

Moreen House

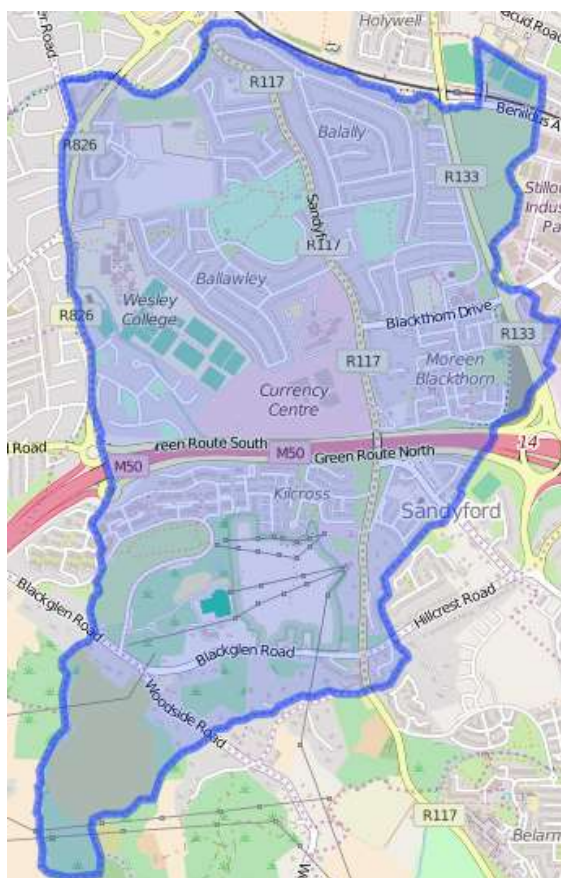
From The Pale to Markoviecz to the Central Bank

Michael van Turnhout

This is the story of Moreen, a now disappeared property in Balally. In this one property we find a rich history stretching back to the times of the Pale. We find famous Irish names of the struggle for freedom such as O'Donnell and Markoviecz. And now it is the location of a symbol of the strong, modern and independent state of Ireland: the Central Bank.

Townland

Moreen was situated in the townland of Balally. This townland is located immediately south of Dundrum and stretches all the way down to Sandyford Village (with the boundary just south of Sandyford House) and Blackglen Road (with the boundary between this road and Slate Cabin Lane). The southern boundary is in fact following the small Glaslower stream, which comes down the mountain alongside Slate Cabin Lane, curves behind the old Lamb Doyle house opposite the shops at Lamb's Cross, and flows through Sandyford. It is joined by the culverted Kilmacud stream and flows down to Blackrock where it is now known as Carysfort-Maretimo Stream. The eastern boundary is more or less the Drummartin Link road and the western boundary the Ballinteer Road.



Map 1: Present Day Balally Townland, Source: <http://www.townlands.ie/dublin/rathdown/taney/balally/>

Map provided by OpenStreetMap

The Pale, Castle and Church

Presumably having become Crown lands sometime after the 1169 invasion of Strongbow, the lands of Balally were given in 1279 to John de Walhopei, an old and valued servant of the Crown, and twenty years later were in the occupation of John Othyr. After having been, about 1334, in the possession of Maurice Howell and Gregory Taunton, the lands of Balally came into the possession of the Walshes of Carrickmines.

In 1371 Carrickmines was raided in strength by the Byrnes, and the Archbishop of Dublin, as a tenant in chief, had to send armed assistance for the relief of the place. It is not wholly certain whether the Walshs were there then or were placed there after the raid. Either way, from then on the defence of Dublin in that district to the south, for two centuries, would be in the hands of the Walshs, their castles of Carrickmines, Kilternan and Kilgobbin commanding the mountain passes in that direction.

Like other lands bordering on the mountains, those of Balally suffered much from raids. As a matter of fact, the Pale ended here, with the boundary ditch said by some to run through what is now Fitzsimons Wood. In a grant from the Crown in 1407 to William Walsh it was conditioned that he should build a small castle. Although a considerable time elapsed before its completion, this castle was ultimately erected, and became the residence of a branch of the Walsh family.

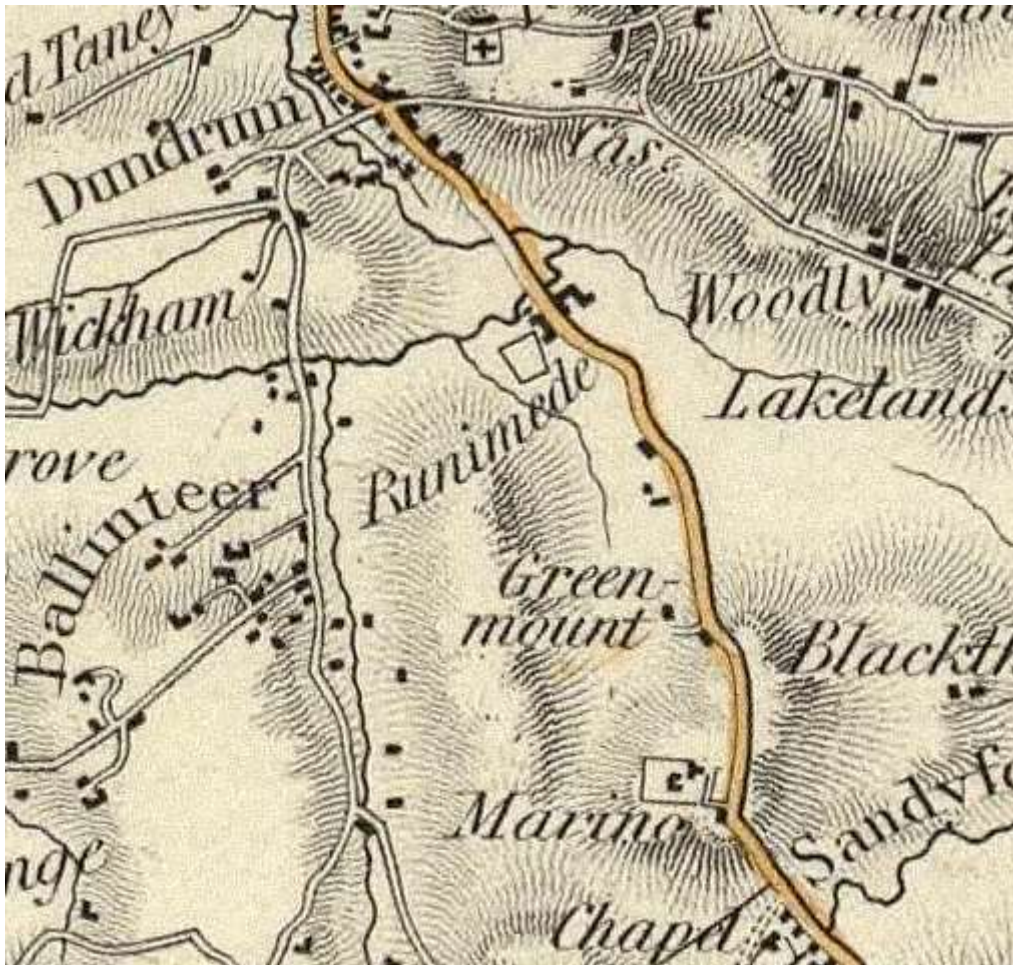
In 1641 James Walsh, as adherent of the Roman Catholic Church, was seized of the castle and lands. The lands must however have been restored to him, because after James Walsh's death in 1646 his son, Henry, disposed of Balally to Mr. John Borr, of Dublin, but during the Commonwealth, when there was a population of seven persons of English and eleven of Irish descent inhabiting eight houses, the Parliament seized upon the lands and leased them to Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Dobson, of Dundrum. After the Restoration Mr. John Borr was successful in establishing his right to the lands before the Commissioners of Settlement and subsequently occupied the castle, which contained three hearths, as his country residence. He was the son of Christian Borr, a naturalised German, who, having come to Ireland early in the seventeenth century, had amassed a large fortune as a merchant.

In the Civil Survey of 1654 James Walsh (deceased) was mentioned as the owner of lands and thatched castle in Balally. There is also mention of the walls of an old church on his lands. There are no remains of the castle nowadays, and even its location is unknown. However, the old church (probably going back to pre-Norman times and with a boundary ditch) was on the lands now owned by the Central Bank (previously Moreen lands). It might thus be assumed that the castle was located not too far away. It must however have fallen in disuse and disappeared in the 18th Century, making way for the next phase of development of the area.

McKay family, builders of Moreen

William McKay was a successful man. In 1792 he had offices on 43 Ship Street and was Deputy Secretary of the Court of Chancery in 1792. In 1814 his main residence was 14 St. Stephen's Green. His success must have started a lot earlier though, as in 1760 part he bought parts of the lands of Balally with plans to build a large country mansion, with the name of Moreen. This ambition was not unusual among the aspiring classes. For example, Runnymede, which was situated on Sandyford Road a bit further north, was one of the first houses built on the western side of the road just out of Dundrum. It was built shortly after the beginning of the 1700's and was in the possession of a John Mayne Esq. The Mayne's were a legal family, Mr. Mayne himself was a judge.

Although the planned mansion never materialised, a country retreat was eventually build. Although it is not entirely clear when. We can find the house in existence on this map of 1837.



Map 2: Detail showing big houses in 1837, Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c6/1837_SDUK_map-of-Dublin-environs.jpg

It is therefore possible that it was not William, but his son Daniel, who build Moreen. As a country house, as his main residence was also 14 St. Stephen's Green. Daniel McKay was born on 2nd December 1778, was a solicitor and began to practice law as an exchequer attorney in 1804. He was later pursuivant of the chancery court, deputy secretary and clerk of the bankrupts office, and clerk of the custodies of idiots and lunatics. He married, on 16 April 1811, Eliza, daughter of Edward Rowland, Gurthen, Denbigh. In 1815 he was elected a life member of the Dublin Society, his proposers being Alderman King and Sir Edward Stanley. McKay served on the R.D.S. fine arts committee 1835-40, and on the executive council 1838-40. He died on 5 December 1840. He was buried, with his wife (Born 9th July, 1785. Died 7th May, 1858) in a vault beneath St Ann's church in Dawson Street.

Daniel and Eliza McKay's eldest son was William McKay LLD, a barrister, who was in occupation of the St Stephen's Green house from his mother's death until 1871. The couple had another son, also a barrister, who, immediately upon being called to the bar in 1839, joined the 3rd Dragoon Guards. Manners McKay never rose above the rank of cornet, however, as he resigned from the army after little more than three years, in September 1842. He married Alicia Georgina Bunbury on 1st September 1845. In 1847 we find him settled back in Dublin, in the family's country house, 'Moreen', in Dundrum.

It appears that Daniel and Eliza divided the houses between their two sons, with Manners becoming the owner of Moreen.

DUNDRUM a village in the parish of Taney, Rathdown barony, Dublin in county five miles S. from the General Post Office Dublin, comprising an area of 35 acres. Population 550 It is situated at the base of the Dublin mountains, on the road to Enniskerry, and consists of one main street, containing 94 houses, chiefly cottages.

In it is a Roman Catholic Chapel, a Petty Sessions' Court-house, Dispensary and National School. The Church of Taney, on Taney hill, is a handsome cruciform building. There is also a National School. The neighbourhood abounds in richly diversified scenery commanding fine views of Dublin bay and mountains and is studded with numerous seats and elegant villas, the principal of which is Wickham, the seat of Leonard Bickerstaff, esq.; and about one mile above the village is Moreen the seat of Manners McKay esq., in which grounds steeple races are held annually. Dundrum is recommended for the purity of the air and in summer is much resorted to by invalids.

Four well appointed Omnibuses ply to and hoof Dublin several times a day, besides the ordinary jaunting car conveyances. The mail from Dublin arrives at 15 minutes past 8. A.M. and at 45 minutes past 2. p.m., and is despatched at 4. p. m.

Figure 3: Description of Dundrum, 1848, <http://www.swilson.info/showcodub1848.php?pageid=dund>

William Rowland McKay was William McKay's son and Manners McKay's nephew. He began his career as a cornet in the 3rd Dragoon Guards in May 1867 and served with the regiment in Bombay and Abyssinia. In April 1869 he rose to the rank of lieutenant in the 80th Infantry Regiment. A year later his name is on the supernumerary or seconded list, and by October 1870 it has disappeared from the army list. In 1882 he reappears as a captain in the Donegal Artillery Militia, with whom he remained until 1889.

A James Francis Lenox MacFarlane entered the 3rd Dragoon Guards at the same time as William Rowland McKay, and was promoted to lieutenant on the same date. Unlike McKay, MacFarlane remained with the 3rd Dragoon Guards as lieutenant, and later as captain. He went on to join the Cork Artillery and eventually rose to the rank of major. Born on 7 April 1845, MacFarlane was the eldest son of Henry James MacFarlane of Hunstown House, Mulhuddart, County Dublin, and Fallagh Erin, Beragh, County Tyrone. In 1871 he married Elizabeth Odette, daughter of Manners McKay (possibly Alice Georgina, born 14 June 1849), and through her he came into possession of the McKay house in Dundrum, where he lived from 1877 to 1896. At that stage Elizabeth Odette had already died (he remarried in 1884 with Emma Amy Ashcroft), he was in line to inherit his father's properties in Dublin and Tyrone (which happened in 1901) and his daughter with Elizabeth Odette had just married and needed a place to live.

Fitzsimon – great-grand-child of the Liberator

Alice Odette Maud Bunbury MacFarlane, born on 30th July 1871 had married on 12th February 1896 with Daniel O'Connell Fitzsimon, one of the many great-grand-children of the Liberator. The young couple bought Moreen as their home.

Although Moreen featured gardens and gate lodges, some part of the property was rented out. This included some cottages just south of Blackglan Road. One of these was occupied by Mary Mulligan, who made her living as a washer woman for the area. You could reach her cottage via a little laneway from the Blackglan Road. Attached to her cottage was a smaller, second cottage, which was rented out to various people over time.

Markoviecz

One illustrious renter was Countess Markoviecz, between 1908 and 1910. According to one publication, she came across a number of old copies of the revolutionary publications the *Peasant* and *Sinn Féin* left by a previous tenant, the poet Pádraig Colum. After reading these, Markoviecz knew she had found a cause to inspire her life. Her interest in the struggle for freedom was aroused.



Figure 4: Countess Markoviecz

True or not, this was a particularly important period, as this was when the Irish nationalist youth organisation Na Fianna Éireann was re-established. Originally this organisation was set up "to serve as a Junior Hurling League to promote the study of the Irish Language" on 26 June 1902 in West Belfast by Bulmer Hobson. Hobson was a Quaker influenced by suffragism and nationalism. He joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1904 and was an early member of Sinn Féin during its monarchist-nationalist period, alongside Arthur Griffith and Constance Markievicz. Hobson later relocated to Dublin and the Fianna organisation collapsed in Belfast. Meanwhile, the Red Branch Knights, a Dublin branch of Irish National Boy Scouts, were founded by Markievicz sometime before July 1909. After discussions involving Hobson, Markievicz, suffragist and labour activist Helena Moloney and Seán McGarry, the Irish National Boy Scouts changed their name to Na Fianna Éireann at a meeting in 34 Lower Camden Street, Dublin, on 16 August 1909, at which Hobson was elected as president (thus ensuring a strong IRB influence), Markievicz as vice-president and Pádraig Ó'Riain as secretary. The organisation was known to be teaching boy drilling skills and how to use arms. Local folklore (and mentioned also in the book "Eleven Houses" by Christopher Fitzsimon) has it that the Countess used the cottage and lands around it for these exercises.

New uses

The estate was sold over time in bits and pieces, starting with lands for the Carnegie Library (and later shops) at Lamb's Cross around 1907. It appears that the last parts were only sold after Daniel and Alice moved to Kilgobbin (where they lived in 1946).

In 1932 Moreen had become old and difficult to heat and maintain, and it was decided to sell the house and most of the lands around it. On some of the lands that were kept, a new house, Whinsfield was built. This was a very modern house, the first Art Deco house in Ireland, which unfortunately was demolished by a subsequent owner to make way for a new house.

The house was sold to the Irish Sisters of Charity who intended to turn it into school. Instead it was however rented to Prof. Coleman Saunders, a medical consultant at Crumlin Hospital. Unfortunately,

a fire broke out and the house was destroyed. In the sixties the lands were sold to the state, who used part of it to locate the mint of the Central Bank, part for social housing, part for a water reservoir and also reserving part (Fitzsimon Wood) as a nature reserve. The latter is open to the public.

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About the author

Michael van Turnhout was born in The Netherlands but has been living in Ireland for 20 years, most of which on Slate Cabin Lane. He is Chairman of the very small local resident's association and is a history buff. Combining the two he published his first article last year.