

Commissioners of *DUBLIN*, 35, LOWER SACKVILLE ST.
 Fitzwilliam Square May 13th 1870

Bought of Cowen & Thomson.

Booksellers.
Stationers.

Letterpress
AND
Lithographic
Printers.

Feb.	19	150	Receipts		£ 6
	27	100	Ind. Slips		3
April	22	100	Circulars for Fitzwilliam Square & Postage		5
<i>Paid</i> <i>22 May 1870</i> <i>Cowen & Thomson</i>					£ 15 6 15 6

1 - Account of Cowen & Thomson, 1875
 (note from the heading their prime location next to the GPO)

A Georgian survivor: Fitzwilliam Square garden and its commissioners

MARY BRYAN

THE EXACT ORIGINS OF THE FITZWILLIAM FAMILY IN IRELAND ARE NOT KNOWN. No verifiable connection has been found to link the family with the Fitzwilliams of England, so it appears likely that the 'Irish' Fitzwilliams arrived in Ireland during the twelfth century with one of the waves of Anglo-Norman invaders. The *Calendar of Ancient Deeds* of the family starts in 1240.¹ As can be seen from these deeds, over the next five hundred years, against the background of a changing and complex political scene, the Fitzwilliams fought wars, built forts, castles and houses, and eventually became one of the largest landowners in Dublin in the eighteenth century.

The Fitzwilliams appear to have been consistently astute, or lucky. They are one of the few families to have retained their lands over the centuries through the vicissitudes of war and changing monarchs. Their history is one of long service to the rulers of the day, and shows an educated family continuously close to the highest political, cultural and social influences of the times. The Fitzwilliams were bred to power, privilege and responsibility, and this was reflected in the buildings erected in Dublin under the auspices of the family in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

It was Richard, 7th Viscount Fitzwilliam, who was responsible for laying out two of Dublin's finest Georgian squares, Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam Square. He died, childless, in 1816, and through a marriage between the two families eighty years previously the estate passed to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery. At this stage, the estate consisted of lands stretching from Baggotrath near the city centre, south to Ballsbridge and Donnybrook, and encompassing Ringsend and Irish-town on the coast. It took in Booterstown, Mount Merrion, Old Merrion and Owenstown, formerly Trimblestown. It extended out to Dundrum, Ballinteer and Ticknock, and even as far as Bray.² It was on the land known as Baggotrath that both Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam Square were built (Plate 2).

Both the Viscounts Fitzwilliam and the Earls of Pembroke employed agents in Dublin to oversee the running of the estate. During the twentieth century, when

the 150 year leases on the various properties expired, the estate became dispersed, and in 1998, with regret, the present Earl of Pembroke closed the Pembroke Estate Office in Dublin, thus bringing to a close an era which had lasted over 250 years.

THE BUILDING OF FITZWILLIAM SQUARE

‘A new Square is planned at the end of Baggot Street, in which the lots are rapidly taken and the buildings are to be immediately commenced. The design is not without elegance and the execution, it is believed, will be correspondent.’

Dublin Evening Post,
18 June 1791³

The phase of peace and stability which occurred in Ireland during the eighteenth century gave rise to great social and economic activity, based on stable government and power. One major outward expression of this exuberant revival was in architecture, and the buildings of the Fitzwilliam estate reflected the spirit of the age. Dublin was a capital city, and the days of more gracious living had arrived. As well as the erection of grand public buildings, single town houses of impressive scale were built, and terraces of spacious dwellings for the well-to-do proliferated on both sides of the river.

2 – *Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin*





The site for the proposed new square of Fitzwilliam was first indicated on the survey map drawn by Pat and John Roe in 1789,⁴ and the first leases were granted in 1791 and 1792. However, political activity was leading towards the Act of Union (1800), and this prospect was an inhibiting factor to the development of the square. In 1799 Mrs Verschoyle, the agent for the Fitzwilliam Estate, wrote to Lord Fitzwilliam that ‘the Union is the terror of everyone ... even here, in this delightful spot Merrion Square, we shall have grass where there should be new pavement ... I fear the present buildings will fall into decay or at least not be kept up in the style they ought.’⁵ While the agent’s pessimistic outlook was not fulfilled in terms of bricks and mortar, the Act of Union brought about far-reaching changes, socially as well as politically and economically. Dublin was no longer the seat of government, and the glittering social scene it had engendered faded away. The prime players on the scene, the aristocracy and the politicians, moved to London; it was the end of an era. However, a new aristocracy was waiting in the wings. This was the professional middle class, particularly the medical and legal fraternities, who emerged to take their place on the scene, and to whom the less grandiose size of the Fitzwilliam Square houses proved attractive.

The building of Fitzwilliam Square took thirty years, from 1798 to 1828, with most of the building being carried out in the decade between 1814 and 1824. The houses were laid out to the strict provisions of the leases. Each house had to have four storeys over the basement, brick was the stipulated material, exact measurements were given for the width of the basement area to the front and the pavement to be laid outside each house, and no protrusions, such as bow windows, were allowed. Only in the design of the doorcases and fanlights was the owner allowed to give rein to personal taste. Each side of the square had a stable lane at the rear to provide access for the horse and carriage to the stables located in the rear gardens. Plots were, on average, twenty-five-feet wide and approximately two-hundred-feet in length, giving the long narrow plot so typical of Georgian terraced housing. As in Mountjoy Square and Merrion Square, the four sides of Fitzwilliam Square enclosed an area in the centre for the garden.

THE GARDEN OF FITZWILLIAM SQUARE

In *The History of the County and City of Dublin*, published in 1817, the various gardens in the squares of Dublin are described.⁶ The interior of the Mountjoy Square garden is praised, and there is a description given of a margin beside the palisades decorated with a variety of flowering shrubs. There is a winding gravel walk and a fine lawn in the centre, with lamp irons around the perimeter. In contrast, the garden

in St Stephen's Green merited scant praise as it was thought very little had been accomplished there. A gravel walk is described, with some level meadow ground in the centre, a low double hedge and a grass walk. Gravel walks appear again in Merrion Square, and shrubberies laid out 'with much taste and good sense'.⁷ It would appear that all the gardens in the various squares at this time were planned in a similar fashion, with perimeter belt walks shaded by trees and shrubs, and with a large open, grassed space in the centre. The first known depiction of Fitzwilliam Square garden, on John Roe's map of 1822, shows a similar layout with a double-perimeter path, planting at the margins, and a large central open space.⁸

The Fitzwilliam Square garden is particularly remarkable in that since its beginnings in 1813, the layout has not changed. If the first Ordnance Survey map is compared with the current map, little or no difference can be detected (Plates 3, 4). One of the reasons for this unique survival is the fact that, of the great Dublin squares, only Fitzwilliam Square garden remains private. The gardens of St Stephen's Green, Merrion Square and Mountjoy Square are all public spaces, as a result of which they have been much changed from their original layouts.

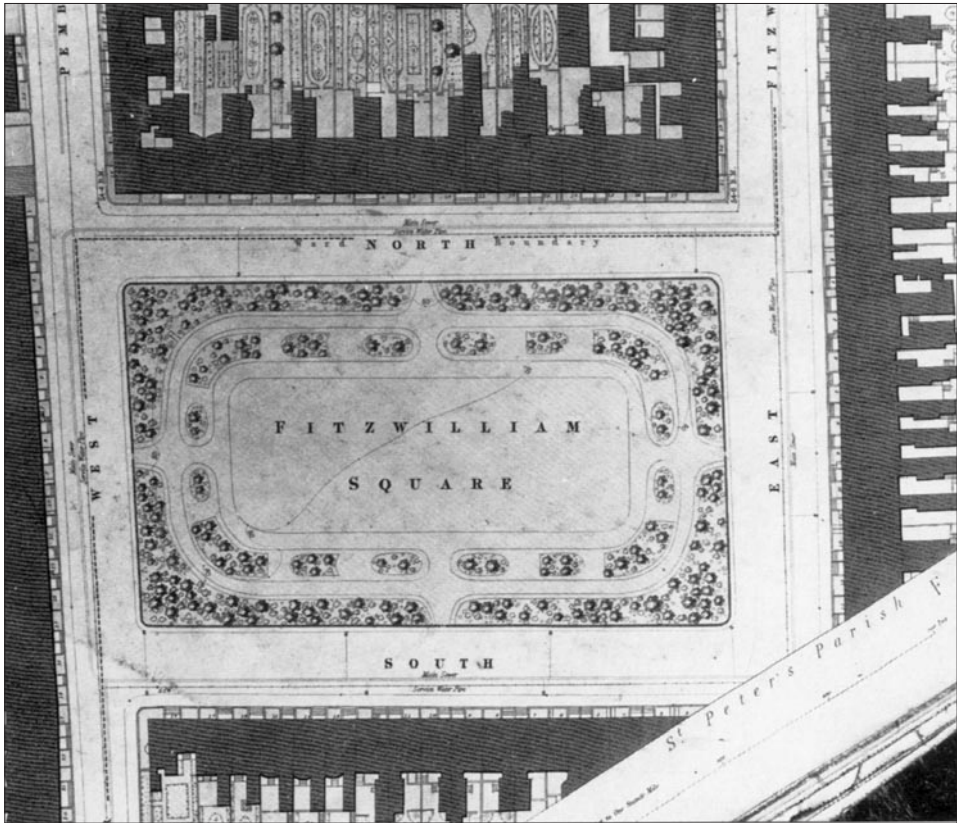
The first square laid out by the Fitzwilliam estate was Merrion Square, and it was over thirty years later, in 1791, when the square was virtually complete that the Act for enclosing its central garden was enacted. As early as 1792, when the first leases for Fitzwilliam Square were being granted and well before any building took place, there was a suggestion made by the Dublin Assembly to erect a statue there, 'the statue in the Mansion House garden is fallen down ... it should be repaired and put up in a very elegant manner in Fitzwilliam Square'.⁹ Barbara Verschoyle, the agent for the Fitzwilliam Estate, pursued the matter in 1797, asking Viscount Fitzwilliam to allow her to expend £50 or £60 on a pedestal for the brass statue and horse which had been promised to Fitzwilliam Square by the Lord Mayor. She warned that this was urgent, 'as another Lord Mayor or Aldermen may change their mind and we may loose it which I would be sorry to do'.¹⁰

In 1805 the enclosure of the garden and the erection of the statue seemed imminent when an advertisement appeared in *Saunders's Newsletter*:

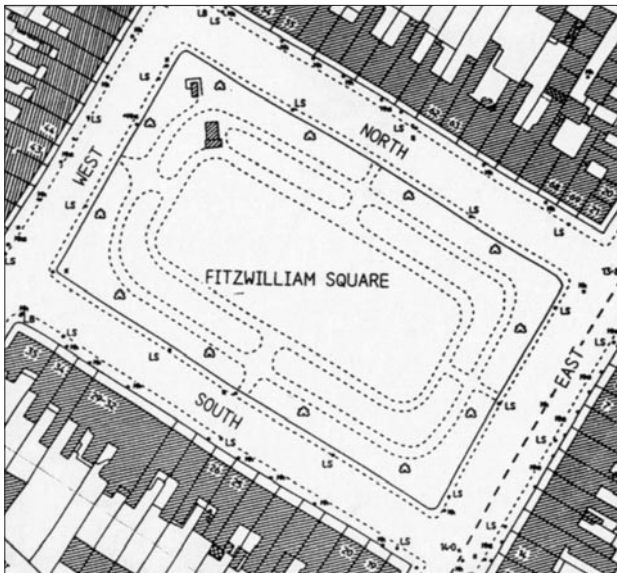
FITZWILLIAM SQUARE

Proposals for building the Wall round the Square in which the Iron Railing is to be placed, and for erecting a pedestal for a Statue in the centre of it, will be received by Mr. W. Verschoyle, 24, Merrion Square, who will show the plans.¹¹

In 1806, the Dublin Assembly again mentions both statue and garden, 'the statue of King George II should be given to the inhabitants of Fitzwilliam Square as soon as said square is enclosed by railings'.¹² However the statue was never erected.



3 – Fitzwilliam Square,
Ordnance Survey, 1837
(photo David Davison & Assoc)



4 – Fitzwilliam Square,
Ordnance Survey, 1994

(Ordnance Survey Ireland maps
reproduced by permission of the
Government, permit no. 7366).

opposite
5 – Fitzwilliam Square
debenture, 1813

Fitzwilliam-Square Debenture.
Part of £3000.

£100 Principal.
£6 per Cent. Interest.

P.D. 8

WHEREAS by an Act passed in the Imperial Parliament, in the United Kingdom of Great-Britain and Ireland, in the 59th of the Reign of his Majesty King George the Third, entitled "An Act for inclosing, lighting, and improving Fitzwilliam-square, in the County of the City of Dublin," the Commissioners therein named, and their Successors, or any five or more of them being present at any General Half Yearly Meeting, were authorised, by Writing under their Hands and Seals, to raise, by Sale or Mortgage of all or any Part of the Fund arising from the yearly Taxes of said Square, or by issuing one or more Debenture or Debentures thereon, bearing Interest at the Rate of Six Pounds by the £100, by the Year, such Interest to be payable out of, and chargeable on the said yearly Taxes, or by the yearly Appropriation of any Part of said annual Tax, such Sum or Sums of Money as should be sufficient for the Purposes of said Act. NOW THIS DEBENTURE WITNESSETH, that *John Smith* hath paid into the Hands of Peter Latouche, Jan. Esq. the Treasurer appointed by the Commissioners, in pursuance of said Act, the Sum of £100, and is now entitled to this Debenture, and that until the said Sum of £100 shall be paid off, pursuant to the Provisions in said Act, an Interest for the same, of Six Pounds per Annum, from this Date, shall be paid to him the said *John Smith* his Executors, Administrators, and Assigns, by the Treasurer for the Time being, out of the Funds arising from the yearly Taxes of said Square, by Half-yearly Payments, agreeable to the said Act, on every first Day of May, and first Day of November. IN WITNESS whereof we have hereunto put our Hands and Seals the first Day of November, one thousand eight hundred and thirteen.

Peter Latouche
John Smith
James Curran

Commissioners.

THE ACT AND THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE SQUARE

Finally, in 1813, an Act, whose term was 150 years, was enacted for ‘inclosing, lighting, and improving Fitzwilliam Square in the County of the City of Dublin’.¹³ The Act names the fourteen parties that constituted the Commissioners of the square. These were ‘Richard Verschoyle, Peter La Touche Junior, Charles Burton, the Honourable Pryce Blackwood, the Reverend Bartholomew Lloyd F.T.C.D., Thomas Ordes Lees, Peter Roe, James Donovan, George Tuthill, Joseph Atkinson, Thomas Leland, Nathaniel Calwell, Joshua Dixon, and John Smith Fleming’.¹⁴ All but two of these were owners of plots or inhabitants of the square. One of the two exceptions was Peter La Touche, but by the following year he had taken over some leases on the square held by Blackwood. The other non-resident was Richard Verschoyle, who lived in Merrion Square and whose wife Barbara was the agent in Dublin for the Fitzwilliam estate. At this time only twenty of the final sixty-nine houses had been built, two on the east side, ten on the west side, and eight on the north side. Building on the south side did not commence until the 1820s.

All the procedures governing the running of the square were set out in the Act, from the number of meetings to be held per year to the annual payment required of the residents. This was not to exceed five shillings per foot of the frontage of the house or lot. A schedule giving exact measurements of the various plots was appended to the Act ‘to prevent all Doubts concerning the Number of Feet contained in the Front of the Houses or Grounds’.¹⁵

The Commissioners could issue debentures, ‘bearing Interest at the Rate of Six Pounds by the Hundred Pounds by the Year’ (Plate 5).¹⁶ Monies raised were to be used ‘for the Purpose of Defraying the Expences of this Act and paying for the said Railing, Gateways, Locks, Keys, Chains, Lamps and Lamp Posts’.¹⁷

PLANTING

It appears that the planting in the early years of the garden would have concentrated on greenery, relieved only by flowering shrubs and open green lawns. However, the arrival of the Victorian era heralded a riot of colour in the garden, as can be seen from the extant invoices, receipts and accounts of the Commissioners from 1837 to 1892.¹⁸ During the 1840s, many tulip, snowdrop and crocus bulbs were ordered from nurseries, such as Thomas Bridgford & Sons, Seedsmen, Nurserymen & Florists (Plate 6).¹⁹ Flower seeds were ordered in profusion, and loads of manure, sods and sand were delivered regularly over the years. Colour had arrived and the flower bed became a permanent fixture. Some major tree and shrub planting took


Dublin

18


Bought of
THO: BRIDGFORD & SON'S
Seedsman, Nurserymen & Florists.

Trained & untrained Fruit Trees, Evergreens, Stove & Green-house Plants, Dutch Bulbs imported annually. Mushroom Spores, Russian Mats, Garden Tools, Split Pots, Bird Seed &c. &c.

48, LOWER SACKVILLE STREET.



Spalding Nursery, corner of Sandymount Avenue, Rock Road.



48, 1/2 Sackville Street.

Mr. Casuath

1845				
November	18	500 Mixed Grasses 4/6	---	7 6
"	"	50 Double Smudrops	---	2 "
"	"	48 Mixed Tulips	---	4 "
"	"	6 Scarlet Montagon Lillies	---	3 "
"	"	3 Lilla Sehenica	---	2 3
December	18	500 Mixed Grasses 4/6	---	7 6
"	"	48 Mixed Tulips	---	4 "
"	"	6 Scarlet Montagon Lillies	---	3 "
"	15	50 Double Smudrops	---	2 "
1846	"	3 Lilla Sehenica	---	2 3
May	15	Annual flower Seeds	---	11 3
			2 8 9	
<i>76. Fitzwilliam sq</i>				<i>RW</i>
<i>Rec^d the above</i>				
<i>Thomas V Bridgford</i>				
<i>24th Oct - 1846.</i>				

6 – Account of Thomas Bridgford & Sons, 1845

place in 1849, when one hundred mahonia, twelve arbutus, twelve jasmine, one hundred laurels and twelve escallonia were purchased from Thomas Barnes, Nurserymen & Florist.²⁰

The gardener during this period was Edward Nowlan. In 1846 the Commissioners ordered a suit for him which included a waistcoat and was made of green cloth with ‘12 Fitzwilliam Square gold buttons’ at 4s (Plate 7).²¹ The commissioner assigned to ordering the suit was Richard Williamson. Williamson lived at no. 8 Fitzwilliam Square, on the east side, which he had built in 1818. Sixty years later, in

for Commissioners
of Holy William Square
for Richard Williamson Esq.
 BOUGHT AT
THE DUBLIN WOOLLEN WAREHOUSE,
 7 COLLEGE-GREEN, DUBLIN.
JAMES W. GREGORY,
 PROPRIETOR.

Established for the Sale of English, Irish and Scotch Manufactured Woollen Goods, in the
 greatest variety, of the best quality, and at the lowest prices
 FOR CASH.

1526
To 27/4/40 15 1/2 lbs Green cloth
for Governor of Holy William Square 17/11 115.11
1/4 Shalloon 20 1.3
Linings of coats of padding for coats 2.6
Linings for Waist coats 1.6
2 1/2 Yards Millie Oxford Kersey 17.6
Products of Linings for trousers 10
12 Holy William Square Buttons 4.0
10 Hances 10 1.3
Part of 500 of cloth for
Guarantee 1.40

£48.9
to be paid for that for 10 15.0

£33.9

To Tho. Crosthwait Esq. 3 Holes, Reg. Cash
Richard Williamson Esq.
Wm. Gregory

7 - Account of the Dublin Woollen Warehouse, 1846

1877, Williamson was still a commissioner and still living in no. 8. Thomas Crosthwait, who lived at no. 9, took over as treasurer when William Digges La Touche retired in 1840. From the beginning, the Commissioners banked with the La Touche Bank, and continued to do so until it ceased to operate in 1870, when the account was transferred to the Munster Bank. Thomas Crosthwait remained as treasurer for twenty-five years. Edward Nowlan, the gardener, died in 1861, and was replaced by Barnaby Flynn.

During the 1850s and 1860s Edmondson and Company, Seedsmen, continued

to supply the garden with bulbs and seeds. In 1855 the list of bulbs included hyacinth, anemone, narcissus, snowdrop, tulip and a thousand crocus. Types of seed ordered included sweet pea, mignonette, candytuft, lupins, poppy marseilles, stock and wallflowers. The entire order for seeds listed forty-five different varieties.²² Thomas Barnes and M. O’Keeffe were the main suppliers when another major tree and shrub planting took place in 1856.²³ This planting included twelve evergreen oaks and 150 laurels, these latter being a great favourite with the Victorians.

The cultivation of flowers and the planting of trees continued during the nineteenth century. Edmondsons, Bridgfords, and Charles Ramsey, Nurseryman & Seedsman of Ballsbridge, continued to supply seeds, shrubs and trees to the Commissioners. The propagation of flowers was taken seriously, with a Dunphy stove being purchased from Dockrells for the propagating house.²⁴ As well as many loads of manure and sods, Patrick Lunny provided cut hay for the plants in the glasshouse frames, and a tarred cover was bought from Ellen Smith’s Sailors Outfitting Establishment to protect the geraniums in the nursery frames.²⁵ Every summer, when the large central grass area needed cutting, a regular item appears in the accounts for the hiring of a pony or mule to pull the lawn mower. There is a quaint invoice from Robert Mills, Saddle & Harness Manufacturers to his Grace, the Duke of Leinster, in 1867, for ‘4 Boots for Horse’.²⁶

There were several more waves of tree and shrub-planting during the 1870s, including horse chestnut, limes, mountain ash, yews and evergreen oaks, some provided by M. & C. O’Keeffe (Plate 8), and some by Charles Ramsey.²⁷ Hollies, euonymus and laurels were planted at various intervals, and some survive today. These shrubs, particularly the hollies, were probably planted as an understorey to the trees as they thrive in shade. Some of the present limes, evergreen oaks and plane trees possibly date from these late-nineteenth-century plantings.

MAINTENANCE

As well as the cultivation of the garden, the Commissioners had to deal with the maintenance of the railings, gates, locks and seats. The railings were painted at least once every ten years. Lead colour was used by Hammond Bradley & Company, Wholesale Paper Stainers, in 1844.²⁸ No colour is mentioned when they were scraped and painted in 1855, but Sibthorpe & Son painted the railings ‘Bronze Green’ in 1866 (Plate 9).²⁹ In 1890 they were painted black.³⁰ The metal seats were also cleaned and painted over the years, and in 1877 new seats were commissioned from Grant & Lennon, Carpenters and Builders, using the original drawings.³¹

In 1862 Grant & Lennon, who were employed regularly by the Commis-

Commissioner Fitzwilliam Square

Bought of M. & C. O'KEEFFE,

NURSERYMEN,

HEYTESBURY STREET, DUBLIN, AND ROCK LODGE, COUNTY MEATH.

ALL LETTERS ADDRESSED HEYTESBURY STREET, DUBLIN.


CRATES, HAMPERS, ETC.. USED IN PACKING NOT TAKEN BACK

1870		£	s.	d.
26 May	6 Ligen Geranium	2	14	"
1	4 do Calceolaria	1	4	"
	2 do Ageratum	"	8	"
	2 do Heliotropus	"	12	"
	1 do Gazania	"	7	"
14 June	20 Dahlias	1	"	"
26 Oct	6 Evergreen Oak	"	3	"
	6 Eucalyptus Glob	"	6	"
	1 Miscanthus Boy	"	1	6
	2 Boy	"	2	"
26 th	1 Hybrid Hollis	2	12	6
	9 do do	2	5	"
	4 do do	"	14	"
2 Nov	24 Boy	"	12	"
	24 Malabar Pine	"	12	"
	1 Hedger Holly	"	7	6
4 Nov	12 Boy	"	6	"
8 th	6 Hybrid Hollis	1	1	"
		1	15	6



Paid
C. O'Keefe

Dec. 22. 1870 P James Walsh



5 Jan 1866

Estimate for Thomas Crosthwaite Esq
 Fitzwilliam Square
 (From H. Sibthorpe & Co) Ltd
 - Fitzwilliam Square Railings, &c.
 To clean and paint Iron Railing and
 gates to Square, including Wire-work
 2 coats Bronze Green. for £20.16.6

H. Sibthorpe & Son
 J.W.S.

opposite

8 - Account of
 M. & C. O'Keeffe, 1870

9 - Estimate from
 H. Sibthorpe and Son, 1866

10 - Notice posted by the
 Commissioners, 1866

NOTICE.

The Commissioners of Fitzwilliam Square have found it necessary to make the following Rule:—

"That the inhabitants of the Square shall altogether refrain from walking upon the centre Grass Plot till further notice; for the purpose of preventing injury to the Drainage Works now in progress."

The Gardener is empowered to prevent any violation of this rule.

5th November, 1866.

JAMES BELL, Printer, 26, Temple Lane, Dame Street.

sioners, built an implement shed in the garden to house a cast-iron tank, and sixty feet of lead piping was laid to it from the street outside.³² Four years later, drainage work was still in progress (Plate 10). Grant & Lennon also supplied new handles for the wheelbarrow, an item that recurs in the accounts almost as often as new blades and stones for the scythe. Gates and locks also required regular attention, and many loads of Killiney gravel were delivered for the paths.

In 1862 the Commissioners consisted of Richard Williamson, Henry Roe, Arthur Bushe, Montiford Longfield, Thomas Crosthwait, John George, Robert Tighe, Croker Barrington, Reverend Truell, Lt Col Gamble Lewes, James Hawthorn, Richard Green, William Le Fanu and Charles Kelly. Of these, Williamson, Roe and Truell had been living in their houses since they had been built over forty years previously. As well as signing the agreement with the Corporation for metered water to the square, these commissioners were also in charge when the Alliance & Dublin Consumers took over the servicing of the fourteen gas burners around the square.³³ Prior to that they had been looked after by the Hibernian Gas Light Company. In 1875 new gas pillars were erected, and shortly afterwards the old lamp-posts were cut down.³⁴

Notices concerning meetings and the election of commissioners were published in a variety of newsletters and newspapers over the years, including *Saunders's Newsletter*, *Dublin Gazette*, *Evening Mail* and, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the *Irish Times*. A substantial amount of printing was carried out for the Commissioners each year, including receipts, tax slips, circulars and special notices. Several firms were used, including Cowen & Thomson, Booksellers, Stationers, Letterpress and Lithographic Printers (Plate 1).



The commissioners in the 1880s included some new appointees, such as William Findlater, James Hamilton, Charles N. Clarke and Samuel Adair. They made significant additions and improvements to the garden. In 1882 the Corporation agreed to widen, kerb and concrete the pathway outside the railings on condition that the Commissioners paid half the total cost of £200, which was agreed.³⁵ A few years later a further improvement took place when a small timber summerhouse was erected. This was repainted in 1890 with 'the roof in terracotta, the woodwork blue and all the grained work varnished'.³⁶ In 1892 a copy of the celebrated Gooseman fountain in the market place at Nuremburg was erected in the south-east corner. Unfortunately, the small bronze figure was stolen during the period of neglect in the 1970s after the Act expired. The polished granite bowl of the fountain remains.

TENNIS

Over the years, the playing of games in the garden was the subject of much discussion by the Commissioners. As early as 1837 it had been resolved that no ‘Dogs, Bows and Arrows or Pegtops be on any pretence allowed in the garden’.³⁷ A few years later, croquet was proscribed, much to the annoyance of Mr Keatinge of no. 21 who could not understand why his children were not allowed to play, as the game was permitted in Merrion and Wilton squares in Dublin, and in Berkely Square and all the London squares. Nineteenth-century vandalism produced a stern resolution from the Commissioners in 1875 that football, archery, cricket, toy firearms and fireworks were strictly prohibited (Plate 12). Yet again, in 1877 it was resolved that ‘Cricket, Hockey and all such rough games be strictly prohibited’.³⁸ Tennis was (and still is) the only permitted sport in the square, and the game there created its own little bit of sporting history. In 1879 the committee of the Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club advertised that it ‘proposed to hold the Championship of Ireland open to all-comers’.³⁹ There would be a gentlemen’s singles, a ladies’ singles, a gentlemen’s doubles and ‘a doubles for a lady and a gentleman as partners’.⁴⁰ Not having enough space at their grounds in Pembroke Street, the Committee applied to the Commissioners of Fitzwilliam Square, and permission was granted to hold the championships in the garden. These were the first Championships of Ireland, and the ladies’ singles was the first such event ever played, anywhere in the world. Five years would pass before the All England Club (Wimbledon) would include a ladies’ singles in their championships.

The championships held in the square became a glittering annual event (Plate 11). Bands playing during the week were a feature, with the band of the Welsh Regiment or that of the King’s Own Regiment taking part. The week was one of the social highlights of the year. An unreferenced newspaper report of 1886, quoted in *The Fitzwilliam Story*, said ‘Fitzwilliam Square was crowded with spectators, the gaiety of the scene being enhanced by a large number of young ladies in pretty toilets.’⁴¹ It goes on to describe dusk falling and the great Georgian windows of the square lighting up as the dancing began. Percy French, the songwriter and poet, who was a member of the club, wrote a ballad each year for the tournament, and copies were on sale in the club and around the city. These ballad sheets were illustrated by Richard Caulfield Orpen, cousin of Sir William Orpen, the painter, who lived in no. 29 Fitzwilliam Square, and who was later the architect for the new pavilion built by the Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club in Wilton Place.

overleaf

11 – *Tennis Championships of Ireland, Fitzwilliam Square, 1897* (courtesy FLTC)



FITZWILLIAM SQUARE GARDEN AND ITS COMMISSIONERS



17th April, 1875.

It having been represented to the Commissioners of Fitzwilliam Square, that considerable damage has recently been done to the shrubs, seats, and other property in such Square by the sons of some of the inhabitants and subscribers and others, and much annoyance caused by their unruly conduct to the other inhabitants and their children.

At a Special Meeting held this day to consider the matter it was resolved, "that instructions be given to the Gardener to immediately Summon to the Police Court every person who individually or collectively shall in future be found to do any kind of damage in such Square, or cause any annoyance to any inhabitant, or his, or her child, and that instructions be given to the Register to employ a solicitor to prosecute such summons, and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded by the Register to every inhabitant of the Square, and to the parents of those boys not residing in the Square who have been reported, or shall be found at any time, either to be in, or associated with those who have been, or shall be concerned, in the matter complained of."

The Penalty under the Act for enclosing the Square, for any injury done thereto is £5 damages, or two months imprisonment.

Foot Ball, Archery, Cricket, and Toy Fire Arms or Fire Works are strictly prohibited.

~~~~~  
4, NASSAU STREET,

20th April, 1875.

SIR,

As directed by the above resolution, I beg leave to send you a copy thereof.

I am Sir,

Your obedient servant,

## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

No records of the work of the Commissioners survive for the first half of the twentieth century, but relatively little planting, compared to the previous century, appears to have taken place. The current hawthorn, laburnum and lilac were planted, and recently some variegated maple, silver birch and Norwegian pine have been introduced; these latter species are not appropriate to the garden. Intensive propagation of flowers ceased after the Second World War because of cost and changing conditions, but the families living on the square helped in maintaining the flower beds for a number of years. This practice ceased when the use of the houses changed from residential to commercial in the 1960s and most of the families moved out of the square.

There were no building additions during the twentieth century. Since 1897, the Jellett family and their descendants have lived in no. 36 Fitzwilliam Square. Ms Bay Jellett, sister of the painter Mainie Jellett, evocatively recalled in her later years how, in her childhood, the summerhouse remained the focal point in the garden, where ‘the Nannies in their starched uniforms sat chatting and watching their charges’.<sup>42</sup>

## THE EXPIRY OF THE ACT

In 1963 the original 150-year lease of the garden expired and the land reverted absolutely to the Earl of Pembroke. The Commissioners of the square thus no longer had any legal standing, and went out of existence. The historic link between the Commissioners and the early days of the square was broken.

It is a curious fact that the Commissioners of the square appear to have been completely autonomous. Other than the fact, enshrined in the Act, that the ground of the garden is leased from the Viscounts Fitzwilliam, there is no extant account or letter linking the day-to-day workings of the Commissioners with the Fitzwilliam / Pembroke estate, or vice versa. Prior to the Act, the garden of Fitzwilliam Square is mentioned in letters in 1797 to Lord Fitzwilliam from Barbara Verschoyle, the agent for the Fitzwilliam estate, concerning the enclosing of the garden and erecting the statue of King George.<sup>43</sup> Nowhere else in the extensive and detailed letter books of Verschoyle does any reference to the Commissioners or the garden appear. The surviving detailed accounts and correspondence of the Commissioners, which extend from 1837 to 1893, make no reference to the agent or to the Pembroke estate. Furthermore, no bills, invoices or correspondence appear to have passed between the two. As the annual accounts and receipts of the Commissioners show, each year a rent-charge of 5s 8d was paid by the Commissioners ‘in lieu of Tithes, due to the Dean and Chapter of St. Patrick’s, Dublin, out of ... holding in the Parish of St.



*13 – The Victorian summerhouse, Fitzwilliam Square garden*

Peter's'.<sup>44</sup> This appears to have been the only outside agency to which the Commissioners had obligations. The Fitzwilliam / Pembroke estate was a tightly run organisation, so the apparent complete autonomy of the Commissioners appears as an anomaly.

When the Act expired in 1963, several years of discussion ensued as the various options were investigated. Dublin Corporation was prepared to take it over but Lord Pembroke was not in favour of such a solution. At one point it was hoped that some arrangement could be made with the Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club, but this came to nothing. In the end, a non-profit-making company, limited by guarantee, was agreed as the best solution, and the Fitzwilliam Square Association Ltd was formed in 1971. The Earl of Pembroke leased the garden to the Association for another 150 years at the peppercorn rent of 5p per annum. There are conditions attached to the lease. The rates must be paid and the garden kept in repair. No public entertainment or exhibition can be held in it, and it must be used as a private park. These are pertinent factors from the point of view of conservation.

During the years from 1963 until the Association became active in the 1970s, the garden was completely neglected. It became overgrown and the flower beds dis-

appeared. This was when the figurine was stolen from the fountain. It was also a time of danger for the houses as it was a period of great change. The many doctors who practised on the square were moving out with their families. Ten houses were vacant and no. 5 was derelict, with its front windows boarded up with concrete blocks. The spectre of the fate of Mountjoy Square, with its demolitions and dereliction, loomed. Fortunately, other professions and businesses moved in to fill the gap left by the doctors, the façade of no. 5 was saved, and the square survived.

Once the Association was up and running the revival of the garden began. A gardener, Patrick Donoghue, was employed, and the garden slowly began to take shape again. The railings and gates were repaired, and keys once again issued to those living on the square and surrounding streets.<sup>45</sup> A major achievement of the new Association was to raise funds for the restoration of the summerhouse (Plate 13).<sup>46</sup> The garden was in safe hands again.

To have this urban space, with its original Georgian layout and landscape, virtually untouched is unique in Ireland, and retaining it is a matter of importance. The Association's sensible low-maintenance approach to the garden is ideal from a conservation point of view, and is backed up by careful monitoring of the condition of the trees and shrubs. There is a current suggestion that the garden should be transferred to Dublin Corporation and become a public space. This is not desirable as it could lead to the garden being landscaped and prettified, as has been done to the detriment of its historical character in the garden of Merrion Square. Such treatment should be avoided at all costs in the unique surviving garden of Fitzwilliam Square. The garden is integral to Fitzwilliam Square as a whole, and not just in the physical sense. Seen constantly through the windows, this large, leafy space clearly belongs to its houses in a way which is not possible with the public spaces of St Stephen's Green, Mountjoy Square and Merrion Square. This special relationship is sensed by the outsider, the passer-by: the garden is perceived as the green, calm, slightly mysterious heart of the square.

The large, open, grassed area in the centre still remains and is used for tennis in the summer, the double-belt walk, with its informally planted shrubs and trees, is untouched, and the intact square of rosy red-brick houses continues to stand guard. On a summer's evening, with the noise of the traffic stilled, it can be little different from when the first commissioners strolled along the paths nearly two centuries ago.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

All copies of FSA archive documents are reproduced courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Square Association. All photographs and copy photographs by Gavin Frankel, unless otherwise stated.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Calendar of Ancient Deeds*, Pembroke Estate Papers, National Archives of Ireland, acc. no. 1011/1.
- <sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, no.322.
- <sup>3</sup> R.M. Butler scrapbook, Irish Architectural Archive, acc. no. 85/135.
- <sup>4</sup> *A Map of the Estate of the Right Honble Lord Viscount Fitzwilliam within the Circular Road ... 1789*, Pembroke Estate Papers, National Archives of Ireland, acc. no. 2011/2/1/13.
- <sup>5</sup> Letter books, Verschoyle to Fitzwilliam, April 1799, Pembroke Estate Papers, National Archives of Ireland, acc. no. 97/46/3/1.
- <sup>6</sup> J. Warburton, J. Whitelaw and R. Walsh, *The History of the County and City of Dublin*, 2 vols (Dublin 1818) i, 459.
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 465.
- <sup>8</sup> *A Map of Part of the Estate of The Rt. Honble The Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery situate in the County of the City of Dublin by John Roe 1822*, Pembroke Estate Papers, National Archives of Ireland, acc. no. 2011/2/1/28.
- <sup>9</sup> *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin (CARD)* 19 vols (Dublin 1889-1944) xiv, 272.
- <sup>10</sup> Letter books, Verschoyle to Fitzwilliam, March 1797, Pembroke Estate Papers, National Archives of Ireland, acc. no. 97/46/3/1.
- <sup>11</sup> R.M. Butler scrapbook, op. cit.
- <sup>12</sup> *CARD*, xv, 408.
- <sup>13</sup> ANNO QUINQUAGESIMO TERTIO GEORGII III. REGIS Cap. 185. An Act for inclosing, lighting, and improving *Fitzwilliam Square*, in the County of the City of *Dublin* [2d July 1813]. Copy in Irish Architectural Archive, acc. no. RP.D.40.1.
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 37z.
- <sup>15</sup> *ibid.* ‘Schedule of the Several Houses and Grounds around Fitzwilliam Square, specifying by whom inhabited, occupied, or taken, his, her, or their Representatives and Assigns; as also the Number of Feet contained in their several Fronts respectively’.
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, ix.
- <sup>17</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> Fitzwilliam Square Association Archive (FSAA), currently on loan to the author. These documents are uncatalogued and sorted by date into three boxes (box 1, 2 and 3) and eighteen fold-

ers (A1-A15, B1-2 and C1). Folders A1-A15 contain invoices, receipts and accounts 1843-92; folders B1 and B2 contain correspondence and notes 1837-91; folder C1 contains sundry items, such as debentures, cheque books, etc; box 3 contains documents 1973-92. In the following notes, the classification referred to here will be adopted.

- <sup>19</sup> Account of Thos. Bridgford & Sons 1845, box 1, A1, FSAA
- <sup>20</sup> Account of Thomas Barnes 1849, box 1, A1, FSAA
- <sup>21</sup> Account of The Dublin Woollen Warehouse 1846, box 1, A1, FSAA
- <sup>22</sup> Account of Edmondson and Co. 1855, box 1, A4, FSAA
- <sup>23</sup> Accounts of Thomas Barnes and M. O'Keefe 1856, box 1, A4, FSAA
- <sup>24</sup> Annual accounts 1874, box 2, A11, FSAA
- <sup>25</sup> Account of Ellen Smith Sailors' Outfitting Establishment 1875, box 2, A11, FSAA
- <sup>26</sup> Account of Robert Mills 1867, box 1, A8, FSAA
- <sup>27</sup> Account of Charles Ramsey 1871, box 2, A10, FSAA
- <sup>28</sup> Account of Hammond Bradley 1849, box 1, A1, FSAA
- <sup>29</sup> Account of H Sibthorpe & Son 1866, box 1, A8, FSAA
- <sup>30</sup> Annual accounts 1866, box 1, A8, FSAA
- <sup>31</sup> Account of Grant & Lennon 1862, box 1, A6, FSAA
- <sup>32</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> *Memorandum of Agreement between the Commissioners and Dublin Corporation 1869*, box 1, A9, FSAA
- <sup>34</sup> Annual accounts 1875, box 2, A11, FSAA
- <sup>35</sup> Receipt from Bank of Ireland 1882, box 2, A13, FSAA
- <sup>36</sup> Annual accounts 1890, box 2, A14, FSAA
- <sup>37</sup> Minutes of meeting 1837, box 2, B1, FSAA
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 1877.
- <sup>39</sup> Minutes of meeting of committee of Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club, March 1879, minute book, Fitzwilliam Lawn Tennis Club, Appian Way, Dublin.
- <sup>40</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> Ulick O'Connor, *The Story of Fitzwilliam 1877-1977* (Dublin 1977).
- <sup>42</sup> Interview with Ms Bay Jellett by Dr Michael Solomons, Feb 1983; transcript in possession of author (courtesy of Dr Solomons).
- <sup>43</sup> See note 10 above.
- <sup>44</sup> Receipt from the Dean and Chapter of St Patrick's 1853, box 1, A3, FSAA
- <sup>45</sup> Annual report FSA Secretary 1976, box 3, FSAA
- <sup>46</sup> *ibid.*