

# Moreen: From the Pale to Markievicz to the Central Bank



MICHAEL VAN TURNHOUT

This is the story of Moreen, a property that no longer exists. Located in the townland of Balally, its rich history extends back to the origins of the Pale. Associated with it were some of the illustrious figures involved in the fight for Irish freedom, from Red Hugh O'Donnell to Countess Markievicz. Today it is the location of a symbol of modern day Ireland: the Central Bank.

## Townland



Present day Balally townland.

As mentioned Moreen was situated in the townland of Balally. This townland extends southwards from Dundrum to Sandyford village (the boundary lying just south of Sandyford House) and Blackglen Road (the boundary here is between the road and Slate Cabin Lane). The southern boundary actually follows the small Glaslower stream which comes from the mountain adjacent to Slate Cabin Lane, it then curves behind the old Lamb Doyle's House then beyond the shops at Lamb's Cross and on through Sandyford. Here it is joined by the culverted Kilmacud stream and flows on to Blackrock where it is known as the Carysfort-Maretimo stream. The townland's eastern boundary is close to the Drummartin Link Road and its western boundary is the Ballinteer Road.

## The Pale, Castle and Church

Presumably having become crown lands sometime after the Norman invasion of 1169, the lands of Balally were given to John de Walhope in 1279. He had been an old and valued servant of the crown. Twenty years later they were occupied by John Othyr. Prior to 1334 they were occupied by Maurice Howell and Gregory Taunton, but at this stage the lands of Balally came into the possession of the Walshs of Carrickmines.

In 1371, when Carrickmines was raided by the Byrnes, the chief tenant was the Archbishop of Dublin who sent armed assistance for the relief of the place. It is not clear whether the Walshs were there at this time or at a later stage. However, from that time and for the next two centuries the Pale was defended by the Walshs from their castles at Carrickmines, Kiltarnan and Kilgobbin.

Similar to other areas bordering on the mountains, Balally suffered from frequent raids. The boundary ditch of the Pale ran through what is now known as Fitzsimons Wood. In 1407, William Walsh received a grant from the crown on condition that he build a small castle. Following a lengthy delay this castle was eventually built and became the residence of one branch of the Walsh family.

In 1641, the castle and lands were seized from James Walsh who was a Roman Catholic. Subsequently they must have been restored to him, as following his death in 1646 his son Henry disposed of them to Mr John Borr of Dublin. He was the son of Christian Borr, a German who had come to Ireland in the early 17th century and had amassed a large fortune as a merchant. During the Commonwealth it was recorded that there was a population of seven persons of English and eleven persons of Irish descent inhabiting eight houses. Parliament seized the lands and leased them to Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Dobson of Dundrum. Following the Restoration, John Borr successfully re-established his right to the lands before the Commissioners of Settlement. He then occupied the castle (which had three hearths) as his country residence.

In the civil survey of 1654, 'James Walsh (deceased)' was recorded as the owner of lands and a thatched castle in Balally. The survey also mentioned the presence of the walls of an old church. No trace of the castle remains today and its location is unknown, however the old church which probably dates from pre-Norman times was on lands

now owned by the Central Bank and previously part of Moreen. It would appear likely that the castle was probably located not far from this spot but must have fallen into disuse and disappeared by the 18th century.

### McKay Family – Builders of Moreen

William McKay was a successful man. In 1792, he was Deputy Secretary of the Court of Chancery with offices at 43 Ship Street. In 1814, his main residence was 14 St Stephen's Green. In 1760, he had purchased lands at Balally and planned to build a large country mansion to be named Moreen. This was a common ambition amongst the aspiring classes. One of the first houses to be built on the west side of Sandyford Road was Runnymede. It was closer to Dundrum and was built in the early 1700s and was owned by John Mayne Esq who was a judge.

The plans for a large mansion at Moreen did not materialise but a country retreat was eventually built at a date unknown. It can be seen on the following map dated 1837 under the name of Marino.



Detail showing big houses in  
1837.

The house may in fact have been built by William McKay's son Daniel. His main residence was also 14 St Stephen's Green. Born on 2 December 1778, Daniel was a solicitor who was practising as an

exchequer attorney in 1804. He later became pursuivant of the chancery court, deputy secretary and clerk of the bankrupt's office and clerk of the custodies of idiots and lunatics. On 16 April 1811, he married Eliza, daughter of Edward Rowland, Gurthen, Denbigh. In 1815, he was elected as a life member of the Dublin Society having been proposed by Alderman King and Sir Edward Stanley. McKay served on its fine art committee 1835-1840 and on the executive council 1838-1840. He died on 5 December 1840 and was buried with his wife (born 9 July 1785, died 7 May 1858) in a vault beneath St Ann's church in Dawson Street. Their eldest son William, a barrister occupied the St Stephen's Green house until 1871. His brother Manners McKay was also a barrister. At the time he was called to the bar in 1839, he joined the 3rd Dragoon Guards but resigned in September 1842. He married Alicia Georgina Bunbury on 1 September 1845 and in 1847 they had settled in 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.

Dundrum as described in Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland 1848.

Manner's nephew and the son of William McKay was William Rowland McKay. He began his career in the 3rd Dragoon Guards in May 1867, serving in Bombay and Abyssinia. In April 1869, he attained the rank of lieutenant in the 80th Infantry Regiment. By 1870, his name was on the supernumerary or seconded list and by October 1870 he had disappeared from the army list. In 1882, he appears as a captain in the Donegal Artillery Militia, a position he held until 1889. A fellow member of the 3rd Dragoon Guards was James Francis Lenox MacFarlane who in 1869 was also promoted to lieutenant. Later he became captain but left the Dragoon Guards to join the Cork Artillery where he became a major. MacFarlane was born on 7 April 1845 and was the eldest son of Henry James MacFarlane of

Huntstown House, Mulhuddert, Co Dublin and Fallagh Erin of Beragh, Co Tyrone. He came into possession of Moreen when he married Elizabeth Odette the daughter of Manners McKay in 1871 and he lived at Moreen from 1877-1896. When Elizabeth died he married Emma Amy Ashcroft in 1884. Later, in 1901 he would inherit his father's properties in Dublin and Tyrone.

### **Fitzsimon – a Great-Grandchild of the Liberator**

Alice Odette Maud Bunbury MacFarlane was the daughter of James and Elizabeth Odette. She was born on 30 July 1871. On 12 February 1896, she married Daniel O'Connell Fitzsimon, one of the many great-grandchildren of the Liberator. The couple purchased Moreen as their home. Moreen included a garden and gate lodges but some parts of the property were rented out. These included some cottages just south of Blackglen Road. One of these was occupied by Mary Mulligan who made her living as a washerwoman for the area. Her cottage could be reached via a small lane from Blackglen Road. Attached to her cottage was another smaller one which was rented to various people.

### **Markievicz**

One person who rented this cottage from 1908-10 was Countess Markievicz. According to one account it was here that her interest in the nationalist cause was awakened when she came across copies of the revolutionary publications '*Peasant*' and '*Sinn Fein*'. These had been left behind by a previous tenant who was the poet Padraic Colum.



Countess Markievicz.

Whether this account is true is uncertain. However, it was at this time that the Irish nationalist youth organisation Na Fianna Éireann was re-established. Originally set up on 26 June 1902 in west Belfast by Bulmer Hobson, it was to serve as a junior hurling league and to promote the study of the Irish language.

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 with Arthur Griffith and Constance Markievicz. Hobson later moved to Dublin resulting in the collapse of the Fianna movement in Belfast. Meanwhile, the Red Branch Knights, a Dublin branch of the Irish National Boy Scouts had been founded by Markievicz before July 1909. Following discussions between Hobson, Markievicz, Seán McGarry and the female suffragist and labour activist Helena Moloney, the Irish National Boy Scouts changed their name to Na Fianna Éireann. This was ratified on 16 August 1909 at a meeting at 34 Lower Camden Street, Dublin at which Hobson was elected president (thus insuring a strong IRB influence). Markievicz was vice president and Pádraig Ó Riain was secretary. The organisation was known to be teaching drilling skills and the use of arms to the boys. According to local folklore (and also mentioned in the book *Eleven House* by Christopher Fitzsimon) the Countess used the cottage and lands to train the boys.

## New Uses

From about 1907 onwards the estate was sold in bits and pieces, beginning with the site for the Carnegie Library, and the later shops at Lamb's Cross. The final parts were sold when Daniel and Alice Fitzsimon moved to Kilgobbin around 1946. By 1932, Moreen had become old and difficult to heat and maintain, and it was decided to sell the house and most of the remaining land around it. Some land was retained and a new home Whinsfield was built. This was the first *Art Deco* house in Ireland but unfortunately it was demolished by a subsequent owner.

The original Moreen house was sold to the Irish Sisters of Charity who planned to turn it into a school. Instead it was rented to Professor Coleman Saunders, a medical consultant at Crumlin Hospital. Unfortunately, the house was later destroyed by fire.

In the 1960s, these lands were sold to the State who used it as a location for the mint of the Central Bank, social housing, a water reservoir and a section known as Fitzsimons Wood which is a nature reserve. The latter part is open to the public.

## OBELISK

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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.*