, masons and carpenters.

Larger and absentee landlords sub divided their landholdings and by the end of the 1770's many smaller country estates started to develop around Dublin City. Larch Hill was one of these estates, Guinness's who live in Tibbradden House on Tibbradden lane another. Marley Park, Massey's estate, Edmonstown House, Ballyboden House are other country residences created around this time also.

Most of the owners of these country homes also had city homes in the Georgian Dublin. The country homes offered, cleaner air, clean water and sanitation and a quiet place away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

William Caldbeck is a recorded owner of the Kilmashogue valley area around the 1790's. It is taught that he owned all the land of Larch Hill as well as the land above Larch Hill in the saddle between Kilmashogue and Tibbradden mountain. William Caldbeck also owned Corkagh estate in Clondalkin and a gun power mill in Clondalkin. He was one of the main manufacturers of gunpower in Ireland at this time.



The field layout was created in the early 1800's at a time when other estates in the area were also created. The field structure today has not changed much since its formation.

William Caldbeck is responsible for the layout and field structure of Larch Hill which has remained much as it did in 1800's to today. Around the same time many country estates would have been created around model estates in Ireland and Britain. Capability Brown the renowned landscape architect died in 1783 but his legacy lived on as the privileged classes sought to replicate estate and layout designs.

Landscape of Larch Hill

If you walk the fields of Larch Hill you will quickly notice the each is surrounded by large stone walls and mounds. On the higher levels of the estate in the forest area you will observe large boulders and slabs. The forest landscape best shows what the open fields would have looked like before the formal fields were created. Large rocks would have protruded from the land surrounded by gorse and heather perhaps thinning out towards the stream in the valley. In the middle of the open mountainside lands stood the fallen dolmen. The Boulders and rocks must have petered out towards the present Melvin field as larger stone walls do not exist on the Guinness's land below Larch Hill.

Land surveyors would have first produced detailed maps of the lands and mapped the field for the best use of the land. The forest area has a lot of boulders and was never landscaped (perhaps because it was too difficult an area to work).

A road was first created to access the land. The current road follows the original road layout as it appears on early maps. There is also a suggestion that the road originally ran below the Melvin field but this is not shown on oldest maps. The maps do show that the entrance to the farm yard was where the current toilet block is and another road ran at the back of the training field to meet the current run – so creating a circular route and keeping all farm traffic away from the house.

The current space where the car park and house exist was a created flat space set into the contour of the hill. When first set out this consisted of a walled garden, Georgian country house, farm yard, out buildings and stables. The Georgian Country House had a basement

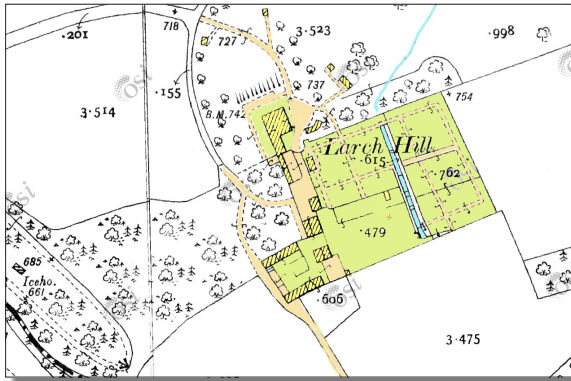


Central Lane in Larch Hill - note large stone walls to the left

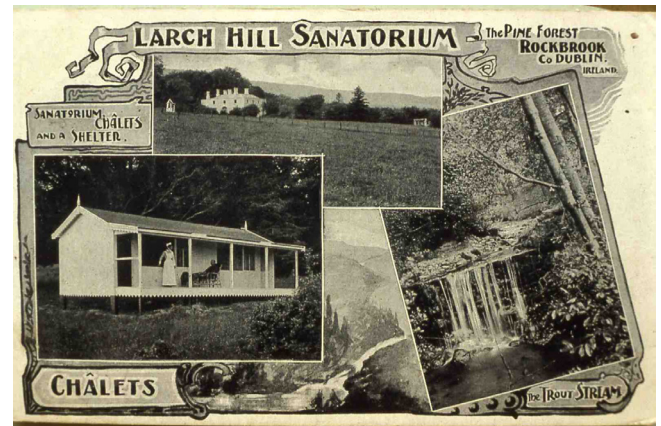
and this was probably built and the ground level entrance filled in and maintained across the farm yard (car park).

Running across the estate is a water stream (now not running). This enters the estate at the back of the Crow's Nest field and follows the contour line of the land so it arrives at the corner of the garden to provide a feature waterway within the garden. The stream was placed inside a stone viaduct, allowed to be uncovered around the dolmen (for aesthetic reasons) and then continued across the 'Haggard' field. The small ditch can be seen above the swimming pool. The stream then continued downland to supply water to animal troughs before re-joining the stream towards Kilmashogue lane.

In every field there exists French drains that run from top to bottom. A French drain is a drainage system that is essentially a rock fill pit that carries water away from the land. Larch Hill has the ability to revive itself very quickly when wet because of this system.

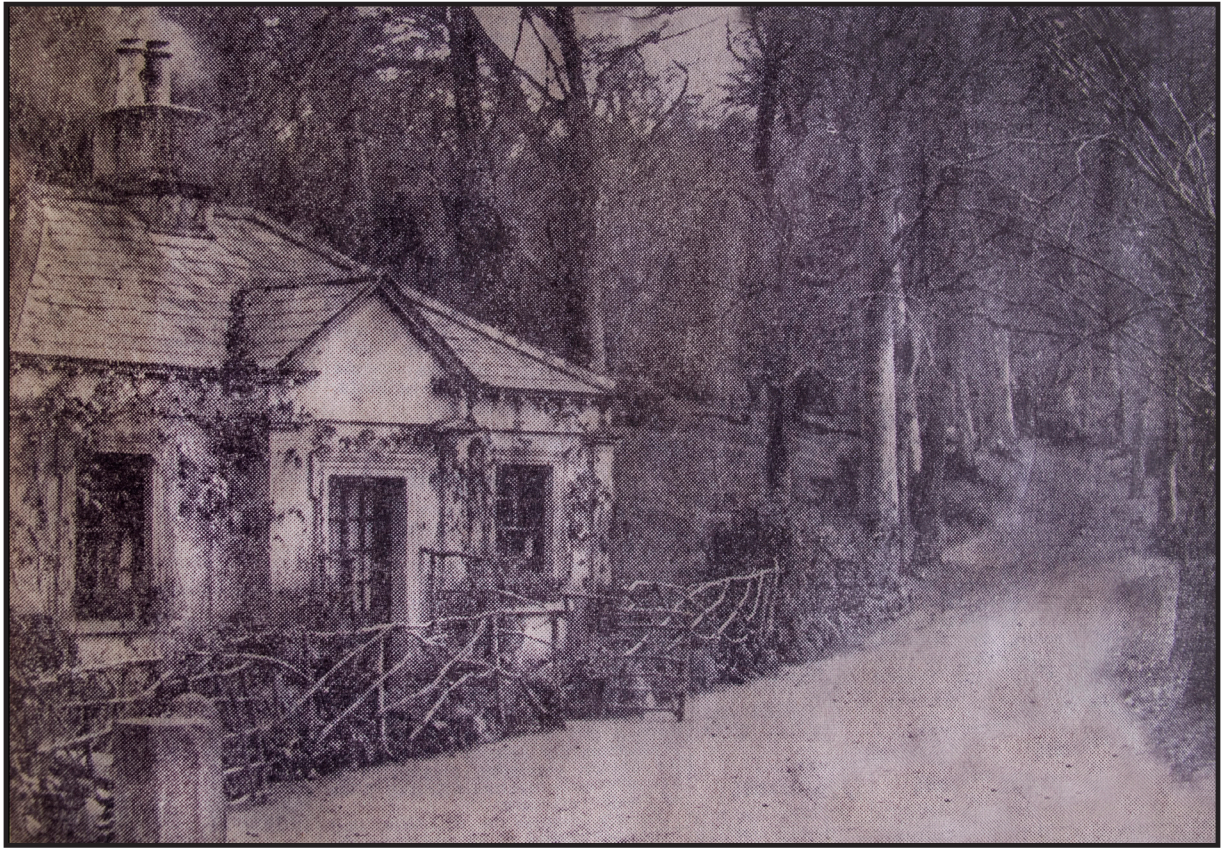


This map shows the layout of Larch Hill on the first ordnance survey maps produced in 1841. You can clearly see the layout of the gardens, farm building and Larch Hill House. Within the gardens you can see a small stream (blue) that ran through the gardens and has a number of ornamental waterfalls. The house was positioned to take advantage of the view of the city below. Within the walled garden it was subdivided by small pathways. The area nearest the house would have provided a garden space with flowers and scrubs and to the rear, across the stream, dedicated to vegetable gardening. This also contained a collection of green houses.





Larch Hill House circa 1944



The Gate Lodge circa 1936

Creating the fields

In order for workmen to create the estate they needed to do so with the help of large draft horses that were used to pull and dig the land. Rocks needed to be pulled and prised from the land and then placed on heavy wooden sledges and pulled to the side of the field. These rocks can be seen today in the constructions of the field walls and mounds. Pulley systems and lifting mechanisms were then be used to position rocks by masons in the wall structures. Some of the best pieces of granite would have been sold off by the land owner for the construction of other properties within the city.

The land drainage system had to be dug and lined and the water viaduct created across a number of fields. The house, farm year and gardens also had to be created by a collection of artisan workers.

Below the house on the banks of the river is an ice house and at the entrance once stood a gate lodge.

The Land Surveyor

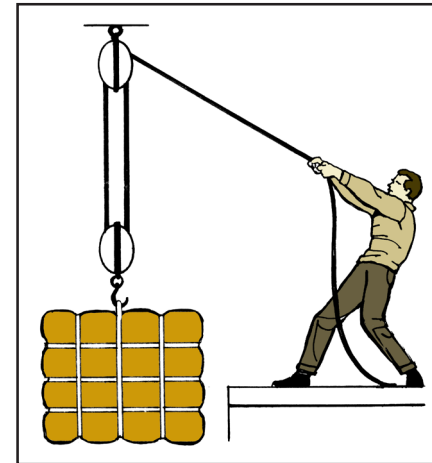
The land surveyor and engineers played a very important part in designing how the estate would be laid out. Problem one would have been the creation of a road to allow travel up the wooded glen. Problem two was to design a field system that was practical and minimised the work that had to be done to create it.

Larch Hill was created from mountainside and within the field structure there needed to be underground drainage systems, wells and river courses. Then there was the construction of Larch Hill House, the farm buildings and gardens.





Modern day draft horses demonstrate their power capability to haul heavy loads. Draft horse were a common feature and used to pull heavy carts on the docks in Dublin, pull barges along the canals and in heavy field and construction work. In the creation of the field structure in Larch Hill a large number of draft horses and their crews would have been employed to do this work.



Once the draft Horse delivered the large rocks from the field each rock then had to be lifted from the sled and placed in wall positions. Pulley systems, tripod pioneering structures and levels would have been used. The master masons employed to do the wall structures would have carefully assessed each stone before directing its positioning in the wall. Similarly, pulleys and levels would be used on the farm to lift hay bales, barrels and building materials.

Larch Hill Timeline

Adam the Forester

Priory of the Holy Trinity Kilmainham

1190 - Walter de Rideleford (a loyal knight of Strongbow who gave him lands from Dublin to Arklow)

1247 - Sir John Harold (Knight)

1641 – Irish Rebellion – lands pass to the Crown

1642 - Sir Adam Loftus of Rathfarnham Castle (through mortgage)

1790 – 1803 Willian Caldbeck (1733 – 1803)

1803 – owned by Caldbeck family

1830's John O'Neill (dies in 1843)

1846 Advertisement in Freemans Journal seeking the let of Larch Hill estate

1850's Courtney Clarke (dies in 1873)

1873 Passes to his daughter and by marriage to Albert J Walsh

1882 Albert Walsh (son) listed in Thom's directory

1901 Mary Arden (widow) (census 1901)

1906 Converted to Sanatorium – Interestingly, William Caldbeck's grandson (same name) a noted architect in Dublin redesigns the house for this purpose. Dies 1920's

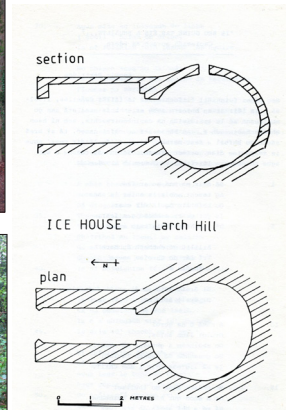
1912 – Robert C. Nicol listed as Medical Superintendent of Sanatorium

1920 –Larch Hill Tea Rooms - James McClean

1926 - John Coffey listed as owner

1935 – owned by bank

1937 – Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland



The Ice house

Most big estates had an ice house (although few remain – the ice house in Larch Hill is a protected building). Fridges did not exist and the ice house was used to store food throughout the year. Ice and snow was collected during the winters and packed with layers of straw within the ice house chamber. The ice house consists of two chambers – the entrance tunnel and the ice chamber or store. The ice chamber is an egg shaped room, with a domed roof. The Larch Hill ice house is unusual in that it has a hole in the domed roof through which food or ice blocks could be lowered. Ice houses are usually built into the surround hill and covered by earth to provide insulation and consistent temperature.

SCOUTS ARRIVE - FIRST CAMPS

In 1937 Prof. J.B. Whelehan, the then Chief Scout, together with the National Executive Board of CBSI (later Scouting Ireland), decided to purchase a campsite. Many venues were suggested, but eventually two options remained. One was Santry Demesne, part of which is now the Morton Stadium for athletics, near Dublin Airport, and the other was Larch Hill. The decision fell to the casting vote of Prof. Whelehan, whose foresight saw that the Santry site would become part of the city far more quickly than its south-side counterpart.

The funding for the purchase of Larch Hill came from the 3,000 pounds profit the association made from non-Scout fares on the 1934 pilgrimage to Rome, and a 500 pound donation from the Knights of Saint Columbanus.

Larch Hill officially opened as a campsite on June 4, 1938. An outdoor mass was celebrated in the garden area by Fr. Leo Mc Cann C.C., and was attended by over 400 Scouts from the Dublin Diocese (which received considerable support around this time from John Charles McQuaid) who were participating in the inaugural camp over the Whit weekend.



hard to beat for national scenic beauty. A bit to the North are the ruins of the Hell Fire Club, and below in Rathfarnham are the lanes where Emmet walked and later Pearse taught.

The boys will remain in camp until to-night.

LARCH HILL INAUGURATED AS NATIONAL CAMP SITE.

Lallyard?

LARCH HILL is open! At 5.30 on Saturday the Chief Scout pulled the lanyard and the flag of the Organisation broke. So was inaugurated the first camp held at the National Camp site—that of the Dublin Diocesan Council.

From early afternoon a solid line of Scouts had streamed on foot and bicycle through Dublin, bound for the Camp, and over 500 Scouts gathered around the Chief Scout for the official opening.

In an inspiring address Professor Whelehan stressed that the National Camp should be the gathering place of the Scouts of the country—a place which was their very own, where all could meet bound together in the ties of Catholic Scouting.

Tents of all shapes, sizes, and quality



quickly sprang up, and before tea the miniature village of the Troops of the Diocese was complete. Each Troop camped as a separate unit, with its sleeping quarters, kitchen and wood pile neatly roped off.

GREAT PRIVILEGE.

At the open-air Mass, Rev. L. McCann, C.C., chaplain to the Archbishop's Own Troop and Director of Publicity, was the celebrant, and an inspiring scene was witnessed when almost all those taking part in the camp knelt to receive Holy Communion.

Fr. McCann, at the close of the Mass, drew a parallel between the Mass and that which was celebrated in the mountains during the days of the Penal Laws when the redcoats were hunting the faithful, and warned them that to-day they had a common enemy whose colour was also red. Ireland's greatest help and protection, he said, had been the Mass, and it would provide the same sure safeguard to-day as it had long ago.

THE CAMPFIRE.

As he declared the Campfire open, Fr. McCann stated that it represented the spirit of the Fourth Law—"A Scout . . . is a brother to every other Scout." The opening was followed with the yell of the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland and many Gaelic and other popular Scouting choruses.

The Chief Scout, at the close asked each Scout present to do his good turn to the Organisation by bringing into the movement during the coming year another boy. The Secretary of the Camp Committee, Mr. P. T. Hughes, thanked the Chief Scout for his great interest in the Camp and for the encouragement he had given the officers in charge.

Among those who visited the camp were: Rt. Hon. Alfred Byrne, Lord Mayor of Dublin; Rev. J. MacArdle, P.P., Fairview; V. Rev. Canon MacNevin, P.P., Rathfarnham; Rev. P. Donohue, C.C., Rathfarnham; Rev. W. Fitzpatrick, D.D., C.C.; Rev. P. Grant, C.C.; Mr. K. C. Shelley, vice-chairman, Dublin Diocesan Council; Mr. O. Murphy, treasurer, Dublin Diocesan Council; Mr. Seamus O'Huiginn, Director of Camping; Mr. Peadar O'Casale, Director of Education; Mr. E. Cullen, P.C., editor, "Catholic Scout."

The committee in charge of the camp was composed of: Commissioner Thomas McHugh, chairman; Diocesan Commr. W. Kinsella, camp chief; S/M P. T. Hughes, sec.; District Commr. John F. O'Connell, S/M H. F. O'Hanlon, and Mr. P. L. Fitzmaurice.

Press coverage at the time of the opening of Larch Hill

500 SCOUTS IN CAMP AT FOOT OF DUBLIN HILLS

AT Larch Hill, Dublin, on Saturday, 500 Scouts of the Dublin Diocese (Gasoga Catoilicidhe na h-Eireann), pitched their tents for their second annual bivouac.

Prof. J. B. Whelehan, Chief Scout, stayed under canvas with the sluaighthe.

Yesterday open-air Mass was celebrated by Rev. L. McCann, C.C., Chaplain to the Archbishop's Own Troop.

The committee in charge included—Commissioner T. MacHugh, Commdt. W. Kinsella, Messrs. H. F. O'Hanlon, J. F. O'Connell, P. F. FitzMaurice, P. T. Hughes.

Long shadows from the blazing camp fire stretched out to the foot of the Dublin Hills when I came upon the boys last night, writes an IRISH PRESS special representative.

In a little world of their own, cut off by mountain, stream and gully from the crowded places, these Dublin lads are having a royal time in their "city" of sixty odd tents.

It is surprising how many songs, national, religious and jazz, boys of between ten and fifteen years know. They must have chorosed hundreds of songs last night.

Larch Hill is the scouts' national camp site and it provides an ideal setting for such a purpose. Set deep in a densely wooded estate, with mountains towering in the background and the silver bay of Dublin stretching out in front, the camp environs would be hard to beat for national scenic beauty. A bit to the North are the ruins of the Hell Fire Club, and below in Rathfarnham are the lanes where Emmet walked and later Pearse taught.

The boys will remain in camp until to-night.

Scouts Enjoy Week-End Camp



Scouts of the 8th Dublin Troop (St. Paul's, Arran Quay) arriving at their encampment at Larch Hill, in the Dublin Hills, after their long trek from the city. From left—Section Patrol Leader, C. Sower; Scouts P. Mooney, O. Brady, J. Geoghegan, L. Doyle, E. Hodson and J. Sower.



Open-air Mass in the Dublin Mountains for the first time since the Penal Days—Boy Scouts of Ireland (Dublin Archdiocese) receiving Holy Communion on Sunday at the camp at Larch Hill from Rev. L. McCann, C.C., Chaplain to the Archbishop's Own Troop.



Scout Troops arrived by local bus to Rockbrook and by open backed trucks



Scouts playing games during the opening camp



This picture shows some of the farm outbuildings. Note the gate in the picture - the gate is still standing as is the garden wall. Behind the wall shown was a small workshop yard and some storage sheds. Today, this space is parking space at the side of the Meitheal Lodge.

Larch Hill House 1938 - it was in bad need of repair as nobody had lived in the house for some time.



Camping Fields

Taylor's Field is so named after Mr John Taylor who was the first warden on the Hill from the late 1940s to mid-1950s.

Potato Field is named for the ridges of long forgotten cultivation that are still visible, sometimes called "lazy beds".

Melvin Field is so called to commemorate the Melvin trophy which was the national Scoutcraft competition of the association (now the Phoenix Patrol Challenge). This trophy was presented to the association during the CBSI pilgrimage to Rome during the Holy Year of 1934 by Sir Martin Melvin. The profits made from this journey are believed to have provided the capital that enabled the purchase of Larch Hill, under the then Chief Scout Prof. JB Whelehan.

The Training Field was so called because it was the site of many of the early leader training (Wood Badge) courses. The first Training Course took place on September 8, 1956.

The Haggard Field is an old Irish name for a small enclosure that is used to store fodder for animals. Like many small fields in parts of Ireland, it's surrounded by stone walls

The Upper and Lower Dolmen Field are named after the ruined megalithic tomb that can still be seen in the field.

The Triangle field is so called since it is triangular.



Patrol Camping in the Cub Field - note the garden wall in the background

The Cub Field is a large flat field which makes it ideal for the younger Scouts and Cub-Scouts.

The Kelly's Field named after Kelly's Glen.

The Crow's nest is so named because it is surrounded by tall trees which provide an ideal nesting ground for crows.



Ex Army Bell tents were the most popular tents used by Scouts at the time.

View looking toward the river valley - note the absence of trees on the mountains in the background



A press picture taken in the Cub Field looking towards Tibbradden Mountain - note the absence of trees on the mountain side





This picture shows the Scoutmasters who attended the first camp in Larch Hill in 1938

FLASHBACK

In our last issue we reprinted the report of the opening of Larch Hill Estate on June 4, 1938 which appeared in the magazine "The Catholic Scout". Unfortunately that was all that was published concerning the event and we were unable to supply any more information.

Now Mr. W. T. Kinsella, formerly Dublin Diocesan Commissioner and at present a member of the National Executive Board, has provided us with a picture of the leaders attending that camp.

Back row, l. to r. – Unidentified, unidentified, H. O'Hanlon (1 Dublin), E. McKay (35 Dublin), ? Tisdall (1 Dublin), J. Doran (52 Dublin), Unidentified, J. Donnelly (19 Dublin), Unidentified, J. Coffey (4 Dublin), J. Shortall (72 Dublin).

Middle Row, l. to r. – Mr. Keegan (66 Dublin), J. Keane (Headquarters), E. Meaney (DC), P. T. Hughes (26 Dublin), W. T. Kinsella, T. McHugh (Executive Board), J. F. O'Connell (19 Dublin), J. O'Neill (61 Dublin & DC), F. Thackaberry (20 Dublin).

Front, l. to r. – M. Redmond (37 Dublin), K. King (21 Dublin), M. Harford (2 Dublin), Unidentified, J. J. O'Brien (21 Dublin).

The late P. T. Hughes later became National Secretary, while the late Tom McHugh was National Treasurer and a National Trustee. If anyone can fill in the gaps in the caption, we'd love to hear from them.



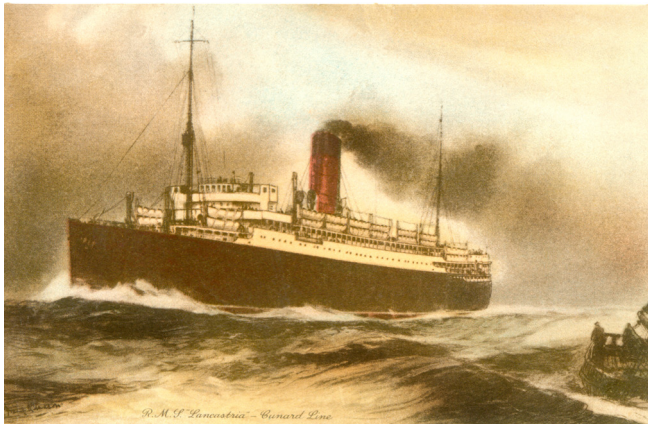


Patrol Leader Paudge O'Broin (tallest Scout) from the 45th Dublin (Mount Argus) Scout Troop took most of the photographs shown on this panel. The photographs displayed here are the only known picture of the first camp in Larch Hill. Paudge when on to be a life member of Scouting Ireland and constantly had a camera in his hands recording things as they happened. This picture was taken on the steps of Larch Hill House and at the gateway to the estate yards.

To Rome in '34

In 1934 the luxury liner *Lancastria* was chartered to convey a huge Scout pilgrimage to Rome. It was led by his Eminence Cardinal McRory, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All-Ireland. The pilgrims included William T. Cosgrave T.D., who had been President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State for ten years and was a personal friend of our Chief Scout, Prof. Whelehan.

Sir Martin Melvin, then proprietor of *The Universe* Catholic newspaper, took a great interest in this pilgrimage, which he accompanied. He had decided to present a costly trophy to C.B.S.I. for inter-troop competition and had commissioned the leading silversmith of the time Miss Mia Cranwell to produce it. In a ceremony on board the *Lancastria* on the way to Rome he formally presented the handsome silver trophy to the Chief Scout. It has played a big part in the annual programme of events since that time.



Lancastria

With the outbreak of the [Second World War](#) the Lancastria carried cargo, and was then requisitioned in April 1940 as a [troopship](#), becoming HMT *Lancastria*.

She was sunk on 17 June 1940 during [Operation Ariel](#). Having received an emergency order to evacuate British nationals and troops in excess of its capacity of 1,300 passengers, modern estimates range between 3,000 and 5,800 fatalities—the largest single-ship loss of life in British maritime history.

The sinking of HMT *Lancastria* claimed more lives than the combined losses of the [RMS Titanic](#) (1,517 passengers and crew) and [RMS Lusitania](#) (1,198 passengers)

Very few monuments exist to commemorate the event and the loss of so many lives so in it was decided to erect a monument in Larch Hill on the 21 August 2004 - the anchor outside national Office, to remember the importance of the Lancastria to the purchase and establishment of Larch Hill as our national campsite and to have a permanent remembrance for those who had lost their lives.

Each year a delegation from the Lancastria Association (UK) continue to cherish the memory of those lost by placing a poppy wreath at the remembrance location.



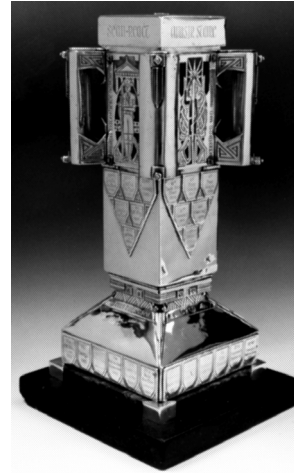
The Melvin Trophy

In 1949 National Commissioner Peadar Cassidy and some others determined to get the long-promised All-Ireland inter-diocesan troop competition (one patrol) for the Melvin Trophy under way. The first contest was held in Larch Hill in August of that year. The result was not announced at the end of the event, but several weeks later. And on the following Easter Sunday (1950) Sir Martin Melvin came from Manchester to present the trophy to the 1949 winners, 26th Dublin (Iona Road), at a large gathering in the Marlborough Street school grounds. The attendance included the then Taoiseach, Mr. John A. Costello.

In 1950 the Melvin competition was held in the grounds of Wilton S.M.A. College, Cork. Six patrols competed. Once again the winners were 26th Dublin and the trophy was presented by Dean Scannell of Cork to S/M J. Henry at the close of the week-end event. Until the 1970.s the 1950 event was the only Melvin competition held outside Larch Hill. In 1955 a total of three patrols competed for the Melvin; in 1956 two. We have come a long way, since then!



Sir Martin Melvin



The Melvin Trophy - this is no longer used and can be seen in National Office display cabinets



Scout Dick Heaslip of the 1st Kerry sending a semaphore message during the first Melvin Trophy in 1949.



Winners of first Melvin Trophy 1949: 26th Dublin Iona Road



Michael O'Driscoll entertains the patrols as they await the final results at a Melvin in the late 60's

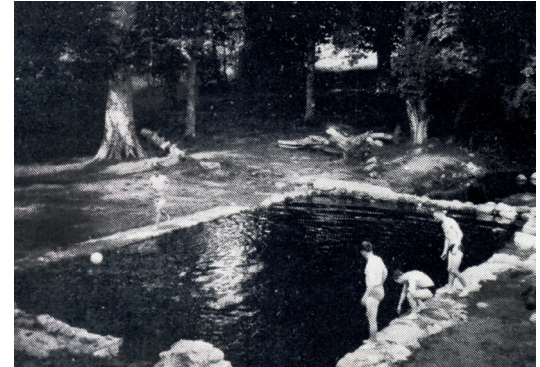


Uniform inspection - Melvin Trophy 1960's



The presentation of the Melvin Trophy has traditionally taken place on the mass lawn in Larch Hill

The Swimming Pool



The pool that exists on the river Glin, which is a tributary of the Little Dargle, was built under the directorship of Paudge O'Broin during the 1960's, and was a much better and more enduring effort than previous damming methods. Today, damage incurred during Hurricane Charlie makes the pool less watertight and large deposits of sand and gravel collect within the pool reducing its effectiveness as a swimming pool. However it is always a perfect place for programme fun. The river Glin comes from the valley between Kilmashogue and Tibbradden Mountains, this valley is known as Kelly's Glen. During the 1800's Dubliners would travel to the glen to sample the waters, reputed to have a strong mineral content, at a spa which was situated in the upper part of the glen.

Training courses



in 1956 the first national adult training course was run in Larch Hill and leader training became a big feature of activity both in the 'old house ' and on the Training field. A key feature of training course was scout skills training and every weekend leaders from all parts of the country, as well as Scouts could be observed in building pioneering structures, tent pitching , fire lighting and cooking.

As our membership increased, particularly in the late 1960's it placed increased pressure on providing a modern training facility which lead to the decision to build the 'new' training centre which was opened in June 1972.

Training courses flowed the methods used in Gilwell Park and building pioneering structures based on designs in the Gilwell handbooks was a popular team building activity. The river valley was a key location as was the many ditch locations around the estate.



Larch Hill Campfires



Campfires on a scout camp are a regular evening feature. With the increase usage of Larch Hill a central space was required to hold large campfires. The space was modelled on Gilwell Park, in London and created a small amphitheatre with a central fire place and stage area and a tiered sitting space.

Camp fires were usually arranged with the warden staff who invited the troops camping on the estate to a site campfire on Saturday evening. As a number of events and training courses and troop camps combined in using the estate members of the training team assumed roles as campfire chiefs and introduced new and novel songs to compliment traditional ballads and chants.

At large events and popular weekends such as Whit weekend there could be upwards of 500 people attending the campfire.

An official Larch Hill campfire song book was also produced. This helped in clarifying the correct words for a song and also expand the repertoire of suitable Scout songs for troop camp fires.

National Events



Larch Hill has always been a key venue for National events. In the 1980's events moved from camp based competition to Cub Days, Father and Son camps, Beaver days. Ventact was a popular event for Scouts and Guides. This created increased numbers using the estate.

The traditional Melvin Trophy and Diocesan competitions continued. Later these conferred to Regional and County Camps and competitions.

As the popularity of Larch Hill increased it also attracted increased International events and camping visitors.

National events continue to use Larch Hill as a venue today. The girl Guides also use the facility regularly and increasingly school groups use Larch Hill as an outdoor educational space during week days.



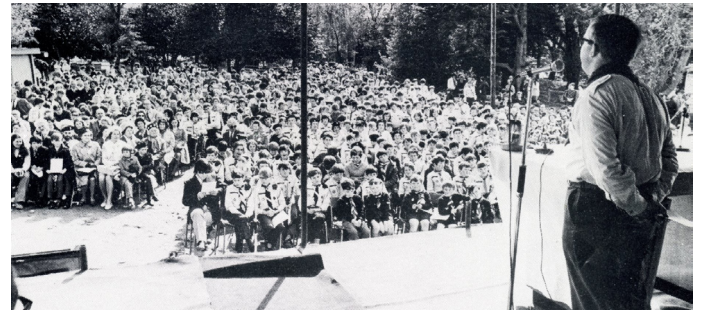
New training centre



The 'New Larch Hill House' which was to be the new training and camping headquarters was officially opened June 1972



President de Valera open the new Larch Hill House, flanked by Stephen Spain National Commissioner and Paudge O'Broin, Director of Larch Hill



Stephen Spain, National Commissioner, addresses the large assembly at the opening ceremony.



The kitchen



The dining room



First aid room

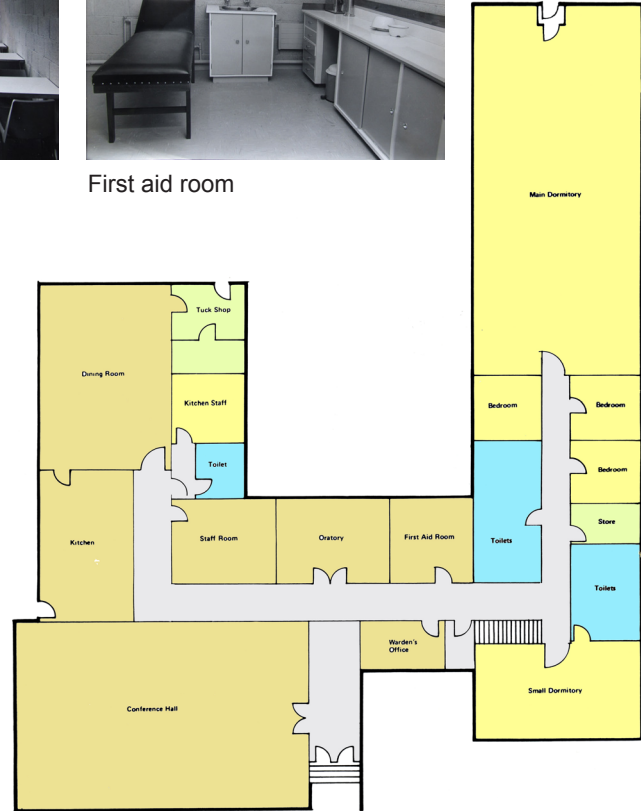


Service hatch



The main dorm

Conference room

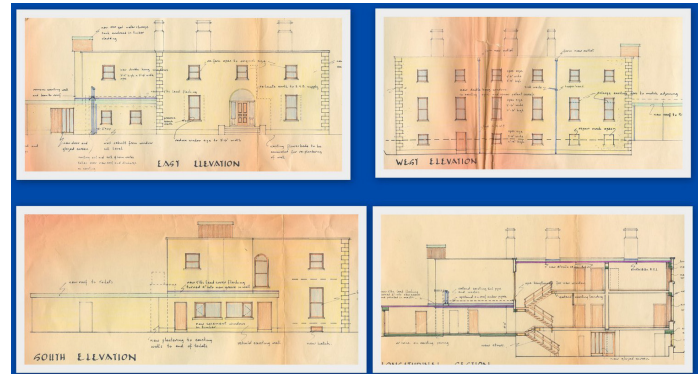


The House 1970's



Due to lack of investment funds with the association it was not possible to extensively renovate Larch Hill House since it came into our possession in 1934. Minor repairs had been undertaken over the years but major building work was required. You can see from the picture how the rendering to the front of the house is falling off. Windows needed repair and structural cracks also needed attention as did roofing and guttering and drainage. The inside of the house also needed repair. In the late 1960's a proper architectural survey was undertaken and plans produced for remodelling and repair. After much discussion on the National Executive Board it was decided to build a new training centre rather than repair the old estate house. When the new centre was built and in use the 'old house' was demolished in 1974.

A photograph of a Melvin presentation ceremony that was held inside the house. (Very few pictures exist showing the inside house).



Larch Hill House proposed renovations late 1960's



Note the granite steps and step posts - these items were salvaged from the demolition and used to create the altar and mass area.



The Gate lodge



The Gate Lodge circa 1936

The gate lodge was always a key feature of large estates and it provided security of entrance. Usually, an estate worker was housed in the lodge. The Gate Lodge was a small building consisting of a basement, two rooms, a hallway and a small toilet. There was no running water - that was obtained from the river. The picture above was taken in 1936 and you can see that someone is living in the lodge. In later years the lodge was used as the control point to the estate at weekends. All entering had to have a camp pass and be lodged into the estate. Like all old building it fell into disrepair from time to time and many work parties



The Gate Lodge under repair in 1970's

engaged in repair work. It was a popular location for Ventures to stay at weekends if taking part in work parties and service work on the campsite. It was demolished at the same time as the 'old house' as it was becoming a health and security risk and in need of expensive renovation.



Famous picture of the entrance to Larch Hill taken in the snow (circa 1965) by Fr. Jerry Kavanagh. The picture was used for many years as the image on the front of the CBSI Christmas Card. (the original image is now in Camp Office)

Artistic impression of how the present day entrance would look if the lodge still existed. Note the trees and bridge wall.



The 47 bus



47 rounding the corner at Rathmines



© Patrick Losty.

Over the years the key mode of transport to get to Larch Hill was the local bus service, the 47 route. The bus terminus was in Hawkins Street beside the New Metro Cinema. A single decker operated most of the time but at weekends the double decker was employed to carry the hundreds of Scouts that waited to start their adventure in Hawkins Street. Whole troops of Scouts with rucksacks were a common feature crossing O'Connell bridge and surrounding streets.



Two key local landmarks - The bus stop that was positioned at the top of the lane on Edmonstown road.
'An Siopa Beag' which was further down the Edmonstown Road (replaced with a new two story house) and a key location on the route to Rathfarnham if you missed the bus.

Pine Lodge (1990)



The Pine Lodge and the Meitheal Lodge were 'temporary prefab buildings' donated to Larch Hill from Trinity College via John Graham - Trinity College building manager and Director of Larch Hill. The Pine Lodge provided rooms for training and some indoor accommodation for Cub Packs. These pictures were taken from the large pine opposite National Office. The small corrugated roofed building between the Pine Lodge and the Meitheal Lodge was the old toilet block and boiler house - now the green lawn to the side of national office.

National Office

Throughout our history there have been many National Office locations. As the association has grown in membership it has been necessary to move to new locations to expand the services provided. Scouting Ireland CSI secured grant funding in 2000 to enable the building of a permanent National Office in Larch Hill. With the formation of Scouting Ireland this office is now our official national administration and support centre.





The Story Continues...



Larch Hill continues to provide outdoor experiences to young people.
A new adventure begins every weekend - there will always be young
Scouts arriving for their first night under canvas and Larch Hill will feature
in the happy Scouting memories of all who have camped there.