

GORDONVILLE

A short history of Dundrum and "Gordonville"

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Report

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Introduction

This is the story of a beautiful old house in Dundrum, called "Gordonville", at Sydenham Villas. I discovered it was a symbol of a very important period in the development of Dundrum.

Note: in the below article it will be referred to as "1 Sydenham Terrace" as well, as this was its original designation.

Dundrum in the early days

The name Dundrum goes back to the Anglo-Norman conquest. After the conquest, the lands that are now Dundrum were part of a bigger estate also comprising Taney and were owned by the de Clahull family. At the beginning of the thirteenth century Sir John de Clahull gave the lands of Taney to the Priory of the Holy Trinity and the Archbishop of Dublin. The lands of Dundrum were constituted a manor in themselves. Sir John de Clahull's successor was Sir Hugh de Clahull. From Sir Hugh do Clahull the manor of Dundrum, after passing through the hands of his son in-law, Sir Walter Purcell, and of Hugh de Tachmun, Bishop of Meath, came about 1268 into the possession of Sir Robert Bagod of Baggotrath. This family exchanged Dundrum with Sir Eustace de la Poer for lands in Limerick.

The Fitzwilliams, builders of Dundrum Castle

The lands of Dundrum were situated on the very extremity of the lands to the south of Dublin and suffered severely by the raids of the Irish enemies of the English Crown. Many lands changed ownership in exchange for the new owners building fortifications. Thus, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Fitzwilliams appear as resident on the lands of Dundrum. The Fitzwilliams erected Dundrum castle. Although a Thomas Fitzwilliam is mentioned as being in possession in 1332 of lands near Dundrum, the first of the name in possession of the manor of Dundrum was William, son of Richard Fitzwilliam, to whom in 1365 a conveyance of the manor was made, and who had rendered a few years before valiant service against the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles at Saggard. Later the family transferred the seat of their branch of the family to Baggotrath and subsequently to Merrion. They remained however owners of the land in Dundrum.



During the rebellion of the 1640's the Castle of Dundrum fell into disrepair. It was restored by Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Dobson, one of the officers of the Parliament Army, to whom it was leased in 1653, together with the lands of Dundrum, by the Parliament.

At the time of the Restoration, Dundrum is returned as containing fourteen persons of English and thirty-three of Irish extraction, inhabiting twenty-three houses.

After the Restoration Dobson came to terms with the Fitzwilliams, on their regaining possession of their property, and continued to occupy the castle until his death. This took place at Dundrum in 1700. His only surviving son, Alderman Eliphal Dobson, the wealthiest Dublin publisher and bookseller of his day, succeeded to the occupation of the castle, and after his death in 1720, it was occupied by his widow. After her death the castle and lands were leased by her son Isaac Dobson to "an eminent silk weaver and a man of unspotted character," Thomas Reynolds.



Dundrum Castle in 1802 – Author unknown – from South Dublin County Council

Although the castle was partly inhabited until the close of the eighteenth century, it was gradually falling into decay, and a new house was build alongside it. The latter was only demolished in 1996.

In 1816 the vast Fitzwilliam Estate was inherited by the 11th Earl of Pembroke. The estate – although reduced in size - still exists today.

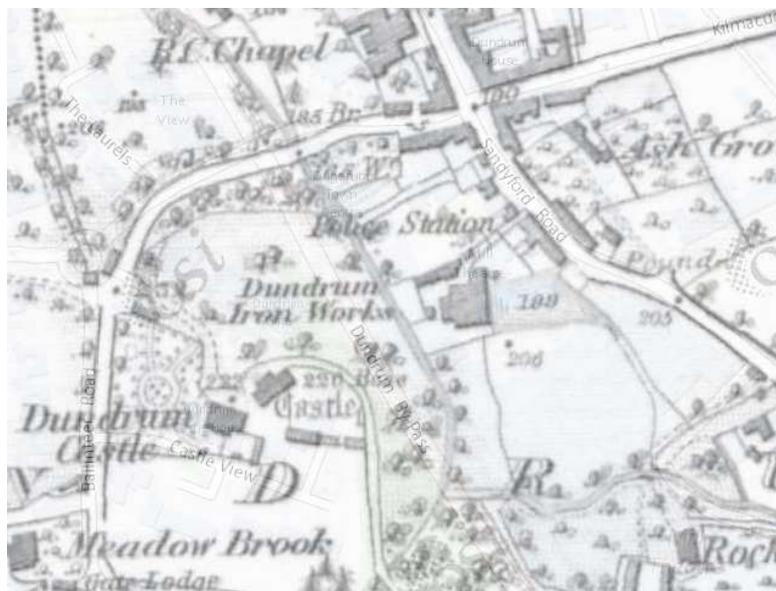


Dundrum in the late 18th and early 19th Century

In the middle of the eighteenth century, in 1766, there were only sixty-six dwellings in the whole parish of Taney, to which Dundrum belonged. Dundrum was then a small village chiefly remarkable for being on the high road to Powerscourt. It had a reputation, though not in an equal degree with Carrickmines, as a health resort. A few houses near the old churchyard formed a separate village known as Churchtown, and the only other neighbouring village of any importance was Windy Arbour, on the road to Dublin, where there was a lodging house.

The principal resident at Dundrum in the latter half of the eighteenth century was the brother of the first Earl of Lanesborough, the Hon. John Butler, M.P. for Newcastle, who resided in Wickham, then called Primrose Hill. It is now Simpson's Hospital. His death took place at Dundrum in the year 1790, when he had attained the age of eighty-three years.

In the 19th Century the first industrial activity came to the area. Water mills had been in existence for some time, as part of the manorial economy, for grinding corn. Improvements in water mills meant that they were now increasingly used as sawmills, paper mills, cloth and laundry mills. These were mostly beside fast flowing waters, such as at Rockbrook (Owendoher River), Kiltarnan (Loughlinstown River) and Dundrum (River Slang). In Dundrum from about 1800 we find a paper mill and an iron works on the lands of Dundrum Castle. (This would become the Manor Mill Laundry in 1864).



Details from OSI map between 1829 and 1842 showing Dundrum Castle and Iron Works



Dundrum was clearly growing. There was a police station, a post office and a small chapel since 1813 on the location of the current Holy Cross church and which was enlarged after the emancipation in 1829 and dedicated in 1837. What this also shows however is that the village was still small, not yet big enough for a church of its own. There was no Airfield (Trevor Overend, the solicitor who built it, only came to Dundrum in 1894) and more importantly, there was no railway. It was still mostly a rural village.



Detail from map <http://www.swilson.info/maps/1848DublinEnvirons.php> showing Dundrum

The Railway

Ireland's first railway was the Dublin and Kingstown Railway (D&KR) between Westland Row in Dublin and Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire), over a distance of 10km and opened in 1834. As it was a success, proposals for a second commuter railway were put forward. These plans proposed the building of a 20km railway from Bray Daly station, which opened on 10 July 1854 to initially terminate at Harcourt Road station. (Harcourt Street Station was not built until 1859). This line crossed through Dundrum and a station house was built (also opened on 10 July 1854).



Bentley brothers, developers of Sydenham Road and Villas

Just like it would happen in modern days, the combination of Dundrum's reputation as a healthy place to live and the opening of the new transport mode soon attracted developers. Dundrum's days as a small rural village would soon be over.

—	William C. esq. 5 White's terrace, Donnybrook
—	W. J. esq. 153 Rathmines road
—	Bentley and Son, house and land agents, auctioneers, & valuers, and agents to the <i>Globe</i> Fire Insurance and <i>British Commercial Life Assurance</i> Companies of London, 110 Grafton-st.—auction rooms, 161 Capel street and 12 Wood quay
—	John, esq. 110 Grafton st.—res. Belview, Dundrum
—	Mark, solicitor, 3 College green, and Kingstown
—	Mrs. 7 Cullenswood terrace, Ranelagh
—	Rbt. sol. 47 Fleet st. & 1 Mornington cottages, Dalkey
—	Samuel, furniture warerooms, 44 Henry street, and Carlisle terrace, Tritonville avenue, Sandymount
—	W. W. esq. 110 Grafton street—res. Hilton lodge, Monkstown
—	W. W. & J. auctioneers, 12 Wood quay, and 161 Capel street
—	William, esq. 16 Charlemont place

Detail from 1858 Dundrum Directory

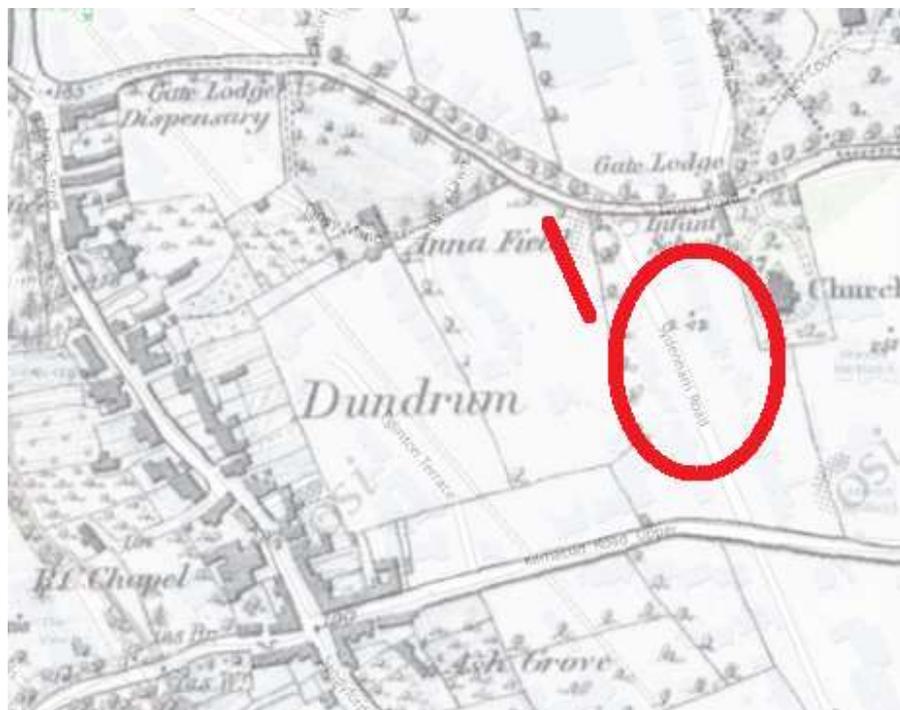
William W. Bentley and his brother John (as per above, house and land agents, auctioneers and valuers) obviously decided to get into the development "game" and obtained a lease for a period of 99 years from Sydney Charles Herbert, 14th Earl of Pembroke on 25th March 1857 as well as a lease dated 27th September 1858 from Bartholomew Clifford Lloyd. We can use the two OSI maps (6-inch map from around 1840 overlaid with modern map) below to identify which fields were leased. From the Earl of Pembroke the triangular field between the railway and the (non-existent) Overend Way, as well as a small strip of land of the field where nowadays Taney Primary School stands, to enable the construction of a road linking the triangular field with Kilmacud Road Upper (which did exist). From Lloyd the field to the left of Taney Church, as well as a strip of the next field to the left (which were part of the Anna Field estate). The fields appear to be chosen because they offer excellent views over Dundrum below.



The field boundaries are from the old map, roads and housing from the current. Fields leased marked in red:



Detail from OSI map between 1829 and 1842 showing Sydenham Villas



Detail from OSI map between 1829 and 1842 showing Sydenham Road

There must have been a lot of “wheeling and dealing” going on, as it appears that B.C. Lloyd only obtained the lands of Anna Field in 1857 from the railway company (who must have purchased it for the construction of the line, and then sold the lands that it did not need). The

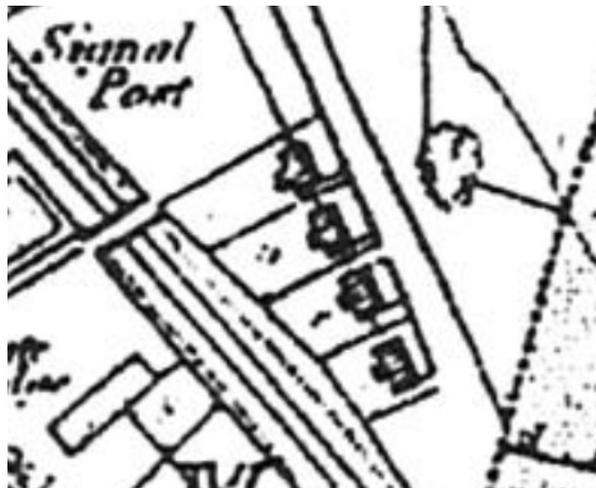


Bentleys themselves did not hold onto all their land long either, selling most of their land on Sydenham Villas on to John Doake and Bartholomew Delaney in 1859. They kept land and developed some housing themselves on Sydenham Road, as they do appear as owners of houses on Sydenham Road, numbers 3, 4, 7 and 8.

It is mentioned in some sources that they overreached when they developed Foxrock, in partnership with Edward and Anthony Fox. In 1859 they leased the lands of the Foxrock Estate from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and Richard Whately, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, with the aim of creating an affluent garden suburb. Due to a slower than expected initial take-up of lots, the founder/developers of Foxrock were said to be bankrupted and did not live to see its successful development into a wealthy suburb. However, this might not be correct, as John Bentley at his death still seems to have been the owner of the properties mentioned above.

John Doake, builder of "Gordonville"

In 1859, John Doake bought land from the Bentleys on Sydenham Villas. He erected 4 houses, then known as 1, 2, 3 and 4 Sydenham Terrace. The street name was only later changed to Sydenham Villas – which happened between 1891 and 1901. And to add to the confusion, in the planning stages the name Sydenham Avenue was used! It was No. 1 that would later become known as Gordonville. Also of interest is that the houses appear to be of the same size and design, as can be seen from the Ordnance Survey map of 1871 below. Nowadays "Gordonville" is clearly bigger with bay windows and a garage/coach house.



As can be seen from advertisements of those days, developers would often build a house, rent it out and then sell it as an investment property. This appears also to have been the intention with the four houses on Sydenham Terrace. After construction and renting them out, John Doake tried to sell them several times. This was the first (as far as we are aware) auction of the newly build houses:



Desirable Investment—Valuable House Property, situate on Sydenham Terrace, Dundrum, County Dublin.

TO be Sold by Auction, in the Public Salerooms, No. 9 UPPER ORMOND-QUAY, on THURSDAY, July 19th, at the hour of One o'Clock in the afternoon, the Houses Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 Sydenham Terrace, three of which are at present occupied by highly solvent and respectable tenants. The above Houses command fine views of mountain scenery, and are all substantially and expensively built, the principal Windows being fitted with Plate Glass. Each House contains two Sitting and five Bedrooms, large Kitchen, and Pantries, Water Closet, and good-sized Garden. There is a plentiful supply of the purest water, which is conveyed to the interior of the houses by force pumps.

The property will be sold in Four Lots (if so desired), or the entire Four Houses will be disposed of subject to the Head Rent of £45 per annum.

JOHN LITTLEDALE and CO., Auctioneers.

NOTE.—Sydenham Terrace is situate within four minutes' walk of the Dundrum Station, from whence trains start every hour.

Saunders News, 14th July 1860

Another attempt was made on 29th April 1861 (Freeman's Journal). However, John Doake – who must have been a professional developer - owned many properties at the time of his death, including the properties on Sydenham Terrace, which he obviously had been unable to sell.

LANDED ESTATES COURT.

In the Matter of the Estate of John Doake, Owner and Petitioner. **TO BE SOLD,** before the Honourable Judge Dobbs, on THURSDAY, the 28th day of June, 1866, at the hour of Twelve o'Clock noon, in the Landed Estates Court, Inns-quay, Dublin, in Four Lots, as particularised in rental, the Four Houses and Premises known as Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 Sydenham Terrace, Dundrum, in the Parish of Taney, half Barony of Rathdown and County of Dublin, held under four leases for residues of terms of ninety years each, from the 25th day of March, 1859. Nos. 1 and 2 are subject to the yearly rent of £10 10s. each, and Nos. 3 and 4 are subject to the yearly rent of £12 each.

The above will be sold in separate lots to suit the convenience of persons desirous of obtaining country residences for a moderate sum subject to a small ground rent.

Dated this 24th day of May, 1866.

GEORGE F. HOPKINS, Chief Clerk.

Proposals for the purchase of said lots will be received by the Solicitor having the carriage of Sale, and submitted to the Judge.

For rentals and further particulars apply at the Landed Estates Court, Dublin: and to **WELDON S. MOLONY, Solicitor, having carriage of Sale, No. 19 Upper Mount-street, Dublin.**

Evening Freeman, 9 June 1866

As we can see from the Evening Freeman in 1866, after the death of John Doake, the houses were on the market again, as part of the Estate of John. There was again not much success. Perhaps because – according to the Landed Estate records - none of the houses at this stage were rented out. The houses ended up being purchased by Weldon S. Molony, in June 1867. And he was none other than the solicitor who was supposed to be dealing with the sale, mentioned in the article above. One might assume that being close to the action he saw the possibility of a good “deal”.



1 Sydenham Terrace

In 1868 Weldon S. Molony himself was registered as resident of 1 Sydenham Terrace (as well as a property in Dalkey), so it appears that still no renter was found. In 1870 he sold the properties to Frederick Kennedy, yet another solicitor, with office as Lower Ormond Quay. He appears to have been more successful in renting the properties out; perhaps Doake and Molony had just been too early; for example, it was only in 1866 that plans for a proper Roman Catholic church in Dundrum were made to replace the chapel. Building of the Holy Cross church started in 1877 and was completed in 1879.

On 7th December 1875 George Abraham Grierson – who must have been a renter - died at 1 Sydenham Terrace. He was 82 years old and is buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery. He had married Isabella Ruxton on 15 Dec 1846 and had been a barrister with offices at Middle Abbey Street up to 1870. There is no mention of him as a barrister anymore after that year, so perhaps he had decided to retire to Dundrum. He was already 77! His daughter Constantia – a spinster - also lived at 1 Sydenham Terrace at the time of his death. His wife Isabella died in 1907.

Mark Anthony Toomey had a business on 6 Harcourt Street, but resided at 1 Sydenham Terrace in 1880. Mrs. Mark Anthony Toomey gave birth to a son – Richard Fenton - at 1 Sydenham Terrace in April of that year (christened on 9th April). Possibly they were there already for a few years, as another child had been born on 19th January 1878 in “Durdunn”, which is likely a misspelling of Dundrum. These were her last two children; all 4 others had been born in Rathmines. Mark Anthony Toomey was born in Dublin in 1844 to Mark Toomey and Jane Kelly. He married Julia Adelaide Bourne in 1868 at St. Peter’s church in Dublin. She was from a respected legal family. In 1875 he was a wine merchant. Mark Anthony was very active in Freemasonry and was initiated in Commercial Lodge No. 245 in 1871 in Dublin. In 1878 he was installed as Worshipful Master of this Lodge. He was also a Life Governor of both the male and female Masonic Orphan Schools in Ireland. There were six children in the family: Mark born 1869 and died in 1871; Louisa Alice born 1871; Mark born 1873; Jane born 1875; Walter or Catherine¹ born 1878 and Richard Fenton born 1880. Mark Anthony Toomey got into financial trouble over a debt he had guaranteed and could not pay. This was an offence you could go to prison for and two of his Bourne brother in laws suggested he went to Australia. According to family lore he left for Sydney in 1883. There is a letter dated 2 March 1880 that suggests it may have been closer to 1880. The family did not re-unite in Australia until 1890,

¹ Sandison Roscoefamily tree (<http://www.gritquoy.com/genealogy/getperson.php?personID=119524&tree=001Master>) and Ancestry records disagree here, although something is amiss with the ancestry record as Catherin is a male!



although the couple later split up and Julia went back to Ireland. Mark Anthony died on 29 Mar 1916 in Sydney.

1880 is also the more likely date as we look at 1 Sydenham Terrace, which got a new owner in 1881. Perhaps the loss of his previous renter made Frederick Kennedy decide to sell. Samuel Brown – an Inspector of National Schools - lived at first in 2 Sydenham Terrace. He must have preferred number 1 though, as in 1881 he buys 1 Sydenham Terrace (in the indenture he is said at the time to live at Sydenham House, which is yet another house on the Terrace). Perhaps he just preferred a house on a corner, but perhaps he also saw an opportunity to enlarge it (see above and below), which would not be possible with No. 2. With No. 2 thus becoming vacant, this is also sold, to an Emma Hudson. Samuel Brown was thus the first “owner occupier”. He died on 14th July 1886 at the age of 67 and left his property to his wife.

In 1891 we find his eldest son Samuel Lombard (born 1856) at the property. He was an Irish politician and barrister. He was an independent member of Seanad Éireann 1923-1925 and 1926-1936. He was elected at a by-election on 12 December 1923, replacing Sir Horace Plunkett, but lost his seat at the 1925 Seanad election. He was re-elected at a by-election on 10 February 1926, replacing Windham Wyndham-Quin. He was re-elected at the 1934 Seanad election and served until the Free State Seanad was abolished in 1936. He died 14th December 1939.

Although in the 1901 Thom’s Directory Samuel Lombard was still there - the name now being 1 Sydenham Villas - in the 1901 census we find his two brothers, Wm Alcock Brown (43, widower) and John Richard Brown (41, single) living at the property. Samuel Lombard is then living with his family at Mount Street Upper. William has followed in his father’s footsteps and is a Senior Inspector at the Board of Education and John is a stock broker. In 1903 only the younger brother John Richard is mentioned as the resident of 1 Sydenham Villas in the Thom’s Directory of that year. Samuel Lombard was still the owner though, as he was the seller of the house not much later. Perhaps he just allowed his brother(s) to live in the house until it was sold after he had moved up to the Mount Street address.

In 1905 William Rowe Thomas, born in England around 1844, a member of the Church of Ireland, a commercial traveller and married to a wife 27 years his junior, owns the house. A Henry O’Connor is mentioned as landlord in the 1911 census, but this appears to be incorrect, as according to the legal documentation William R. Thomas was definitely the owner. However, there does seem to have been a claim on one fourth of the property. This claim went through several hands (O’Connor, Stapleton, Golden) until finally settled in 1930 by the Mortiers who would become owners of 1 Sydenham Villas in 1927. Highly likely this was a



boundary dispute. We can see that the house was larger than its neighbours on the Ordnance Survey map of 1907, whereas we had seen they were originally all the same size. It appears that the house was enlarged at some time between 1871 and 1907 – and appears to have strayed over the land boundary.

However, we are jumping ahead. We know that William R. Thomas lived in the property up to 1911. He died on 22 November 1913, leaving his properties worth 1,100 pounds to his widow Emily Anne. As in the legal documentation their address is now mentioned as 4 Churchill Terrace in Ballsbridge, it appears they no longer lived in 1 Sydenham Villas. The property on Churchill Terrace is a lot smaller compared to the Dundrum property, so they might have “traded down” when William was getting older (he was 67 in 1911).

However, the house at Sydenham Villas was not sold, but appears to be rented out again. In 1915 Thomas Linnane lives in property, but was never an owner. Thomas was the great grandfather of Joe Linnane. Joe Linnane was born in 1910 and presented the radio quiz 'Question Time' for Radio Éireann in the 1940s. He was an actor, known for The Woman in Question (1950), The Angel Who Pawned Her Harp (1954) and Hunted (1952). He died on 28 September, 1981 in Dublin, Ireland.

And now for the gossip! In 1918 Robert Bates is living in the house. In 1927 Emily Anne Bates is the seller of the house, a married woman, presumably to Robert. It appears she was the owner, and not the husband. There is no evidence however that the house was ever sold to Emily Anne Bates. What we do know is that William R. Thomas left the house in his will to his wife, called Emily Anne. And what we also know is that in the 1911 census the 67-year-old William was living in 1 Sydenham Villas with his 40-year old wife², a servant and a boarder in the form a single, male, 39-year-old Robert M. Bates. We have a record of a Robert Murray Bates (born in Co. Carlow on 30th August 1871) marrying an Emily Anne Rudd (her maiden name, see footnote) in December 1914, neatly about a year after William's death. This would explain how the house would have ended up in Emily Anne Bates' hands. Emily died on 4th March 1930. Robert died on 20th September 1930.

Emily Anne Bates sells the house to Eugene Edward Mortier, his wife Annie and his daughter Edith Jane in September 1927. It is then that the name “Gordonville” was first used. Eugene was born about 1864 in the West Indies and was a Marine Engineer. Annie was born around 1860 in Bristol. They had three children, John (born about 1881 in Bristol), George Vincent

² Ages in the census are quite often wrong. This appears to be the case here as at her death Emily Anne was 70, and thus born in 1860, which would make her at least 50 years old in 1911. This is also supported by a marriage record found between a William Rowe Thomas and an Emily Anne Rudd from 1877 in Borrisokane, Tipperary, which is where his wife hailed from according to the census records.



(1893, born in Cardiff) and Edith Jane (born about 1889 in Cardiff). In 1901 the family live in North Wall, Dublin, minus the oldest son John who must have flown the nest by then. George Vincent was awarded a Campaign Medal for WWI Seamen. Edith Jane would be a lifelong spinster and remained with her parents. It appears they wanted to live out their retirement in 1 Sydenham Villas. It was however not to be for Eugene, as he died on 2 December 1927 – aged 64. His wife Annie would live to be 102, and died on the 8 April 1958. Edith Mortier would live another 20 years in the big house.

Not until 1978 is the house sold again, this time to Michael and Jenny Hassett. They would raise their three children, John, Gerry and Jillian, here. Jillian would become the second occupant of the house who would later become a member of Seanad Éireann, having been appointed an Independent senator by An Taoiseach Enda Kenny in 2011. Michael (who died on 21st November 2015) and Jenny Hassett had then already moved to a smaller property, their place being taken by current owners, son and daughter-in-law Gerry and Gina Hassett.



"Gordonville", July 2014, StreetView/Google Maps



Rest of Sydenham Villas

Apart from the 4 houses constructed by John Doake, there are now other houses and a school on Sydenham Villas.



Across the road from Gordonville is Taney Primary School. Up to 1960 it was located in a 1897 building in Eglinton Terrace. In that year it had 99 pupils. However, it became clear with the ever-increasing expansion of Dublin City that the school was set to grow rapidly. The Department of Education was prevailed upon to sanction and build a 6-classroom school which was opened in November 1970. By 1979 the school had grown to be an 18-teacher school. Mrs. Beryl Tilson became Principal in 1978 - the first woman to hold the post of Principal in Taney Parish Primary School. During her long and illustrious period as Principal, up until her retirement in 2000, the school engaged in a huge building programme, replacing the many prefabricated classrooms with a purpose-built, state of the art structure.

Next to the school, on the corner with Upper Kilmacud Road was Sydenham House, a large Victorian House with large garden. It was built in the second half of the 19th Century. It was the home of Michael Rynne, Irish Ambassador to Spain from 1954-61. In 1999 was described as a fine and well maintained house when it was up for sale. In 2011 it was unfortunately completely derelict and was recently demolished to make way for a new house, currently under construction.

Also built in the second half of the 19th Century were three houses fronting Upper Kilmacud Road between Sydenham Villas and the railway line. One of the houses – the second from the



railway line - had a coach house at the back of its garden and a little laneway connecting it to Sydenham Villas. It was later turned into a small house, which at one time was occupied by Gerry and Gina Hassett, the current owners of Gordonville! The house on the corner opposite Sydenham House was called Belfort House. In its place are now apartments/town houses under the name of Belfort House and Belfort Court, constructed in 2007, with gated entrance on Sydenham Villas.

Infill development with more typical suburban houses have taken place as well: 6 semi-detached houses between Gordonville and the former Belfort House, two detached houses on the small laneway leading to the aforementioned Coach House and 4 semi-detached houses in the gap fronting Upper Kilmacud Road between the former Belfort House and the other two other houses mentioned above.

One of the 4 original houses, named Pirton House, at the end of Sydenham Villas was completely redeveloped, and in the small plot of land left over between it and Overend Way 4 additional luxury houses were recently constructed. The developer here did not have much luck either, just like the original one: originally the main redeveloped Pirton House had an asking price of 5.5 million (from the plans in 2007). Despite the price being dropped to 1.85 million it still has not sold.

So, 150 years after Sydenham Villas (or Sydenham Avenue as it was then known) was created, it is still in development and changing with the times. And still disappointing developers!



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