



CONAN KENNEDY'S

# DALKEY

COUNTY DUBLIN

MORRIGAN BOOK  
COMPANY

*a little bit of* **HISTORY**

*& a little bit of* **GUIDE**

*+ interesting* **OLD PHOTOS**

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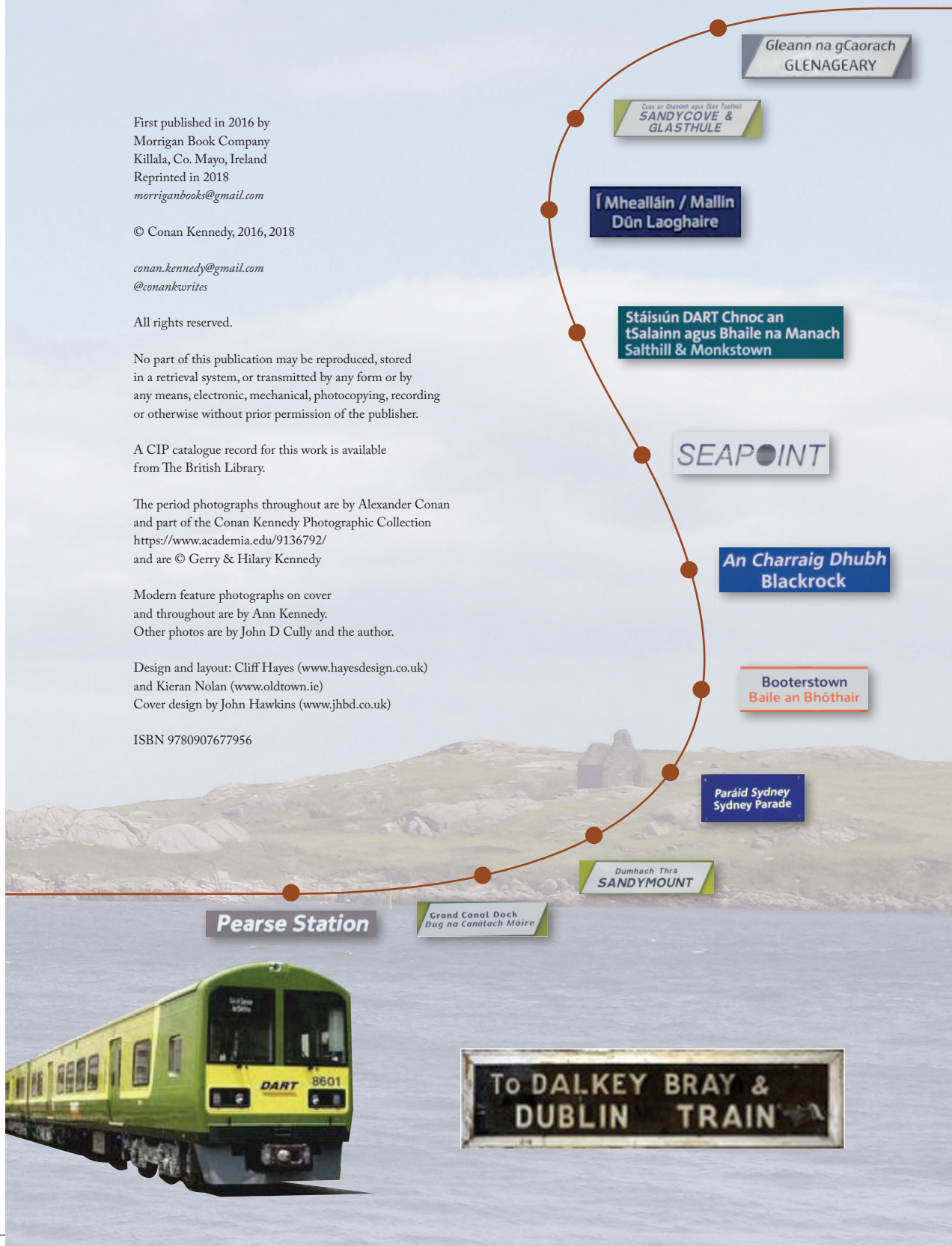
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Dalkey  
Deilginis

Killiney  
Cill Iníon Léinín

Seanchill  
SHANKILL

Bray / Daly  
Bré / I Dhálaigh

AMAN MORE ERUDITE THAN I HAS WRITTEN...

*Dalkey about 1100 was a small Hiberno-Norse settlement clustered round an early church in a hilly, rocky area near the sea. It belonged to the archbishop of Dublin and in the Anglo-Norman organisation it became part of his manor of Shankill. The economy was based on agriculture and fishing. The defensive orientation was towards the mountains.*

So wrote Charles V. Smith in his book *Dalkey – Society and Economy in a Small Mediaeval Irish Town*. An academic book, scholarly. But be warned... here in your hand now you hold nothing like that at all, at all. This is merely (the cover does not lie) a little bit of history, a little bit of guide. Plus of course some photographs, never seen before.

The story of these photos?

My family have been associated with Dalkey for going on two hundred years. *The National Library of Ireland* has classified our clan as 'Upper Middle Class', and who am I to argue? Be that as it may, they were prominent residents. Grandfather Alex Conan was a Justice of the Peace, his brother Walter was Chairman of the Urban Council. We had things pretty much sewn up. Alex built one of the great Dalkey mansions, *Monte Alverno* in Sorrento Road. A wealthy merchant tailor, he was a cousin of Arthur Conan Doyle but, more relevant here, his hobby was photography. More than a hobby, we're not talking selfies. Alex was in fact the Hon. Secretary of the early *Photographic Society of Ireland*, a grouping of Victorian/Edwardian enthusiasts.

Many of his photos came my way in due course (unlike that Dalkey mansion) and some I have used here in these pages. They are reproduced as found, whether from tattered print or glass plate negative. So yes, there is a chunk missing from the corner of the one overleaf, and yes the one on the page after that is a tad crumpled.

But what can one do about the crumple of time?

Write on, I reckon, read on.

Walk on.

Cnoc Chill Iníon Léinín  
KILLINEY HILL

Cuan Bhlóic  
BULLOCK HARBOUR

Caisleán Dheilginse & Ionad Oidhreacht  
DALKEY CASTLE &  
HERITAGE CENTRE

Cuan na Coille Móire  
COLLIEMORE HARBOUR

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## CASTLE STREET

**A**LWAYS OPEN TO CORRECTION, but this appears to be the oldest extant photograph of Dalkey Town. It was taken by Alex Conan in the 1880s, the glass plate negative not unearthed until 2010. A view of Dalkey looking down Castle Street, East to West, how does one date an image like this?

Carefully.

It was definitely taken pre-1896, a year when the first electric trams ran to Dalkey. No wires or standards to be seen. But, on same track, so to speak, it was also taken after March 1879, that being the date when the horse trams reached the town. Yes, those are the faintest hint of tram tracks to be seen in the photo, and those two men are surely sweeping up horse droppings.

More evidence. It was pre-1894, because one of the buildings on the right was replaced in that year, today we see the date high up on this newer gable. Confirmation... the buildings to be seen here on the left are definitely not the Library, built in 1901, nor the Dispensary, which came along in 1909.

Narrowing things down. The 'fresh' look of Calcutt's Shop on the right, combined with a knowledge of the photographer's work and movements, that puts the photo at early 1880s. Records show that James Calcutt was in residence/business at 26–27 Castle Street from around then, his widow later popping up in the 1901 Census.

A little bit of genealogy...

The widow's name was Elizabeth, née Sawyer, and she had been born in the 1840s in Queen's County. By 1911 she was living in Sandymount Avenue. We can be pretty sure she was related to the Charles Calcutt who, around that time, was in the hardware business in Blackrock's Carysfort Avenue. And so the story moves along. In 2009 a Margaret Calcutt died in a Blackrock nursing home aged 98. A pity, that, a writer and researcher of old photographs may very well have knocked on her door with a copy of this photo. But he hadn't found it yet!



Another glance. The lenses of Victorian cameras play their tricks, but what else is new, all cameras do, we live in days of Instagram. Serious foreshortening confuses perspective in this old photo but, unseen, six houses up from the right hand corner there was a lane called *Porter's Road*. This took its name from a local landowning family. It is now *St Patrick's Road*, with elegant street sign to prove.



On the corner up there at 21 Castle Street was the coal merchant business of one David Beggs. A little bit more genealogy might tell us if there is a connection here to the trade union leader of modern times, but life is probably too short for investigating the origins of trade union leaders. Not in detail anyway. What is certain is the fact that this Victorian Beggs family have a smashing great burial plot and monument magnificent in *Deans Grange Cemetery*. King Coal!

In the late 19th century there was a large coal yard on Bullock Pier (now *Western Marine* premises). Coal was imported directly into Bullock Harbour from Wales. (We'll be going down there later in the book... to Bullock, not Wales). This was operated by Downeys, and another well-known merchant, W.O. McCormick, was also involved in Dalkey. Where the Beggs business fell in all this is unclear, but what is clear is that these old Dalkey/Dún Laoghaire coal importing companies, amalgamating, developed over the years into one of Ireland's major chains of petrol stations.

Moving on, below on right we see a newer view of Castle Street. It has a familiarity, both to our own times and the days of the previous photograph. The Calcutt's premises are still there, albeit in very poor repair and (the poster in the window tells us) offered for rent by Adams, then of Merriion Row, now of St Stephen's Green in Dublin. It must have been taken post-1909, the Dispensary on the left having been built in that year. It is likely to be 1910, the building (formerly Calcutt's premises) on the right side being demolished around then for the new Maxwell's Chemists which arrived there at 27 Castle Street in 1911. The 'Tearooms' sign on the adjoining gable demonstrates a certain passage of time, and why wouldn't it, that building having gone up in 1894.

That tram in the centre is electric, and reasonably 'modern' in appearance. It stands at the terminus, the end of the line which started at Nelson Pillar in Dublin. Nelson Pillar? Think *Spire*. Here in Dalkey there was a tramways office at the laneway just beside that tram, and up the laneway was a public lavatories used by the crews. That facility was built on top of the ancient well of Dalkey, *St Begnet's Well*. A stroll up there these days reveals (below) no ancient Holy Well nor mark thereof, merely a modern (badly built) stone wall with mysterious empty recess.

A sad fact which goes to show ... something.

The last electric tram ran between Dalkey and Dublin in 1949. The route to the city was along the present main route (Ulverton Road) to Dún Laoghaire, through Monkstown and Blackrock beyond. Out on the Merriion Road there were laybys where trams could pull in to let non-stop express trams hurtle by. It was a very sophisticated system, yet torn up and dismantled willy-nilly. Another sad fact that goes to show ... something else.



Few signs of the tramway now remain. Though here and there along the route some distinctive iron lamp standards survive, these originally held the overhead wires. Some elegant cast iron bases of others have been used as bollards up on Dalkey Avenue. Here in Dalkey Town there are the well-preserved tram stables and depot. Inside the gates the tracks on their distinctive granite tram "setts" can still be seen. The observant will notice the guage of the tracks, 5'3", being the same wide gauge as Irish railways. (At night the routes were sometimes used for hauling actual railway

trucks carrying sand and stone and suchlike bulk materials.) Dublin's modern LUAS trams or light railway (or streetcars, as my Canadian brother-in-law calls them) have the slimmer gauge of 4'8½". The modern route is currently 28 miles, but slowly extending. However, that includes long routes out into former countryside, whilst the earlier system covered over 60 miles within a much smaller city.



Behind the Tramyard (now a hipster-friendly little shopping enclave) there are some streets of brick cottages which were originally built by the tram company for their workers. Formerly know as Tram Cottages, the name has been gentrified into Carysfort Villas. Up to comparatively recent years many of the occupants here were descendants of tram drivers and conductors. These seem largely to have been replaced by people working in IT and media. Though of course it sometimes seems much of modern Dalkey is inhabited by IT and media folks. And Bono.

