



1 – Dublin Artisans' Dwellings Company houses from the Rialto scheme, facing the South Circular Road, Dublin. (all illustrations courtesy Irish Architectural Archive)

The Dublin Artisans' Dwellings Company

COLUM O'RIORDAN

AMONG THE MOST COMMON ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF DUBLIN CITY – though not the grandest – are the rows of solid two-up two-down red-brick houses and single-storey cottages to be found in neat clusters across the city (Plate 2). Indeed, whole areas of the city are characterised by these houses, from Harold's Cross to Infirmary Road, and from Rialto to Stoneybatter. A number of agencies and organisations built these types of houses, including Dublin Corporation, but the organisation perhaps most associated with them is the Dublin Artisans' Dwellings Company. This article sets out the origins of this building enterprise, and charts its progress over more than a century of involvement in the planning and development of Dublin.

On 22 April 1876 a conference took place in the Shelbourne Hotel on the subject of the Dublin housing situation. In particular, the conference sought to address the question of how suitable housing for the working or industrial classes of the city might be provided. The immediate spur to action had been the passing in 1875 of the Artizans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act (the Cross Act), legislation which, in essence, allowed local authorities to acquire derelict or vacant properties, to clear the sites so acquired, and to lease these sites to private commercial companies for the purposes of constructing suitable housing for the working classes. The Dublin Sanitary Association, formed in 1872, claimed credit for the fact that the act applied to Ireland, but felt that the actual implementation of the legislation was beyond its province. It, and others, recognised, however, that an opportunity now existed to bring about a much-needed improvement in the housing situation in Dublin.¹

The meeting resolved that 'inasmuch as the houses at present occupied by the artisans and labourers of Dublin are to a great extent of such a character as to be highly injurious to the moral and physical welfare of the inhabitants, this meeting is



2 – Artisan dwelling houses on Lennox Street, Dublin

of the opinion that a movement should be set on foot to provide suitable and healthy dwellings for these classes of the community.² It was further decided that, in order to consider the best means of achieving these objectives, a committee should be formed to report back to an adjourned session of the conference. *The Irish Builder*, in reporting these events, wondered whether ‘determined action has at last been taken’, or whether it was witnessing instead ‘another outcrop of resolving which begins in talk and ends by an exhaustion of the same element for a time’.³ As it happened, determined action had indeed been taken. The committee, at its first session, recommended ‘the formation of a Company to be designated the Artizans’ Industrial Dwelling Company “Limited” having for its objects the procuring of suitable sites for, and the erection of appropriate dwellings’.⁴ A subcommittee was charged with the task of preparing a prospectus for the new company, settling matters of capital and number of shares and arranging ‘all matters of detail’. The sub-committee set to work at the end of April 1876, and had completed its task by the end of May. The

first meeting of the board of directors of the newly formed Dublin Artisans' Dwellings Company took place on 13 June 1876; the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company were finalised and adopted by the beginning of August, and the first shares were issued the following month.

According to the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the objectives of the Company were to acquire lands in the city or county of Dublin, whether outright or by lease, and to erect on such lands 'dwelling-houses or places of residence for Artisans and others, with such offices, out-houses, and buildings, fittings, and conveniences, as may be deemed proper in connection with such dwellings or places of residence'.⁵ These dwellings were then to be leased to tenants. The Company was also empowered to acquire existing tenements, whether for demolition or improvement, to lend money to assist with building improvements, to borrow money, and to work in conjunction with, or amalgamate with, other companies with similar objectives. Capital to support these objectives would be raised, in the first instance, through the issuing of shares. While undoubtedly philanthropic, the enterprise was conceived from the outset as commercial; the object was to provide suitable accommodation for working people and to make a profit in the process.

Sir Arthur Guinness, who had chaired the initial Shelbourne Hotel meeting, became the Company's first chairman (a position he occupied in a more honorary fashion than any of his successors, leaving the day-to-day chairman's duties to his deputy, Richard Martin), while Edward Cecil Guinness agreed to act as a trustee. Completing the first board of directors were Richard Owen Armstrong, William Findlater, Edward Hudson Kinahan, Frederick Stokes and Robert Warren, a combination of solid and respectable businessmen, lawyers and merchants. Jonathan Pim, the Dublin Sanitary Association's president, acted as one of the first trustees of the Company, while Robert O'Brien Furlong, an honorary secretary of the Association, was one of its first auditors. More significantly, Edward Spencer, the secretary of the Association, became the Company's secretary, placing his considerable administrative skills at its disposal. The Company also attracted notable political and social support. Both Arthur and Cecil Guinness were among the Company's first shareholders, as were all the members of the board. Other initial shareholders included Edmund Dwyer Gray, proprietor of *The Freeman's Journal* (and incidentally the only member of Dublin Corporation who had attended the April 1876 conference), James Whiteside, Lord Chief Justice, Richard Chevenix Trench, Archbishop of Dublin, and the earls of Meath and Pembroke.

The Company quickly set about its task, offers of potential sites for acquisition having been received before it was even properly established. By the middle of 1877, less than a year after that establishment, two of Dublin's leading architects, Thomas Newenham Deane and Thomas Drew, were engaged on three separate pro-

THE DUBLIN ARTISANS DWELLINGS CO^y LIMITED,
 12 WILLIAM ST^y DUBLIN.
 COOMBE PROPERTY.

RE-CONSTRUCTION OF SANITARY ARRANGEMENTS.

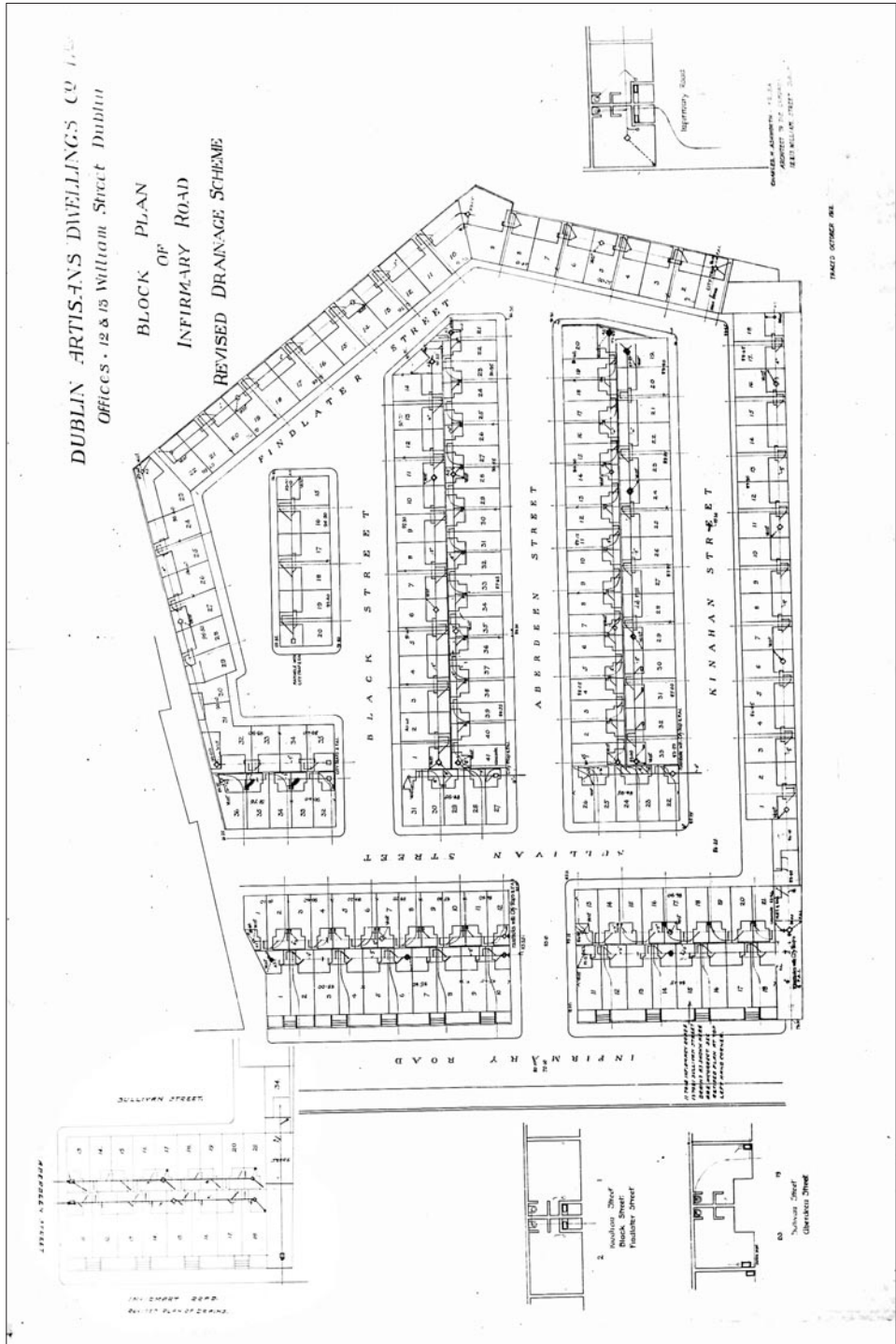




*4 – Buckingham Street Buildings, Dublin
opposite 3 – Coombe scheme, showing drainage revisions, c.1910 (IAA 79/26.9/6R1)*

jects, the former on Temple Buildings, Upper Dominick Street, and the Echlin Street Buildings development, and the latter on Buckingham Street Buildings (Plate 4).

These first three developments consisted mainly of blocks of one or two-room flats, although the vast majority of the Company's dwellings would be one or two-bedroomed single-storey cottages or two to three-bedroomed two-storey houses.⁶ The first scheme to exclusively consist of cottages and houses was at Kirwan Street, begun in 1879 and constructed to a design submitted not by an architect but by the building contractor James Beckett. In 1881 work began on the Company's Coombe scheme (Plate 3). Designed by Drew, this was the first site to be developed by the Company under the terms of the 1875 Cross Act. Dublin Corporation had acquired and cleared some of the most wretched slums in the city – with all their inhabitants – from the site, which the Company then leased from the Corporation for 10,000 years at a rent of £200 per annum.



Drew's initial proposals for the Coombe were criticised by the Company board, and he was required to revise them on a number of occasions. He had previously complained that the Company would not pay for work done in designing schemes with which it did not proceed.⁷ The Company's view was that it was not liable to pay fees unless a development was actually built, and so refused to pay for design work on unrealised schemes. Whether it was because of issues such as these, or whether it was because the Company was able to rely on enterprising contractors and its own clerks of works rather than architects to lay out schemes, the Coombe scheme represents Drew's last direct dealings with the Company. Deane, who in June 1879 had solicited an appointment as company architect,⁸ also had his difficulties with the board, complaining on one occasion (January 1878)⁹ that the board was giving instructions to the contractors on site without reference to himself as architect, a practice which had led to confusion and embarrassment as well as extra expense. Once the Temple Buildings and Echlin Street schemes were complete, Deane too ceased to work for the Company. It was not until Charles Ashworth was appointed Company architect in July 1890 that a professional architect again was directly involved in the development of the Company's housing.

In the decade between the start of the Coombe development and the appointment of Ashworth, the Company was extremely busy. Schemes at Portobello, Rutland Street, Harold's Cross, Infirmary Road, Plunkett Street, Clanbrassil Street, Bray Commons, Seville Place, Rialto, New Row and Crampton Quay were put in hand and taken to completion with an assiduous attention to standards and money. The Company minute books detail progress on each scheme. Land acquisition, the tendering process, problems with contractors, the choice of building materials, and negotiations with the relevant local authority over who should pay for sewers, roads and lighting are all recorded, as are more prosaic decisions such as the appropriate names for the new streets in the Company's schemes. (A common source for names was the membership of the board of directors. Hence the 1885 Infirmary Road scheme has a Black Street, a Kinahan Street, and a Findlater Street, all named after members of the board (Plate 5).) Above all, the Company's concern with the question of costs can be seen. Few bills were paid unquestioned, and, in particular, payments to contractors were subject to very careful scrutiny. More often than not, revisions were demanded and final settlements were rarely in line with a contractor's initial submission.

Once a development was built, the lands and houses were mortgaged to the Board of Works under the terms of legislation, such as the Public Works Loans Act,

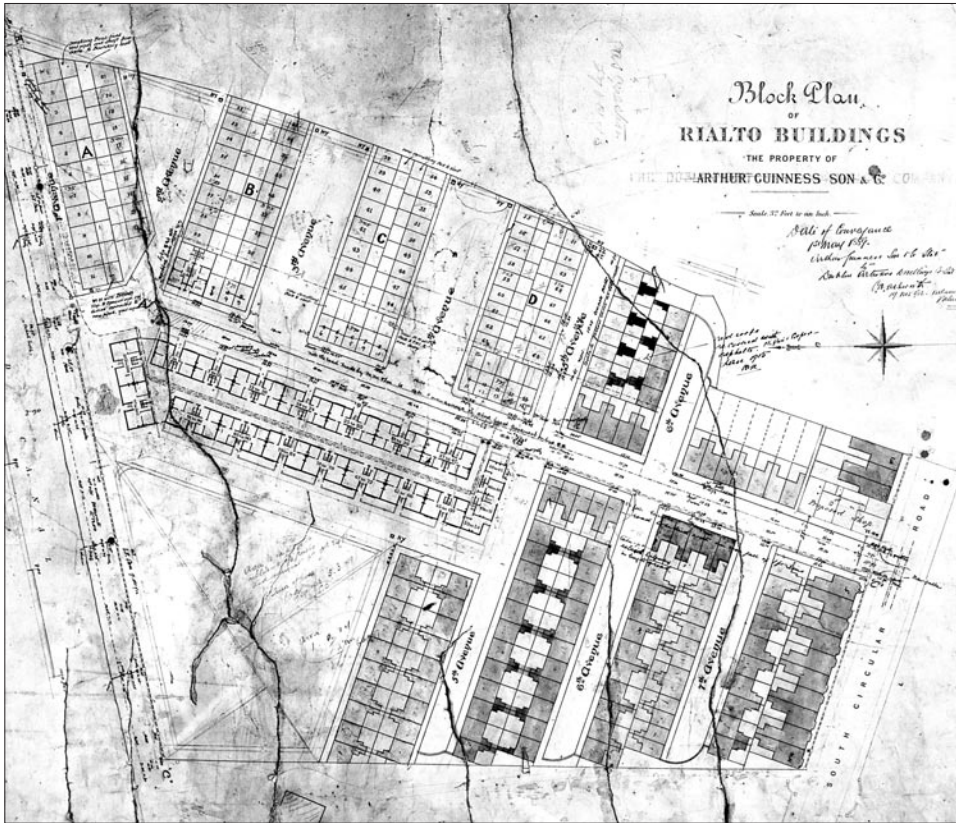
opposite 5 – Infirmary Road scheme, showing revised drainage, 1912 (IAA 79/26.10/34R1)

1879, designed to assist with the development of proper housing for workers. Funds thus raised were used to meet payment demands for schemes already built and to fund further activities. Building money was also raised through a succession of new share issues in 1882, 1888, 1894 and 1900. And as schemes came on line, rental income began to accumulate (Plate 6), allowing the Company to pay dividends to its shareholders (beginning in 1878) and remuneration to its directors. Indeed, rental income was critical to the commercial success of the entire enterprise, and the board was concerned in the early years that its houses might prove unpopular or remain unoccupied. On one occasion (October 1879) it went so far as to order 250 posters to be put up in Dublin advertising the properties.¹⁰ However, such concerns gradually subsided, and soon disappeared altogether. In December 1888 Arthur Guinness & Co. issued instructions to its workers that it would no longer pay any sick pay unless the applicant lived in a house 'the sanitary condition of which was certified'. Dublin Artisans' Dwellings Company houses were specifically exempted from this rule, and so the Company was inundated with requests from Guinness workers for houses.¹¹ The War Department also began regularly to rent Company property to house soldiers, in particular in the Harold's Cross and Mount Temple developments which were near army barracks.

With a clear and rising demand for its houses, the Company was able to press ahead with its building activities and enter into new types of housing ventures. In 1883 the Company reached an agreement with the Earl of Meath – who, with his wife, had a long established concern for improving housing – to build for him a

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7 12 3	7 12 3		Buckingham " " " "	-
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6 – Page from the Company's first ledger for the period 10-31 August 1878 showing rental income from the first schemes constructed (IAA 79/26.4/1/1, 19)



7 – Block plan of Rialto Buildings

The date of the purchase of the development by the Company is noted on the plan. The central block and the cottages marked A to D were constructed by Guinness, while the shaded houses were constructed by the Company subsequent to the acquisition of the property. (IAA 79/26.12/77R1)

housing scheme beside its own Coombe houses.¹² The result was the ‘Tripoli’ development, or Pimlico Cottages, which the Company administered for Lord Meath for many years in return for a specified percentage of the rents collected. In August 1887 the Company similarly agreed to take on the administration of Willington Darley’s twenty-seven houses in the Coombe. Again, in 1889, the Company agreed to administer W. Hogg & Company’s buildings in Fownes Street.¹³ The Company also occasionally acquired tenement buildings, which, when suitable, it kept in occupancy pending demolition or redevelopment. And it acquired artisan housing built by others. In 1887 it began negotiations to purchase from Guinness & Co. not only an area of land at Rialto which it could develop (and subsequently did), but also a block of flats, Rialto Buildings, and cottages (110 dwellings in all) which Guinness had already constructed (Plate 7).

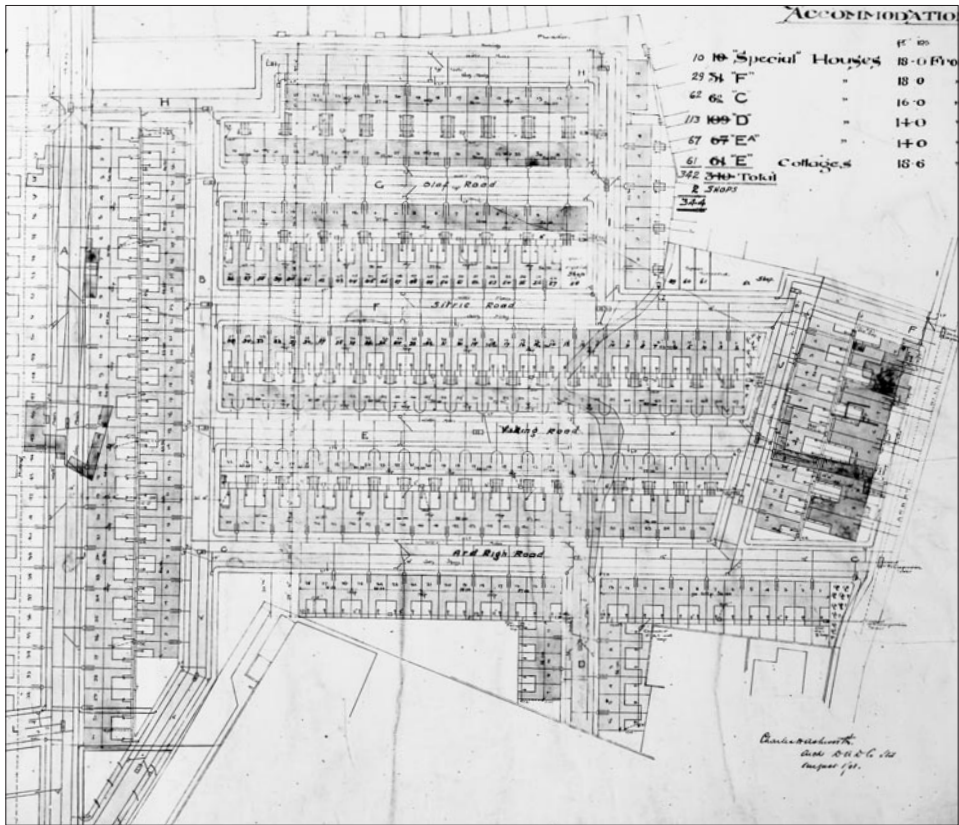


*8 – Company houses from the Rialto scheme, facing South Circular Road, Dublin
The architectural style adopted for this row of houses is unique amongst the Company's schemes.*



These negotiations, and the increased demand for Company houses from Guinness workers, eventually led to an agreement between the Company and the Guinness Trust whereby the Company would act as the agent for the Trust in developing Trust housing.¹⁴ The identification and acquisition of sites, the layout of those sites and the appointment of contractors, would all be in the Company's hands, with decisions to be ratified by the Trust. This agreement was a principal spur in the Company's decision to appoint its own architect, Charles Ashworth, since it was perceived that it would lead to a greatly increased building workload. In the event, the agreement was short-lived, running from May 1890 until February 1892, when the Trust decided to take over its own building operations in Dublin. Edward Spencer, the Company's secretary, had been central to the negotiation of the scheme, and had borne principal responsibility for its smooth operation. His sudden death on 21 September 1891 accelerated the decision to bring the arrangement to an end. Short as it was, the formal collaboration with the Trust did have some lasting results, principally the Thomas Court (Rainsford Street) development of 1890-91, and the acquisition by the Trust of its Kevin Street site.¹⁵

Following the ending of the Guinness Trust arrangement, Ashworth, whose conditions of appointment had specified that he would work for the Company alone, was informed that



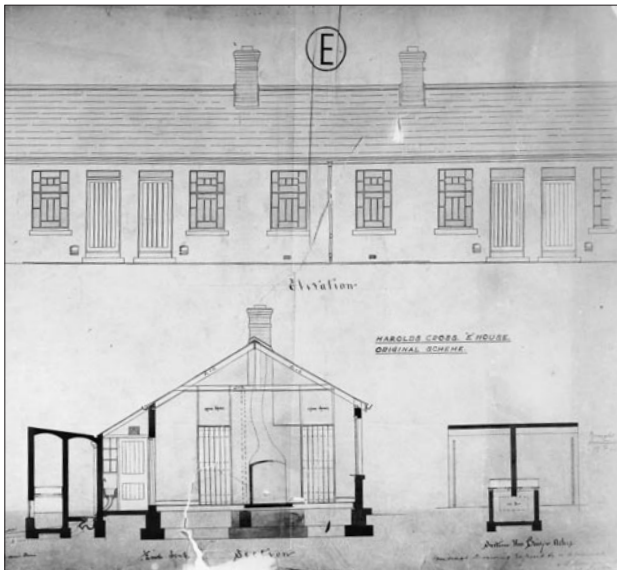
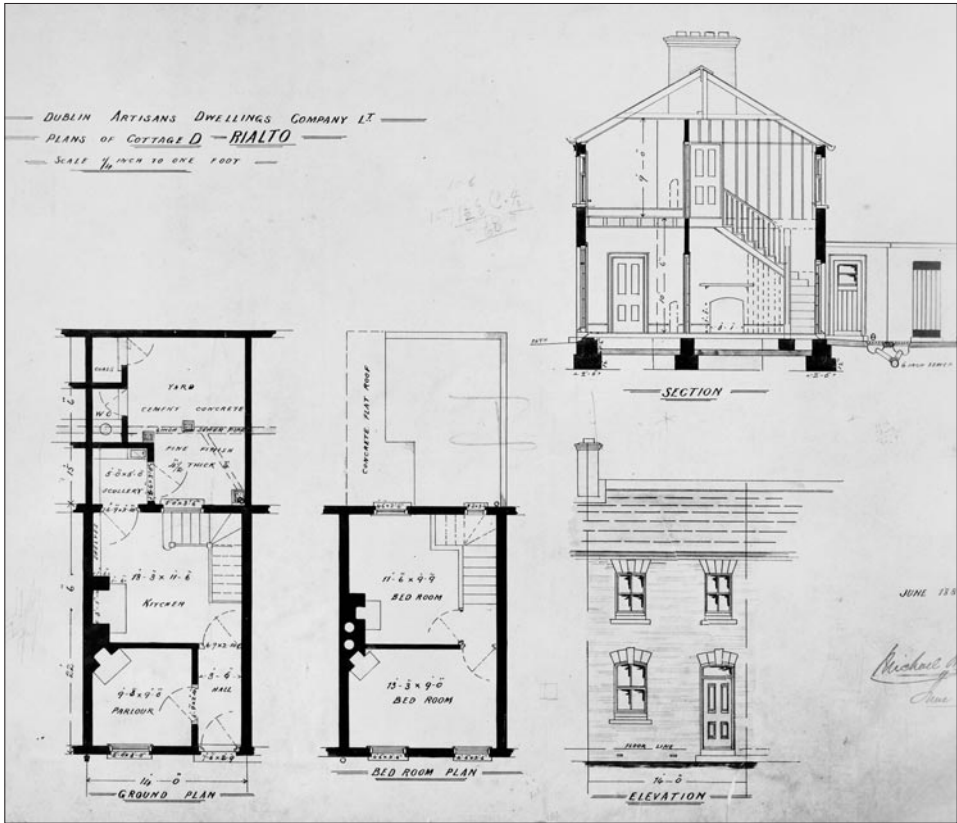
9 – Manor Place scheme, lower section
(IAA 79/26.10/69R7)

should he wish to carry out work other than for the Company he could do so, though board approval would be required on each occasion he found such work. Ashworth rarely had time to explore this option as Company work kept him very busy. He was required to review all repairs and redecoration, a task which saw him constantly visiting individual properties to assess the needs for painting, papering or general maintenance. (A considerable proportion of Ashworth's time was spent on these inspections, while a correspondingly large portion of the board's time was spent considering, debating and deciding on reports detailing minor damage to, or the decorative state of, houses.) The architect was also responsible for reviewing all sites offered to the Company, and for upgrading sanitary and plumbing arrangements on the older schemes. This latter task occupied much of his time from the mid-1890s as arrangements provided in the earliest schemes ceased to be acceptable. As for new building, after Thomas Court, and minor additions to the Coombe development

(Meath Terrace), Clanbrassil Street and Kirwan Street, Ashworth laid out the extension to the Harold's Cross development at Mount Drummond and a series of extensions to the Rialto scheme (Plate 8). He also designed the largest of all the Company's schemes – the Mount Temple or Manor Place development. Running from the North Circular Road to Arbour Hill, and flanked on one side by Stoneybatter, Manor Street and Aughrim Street, and on the other by the Royal (Collins) Barracks, the first phase of this development – the Aughrim Street scheme – was begun in 1891. The rest of the development was progressed in a number of phases – Manor Place Lower (from Manor Place to Arbour Hill) (Plate 9), Middle (Manor Place to Halliday Road), and Upper (Halliday Road to Cowper Street).

Speedy progress on the development of Company schemes was helped by the design approach adopted. In essence, the Company limited itself to a very small number of house plans or types, generally designated by a letter (A, C, D, E, E^A, F, F^A). Types A to E all predated Ashworth's appointment as Company architect, but continued to be used by him. Schemes were laid out in block plans of parallel streets using specific house types as appropriate or desired. Odd angles or extra plots were filled by 'Special' houses specifically designed to fit, but as these one-off interventions cost more to build, they were kept to a minimum. Once the number of each house type was established, contractors, especially those who had worked for the Company before, could quickly submit accurate tenders by revising the unit cost of the same house type from a previous scheme. Additional standard houses could also easily be added to schemes during contract periods, based on the agreed contact price for that particular house type.

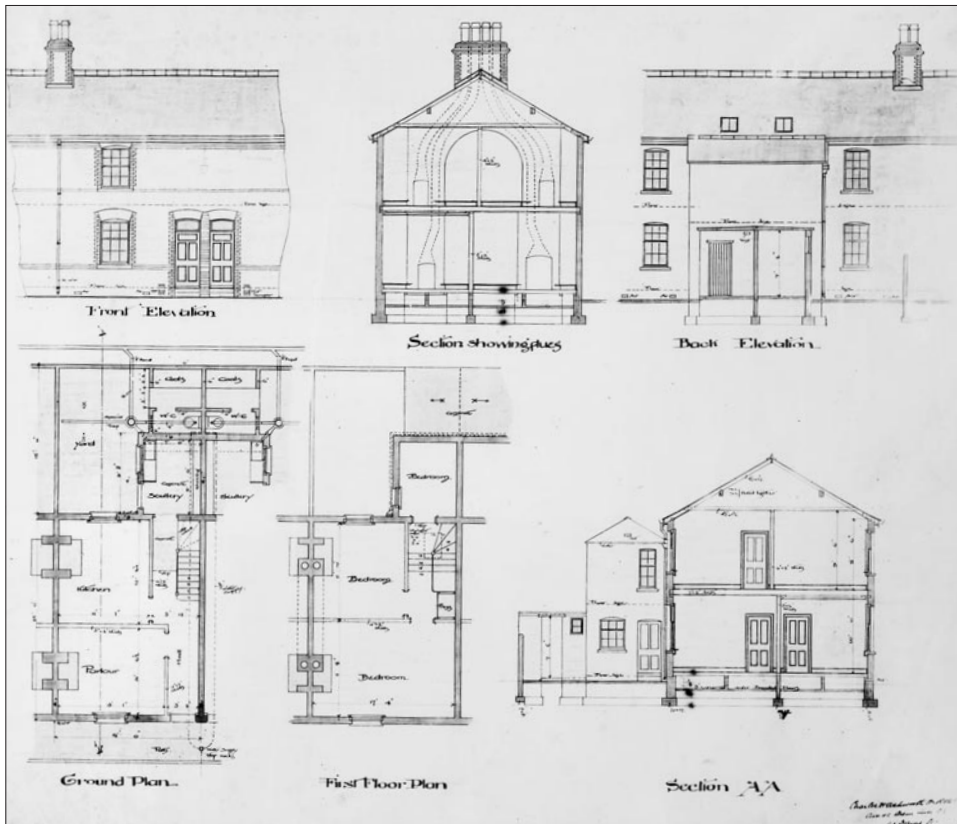
Type A was a two-bay, two-roomed, single-storey cottage, the simplest of the house designs built by the Company. It was used in schemes from Rialto to Dun Laoghaire, but seems not to have been used from the late 1890s onwards. Although a particular design in the Coombe scheme is referred to as House B, Drew's Coombe Cottages are atypical for the Company – as was the layout of the scheme around squares rather than in rows of streets – and a type B designation does not seem to have been employed elsewhere. (Similarly, a House G appears in the John Dillon Street scheme but nowhere else). Type C was a two-bay, two-storey house with four rooms (a parlour and living room on the ground floor and two bedrooms above). Type D was a narrower version of type C (Plate 10). Type E was a three-bay, three-roomed (living room and two bedrooms), single-storey cottage (Plate 11). This was the most common single-storey dwelling, and hence the most common of all house types constructed by the Company. Type E also illustrates the fact that there was room for some alterations within the parameters of the basic house pattern. Type E cottages could have façades with a central door flanked on the left and right by a window, or the door could be set to the left or right with the windows



10 – Elevation, section and plans of a two-storey type D house from the Rialto scheme (IAA 79/26.12/77R4)

11 – Elevation and section of a typical E-type cottage

This example is from the Harold's Cross scheme. The unusual glazing is a distinctive feature of many of the Company's developments. (IAA 79/26.10/25R7)



12 – Elevations, sections and plans of an F-type house from the Manor Place scheme, lower section. (IAA 79/29.10/69R4)

paired beside it, while façades could be of red-brick or rendered as desired.

Type E^A dwellings, first introduced by Ashworth in the Harold's Cross / Mount Drummond scheme, were two-storey, three-roomed houses (living room downstairs, two bedrooms above). For the first time, the 'scullery' was more than a simple sink space attached to the back of the dwelling. It became almost a full room in its own right. Type F, again first used at Mount Drummond and then in the Manor Place development, was a six-roomed, two-storey dwelling (Plate 12). On the ground floor was a parlour and kitchen, with a large scullery to the rear; on the first floor were two large bedrooms, with a box-bedroom over the scullery. House type F^A, used at Mount Drummond, was a more sophisticated version of type F; the scullery now became a proper kitchen, with its own fire place and larder. The house had two downstairs 'parlours', while the third upstairs bedroom was larger than those in the F-type houses, and had its own fireplace. A comparison of type A with

type F^A clearly shows the development of standards acceptable for working-class houses, from two-roomed cottage with one fireplace to six-roomed house with separate kitchen and six fireplaces. In all house types however, the WC was located in the rear yard of the dwelling, separated from the house proper. All yards also contained a coal shed.

While the Company archives shed a great deal of light on the business of construction, information relating to those who actually occupied the houses is harder to come by. What must have been very substantial records relating to the Company's tenants are missing from the archives of the Company now held by the Irish Architectural Archive. Only a single rental – and that, a very late example – is included in the collection. There are no other rent books, no completed tenancy agreements, no tenant lists and no tenant correspondence aside from occasional references or quotations in the minute books. And so, it is only through those minute books that any impression of the Company's interaction with its tenants can be formed.

Careful vetting of those it accepted as tenants ensured that the Company generally had little difficulty in collecting rents. It set high standards for the tenants in terms of their behaviour and the way they kept the properties, and was rigid in the enforcement of its rules, resorting to eviction when necessary. This was balanced by a concern on the part of the Company for the general welfare of the tenantry. The chairman reported to each Annual General Meeting (until as late as the mid-1950s) on the overall health of the tenant population, comparing the death rate of its tenants favourably to the death rate in the rest of the city. In return for good behaviour and prompt payment of rents, the Company responded quickly and positively to requests for repair or redecoration. The Company was happy to allow improvements to individual dwellings, such as the replacement of open ranges with closed, the installation of baths, the introduction of gas and, eventually, electricity, though tenants might be required to share the expenses of these innovations. A close eye was kept on numbers occupying houses, and while subletting was allowed, overcrowding was not. Where necessary and possible, the Company would move larger families from smaller to larger houses. Rent collectors, or 'caretakers' as they were officially known, were generally ex-military or ex-RIC men (later ex-guards). They were relied on to monitor tenant activity and the state of the dwellings as well as to collect rents. In turn, they were carefully monitored themselves, and discrepancies in monies collected and monies handed over could lead to quick dismissals. Care was taken too with regard to the type of commercial activities the Company allowed or encouraged in its developments. Shops were built for most schemes, rented at appropriate commercial rates, and post offices were allowed. Dairy activity was allowed but controlled. Requests to open licensed premises or to stock and sell beer were, however, consistently refused.

Individual requests for rent deferrals or reductions were heard by the board, but generally declined. The board could be more sympathetic to requests for assistance from newly widowed tenants, especially those with children to support. This could amount to no more than a few weeks rent-free accommodation or a single *ex gratia* payment, but for the wives of former Company employees pensions might be paid on an *ad hoc* basis for specified periods. Such pensions might or might not be renewed when the initial periods expired. When the Bray scheme was flooded in 1905, the Company distributed blankets and up to £1 per household to be spent on 'such articles as may be needed'.¹⁶ But the Company was never a charity. It had shareholders to satisfy, and its principal source of income was the rents it collected from its tenants.

With the completion of the Mount Temple scheme in 1909, the Company turned away from new building, concentrating instead on the repair and maintenance of the more than 3,570 homes it had built. New sites were still being acquired, but large-scale expenditure on building projects was confined to replacing or upgrading sewage and drainage works on existing developments, and the outbreak of war in August 1914 put an end to any immediate plans of new construction. As early as September 1914, the board noted in relation to its newly acquired site at Infirmary Road that no new works could be undertaken as, owing to the war, building materials were too dear.¹⁷ (In 1917 this field was divided into allotments which were leased to tenants to grow vegetables.)

Throughout the war, the Company was faced with regular and increasingly organised petitions from its workers for increases in their pay; some were refused but more were granted. The Company also faced sharp annual increases in its rates bill. On the other hand, the Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest (War Restriction) Act of 1915 limited its powers to raise rents, and so, as costs rose, rental income remained static. By the end of 1919 the Company was facing considerable financial difficulties. It was forced to change its Articles of Association to allow it pay a less than normal dividend to its shareholders, and in early 1920 it began borrowing from its bank to meet its outgoings.

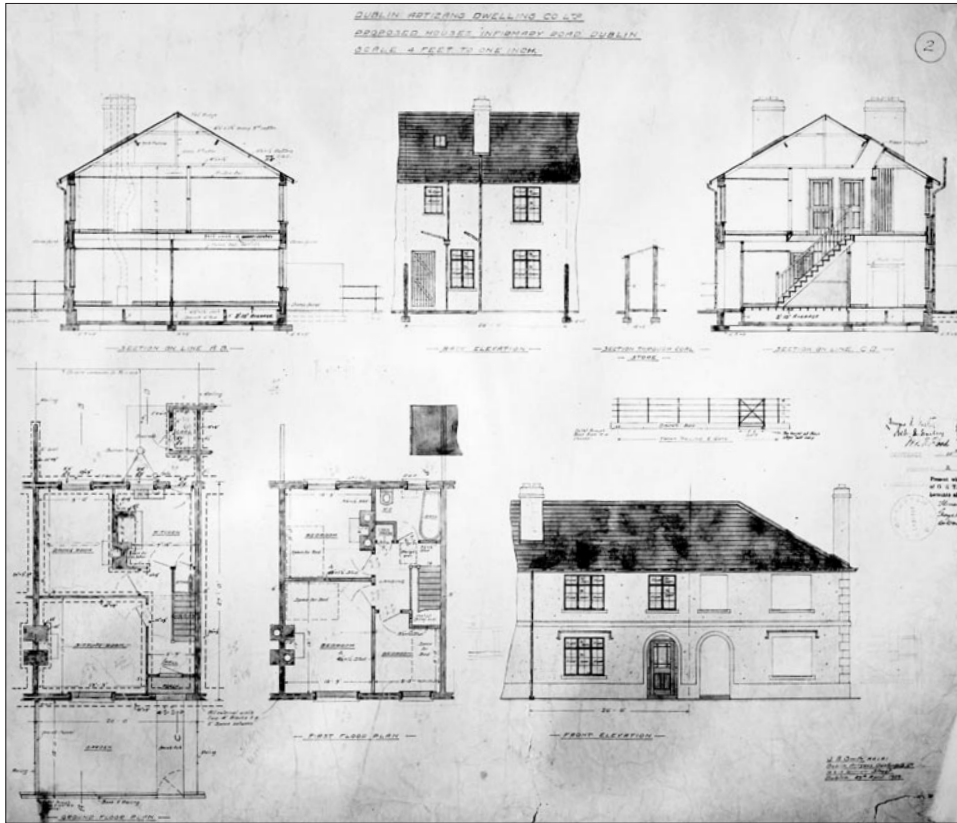
Financial woes were not helped by a prolonged dispute with its tenants when rent increases were finally allowed again in 1920. A notice of rent increases issued on 30 July of that year led to what was, in effect, a rent strike by a considerable proportion of the tenants. Mediation attempts by the lord mayor and the Priests' Social Guild, amongst others, failed. Rent collectors and tenants who paid the increases were physically intimidated, and both the Company and the tenants turned to the courts for vindication. While the Company was generally successful in its court actions, it became increasingly apparent that legal success alone was not sufficient to alleviate its problems. By the end of 1920 over half the tenants were refusing to

pay any rent at all. The consequences for the Company's finances were disastrous. No dividend could be paid to shareholders in 1920 or 1921, and repayments on the Board of Works mortgages had to be deferred. Recognising the ultimate futility of its recourse to the courts, and cognisant of the changing political landscape, the board of directors resolved in September 1921 to 'leave the matters in dispute between them and their tenants to the arbitration of the Dail Eireann'.¹⁸ The arbitration process dragged on, but an agreement with the tenants was finally reached in March 1923.

The rent strike and its settlement had implications beyond the purely financial. One particular grievance of the tenants had been that sons and daughters of existing tenants were often unable to rent property from the Company, a problem exacerbated by the Company's policy of not allowing newly married couples to continue in residence with parents. The Company secretary had ultimate responsibility for approving tenants, but the secretary relied heavily on the recommendations of the caretakers. A perception existed amongst the tenancy at large – whether based on fact or not – that caretakers were susceptible to bribery. Those they recommended for tenancies were not necessarily those who felt most entitled to houses. After 1922 it became Company policy for vacant properties to be offered first to sons or daughters of existing tenants.¹⁹ Only if none was interested were other applicants, of whom there were always a considerable number, considered.²⁰ In this way, 'outsiders' were gradually excluded from what was a stable and exclusive tenant population.²¹

The years following the end of the rent strike saw a solid recovery in the Company's fortunes. Dividends were paid to the shareholders, and arrears of rent built up during the strike were collected. By 1925 it was in a position to make a payment to shareholders to compensate for the failure to pay dividends in 1920 and 1921. The Company even had surplus cash, which it was able to invest in stocks and shares. A great deal of repair and redecoration work, postponed since the outbreak of war in 1914, was put in hand. And finally, in 1929, building began again with the construction of fifty-three houses on the Atkinson's Field site at Infirmary Road. The architect for the scheme was James Bramwell Smith. Smith had entered into partnership with Ashworth in 1925, and had taken over his duties with the Company when Ashworth was incapacitated by ill health later that year. Ashworth died in January 1926, and Smith was appointed Company architect in February. He was to discharge

the ordinary duties of an Architect, including preparation of plans & designs for new buildings, & the supervision of work connected therewith, & in particular is to be responsible for the maintenance of the Company's property in a proper state of repair, as also for the ordering & control of the Inspectors & of the entire out-door staff of employees other than the caretakers.²²



13 – Elevations, sections and plans for a house in the Montpelier Gardens development
(IAA 79/26.41/14R2)

Smith's proposals for Infirmary Road, or Montpelier Gardens as the development was named, were for eight-roomed houses, including a kitchen and a bathroom, front and back gardens and mains electricity (Plate 13). The first houses in the scheme – the ten fronting on the Infirmary Road itself – were ready for occupation in May 1930. Smith went on to design two further schemes – ten houses on Halliday Road, and the twenty houses built over the piece of ground adjacent to the Rialto development known as Rialto Park. The same house design was used for both these schemes, a slightly narrower variant on the Montpelier Gardens model.

The Rialto Park houses were to be the last built by the Company. Further sites were investigated, and in May 1944 Johnstown House and surrounding land in the Glasnevin / Finglas area were purchased. Smith developed a number of proposals for these twenty-eight acres, referred to by the Company as Sunset Hill. His first scheme was rejected by Dublin County Council as the density at eleven houses per

acre was considered too high. The Council preferred a density of around eight houses per acre. A compromise scheme was agreed by mid-1945, though no building works were undertaken, the site being rented on a yearly basis for grazing, and by the end of 1947 the Company was facing a further three years' delay before a water supply would be laid to the site. Eventually, Dublin Corporation proposed a revision of the street layout to accommodate new road plans for the surrounding area. The Company decided that it could not proceed with any building if the site was 'mutilated in [the] manner suggested',²³ and instead offered the whole parcel of land to the Corporation. The sale was finalised in May 1950, and although over £10,000 from the proceeds were lodged in a building development reserve account, suggesting that further construction was imminent, the handing over of Sunset Hill to the Corporation brought to a conclusion the last serious effort of the Company to build new housing.

Instead, the Company lapsed back into the role it had successfully played throughout the 1930s and '40s, maintaining its existing properties, collecting its rents, monitoring its tenants, negotiating pay structures with its by now fully unionised workers, managing its growing portfolio of shares, and paying solid if unspectacular yearly dividends to its shareholders. The Second World War hardly impinged on activities. Air-raid precautions, consisting of the purchase of extra water pumps and buckets for fire-fighting, and the occasional release of labourers on paid leave for Local Defence Force training were its principal direct manifestations. Demand for houses remained high, vacancies very low, and the tenant population steady. In 1939 there were just under 16,000 people living in the Company's properties. A decade later the population had fallen only slightly to just over 14,700.²⁴ The year 1949 saw just fifty-three transfers of houses and fifty-one new lettings, and by April 1950 there were, not for the first time, in excess of 600 names on its waiting lists.

Although ostensibly in relatively good financial shape by 1950, the Company was, in fact, once again facing serious difficulties. The board decided that a reappraisal of its purpose was required, and a new Memorandum and Articles of Association necessary. In his explanation of the proposed changes to the shareholders, the then chairman, Thomas S. Martin, detailed the challenges facing the Company. The Company had been created specifically to supply artisan or working-class houses. But these were now being supplied by local authorities, who, 'with public money at their back, have as their main consideration the desire to house the workman in accordance with his means, irrespective of whether the transaction shows a profit or loss and, quite clearly, your Company cannot compete with them'. He went on to state that rent restriction legislation reduced the Company's ability to maximise the income potential of property, while its houses were 'all old ... and are

becoming year by year less remunerative'. The board's solution was 'to have some new buildings where the maintenance will be comparatively low and the return correspondingly greater'. Since the Memorandum of Association of the Company limited its activities to artisan dwellings, a change was required to allow the Company to build for the 'white collared worker or clerk, to enable it to continue its development on a basis that will show a profit'.²⁵ The intention was to continue as a house-building and owning agency, but to cater for a more affluent, middle-class clientele. However, the potential to diversify into purely commercial or other types of property also now existed. A change of name was considered but not proceeded with, and the new Memorandum and Articles of Association were adopted unanimously by shareholders at EGMs in September and October 1951.

Dramatic as these developments were, they did not result in any immediate shift in Company activity. Gradually, however, the change of direction began to manifest itself, and in 1954 the Company took the unprecedented step of selling some of its cottages in Bray. Its approach to the sales was not systematic: some were sold in a single lot to Bray Urban District Council (UDC) and some to sitting tenants, while other vacant cottages were placed on the open market at set prices. Selling houses had been first suggested – and quickly rejected – during the 1921 rent dispute, but selling as a policy may be seen as a logical conclusion to the deliberations which had led to the revision of the Memorandum and Articles of Association. Sales were confined to the Bray scheme, but continued at a rate of one or two a month throughout 1955 and into 1956, slowing somewhat in 1957. In January 1958 the sale of a further fifteen cottages to Bray UDC was approved. The UDC bought ten more in 1959, and a further seven in 1960.

On 30 May 1961, under the heading 'Future Policy', the board resolved to sell all future vacant dwellings 'at best market prices'.²⁶ At the very next board meeting, two houses, 151 Oxmantown Road and 37 Viking Road, were ordered to be sold, and a steadily increasing number of sales is recorded from that date onwards. In February 1962 a Tenant Purchase Scheme was agreed, under which tenants would be able to purchase their houses for at least one third less than the agreed market value, and the sale of properties became almost the only business recorded in the board minute books.

Income generated from house sales was to be used to purchase 'investment properties',²⁷ and in September 1963 a development of shops and dwellings at Clune Road and McKee Road, Finglas, became the Company's first purely commercial acquisition. Within ten years of the decision to sell, the Company had disposed of over 1,300 dwellings, mainly to the sitting tenants, and owned instead a considerable portfolio of new property, including warehouses in Grand Canal Harbour, shop units in Bayside Shopping Centre, Suffolk Street and Grafton Street, office premises



14 – Crampton Buildings, Crampton Quay, Dublin

in Merrion Square, Ely Place, Baggot Street and Hatch Street, factories on the Merrion Road and in Ballyfermot, and new houses in Dun Laoghaire and Blackrock. With property in Kilkenny and Limerick, its interests were no longer confined to Dublin. For the Company's shareholders, these were very good years as record profits led to record dividend payments.

The Company celebrated its centenary in 1976. It showed itself to be aware of its origins and proud of its legacy, marking this important anniversary by organising an architectural competition, open to architecture students, to design improvements to a 'typical artisan dwelling'.²⁸ However, the actual typical dwellings themselves were now considered to be loss-making, and the Company continued to sell them off as quickly as possible. By the start of the centenary year it had divested itself of 2,121 dwellings, leaving a balance of 1,062 houses and cottages and 484 flats. Later that year it began to sell off the flats in block units. Early in 1977 the Company changed its name to DAD Properties Ltd – a more accurate reflection of

its commercial property management nature – and in July 1979 rid itself of the last of the cottages and houses, selling off the final 651 in a single lot to Folio Homes. With the disposal in early 1980 of the Thomas Court block of flats, the Crampton Buildings development – commercial by location and nature despite the fifty-two flats in the scheme – were left as the last of the original artisan dwellings still in the Company's ownership (Plate 14).

In the mid-1980s DAD Properties Ltd was taken over, and the last vestige of the Dublin Artisans' Dwellings Company as a legal entity disappeared. But its legacy remains: more than 3,600 dwellings in Dublin city, Dun Laoghaire and Bray, built in over thirty schemes on 131 streets, more than 110 of which it had created. It had succeeded in its original purpose, having played a central role in improving the quality of housing in Dublin, while making a profit doing so. At the same time it created and nurtured, through its housing policies, distinctive neighbourhoods and communities. The dwellings it built are, for the most part, still standing and still functioning in the way they were intended, providing comfortable homes to thousands.

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE DUBLIN ARTISANS' DWELLINGS COMPANY

List of developments by date. The start date refers to the year in which the building contract was sealed. The occupation date refers to the year in which the scheme first began to be occupied by tenants and generate income from rents.

<i>scheme</i>	<i>no of dwellings</i>	<i>start date</i>	<i>occup date</i>	<i>architect (contractor)</i>
Temple Buildings	56 flats 23 cottages	1877	1878	T.N. Deane (J. Cunningham)
Buckingham St Buildings	89 flats	1877	1878	Thomas Drew (Michael Meade & Son)
Echlin Street	36 flats	1877	1878	T.N. Deane (G. Tyrrell)
Kirwan Street Cottages	128	1879	1880	** (J. Beckett & Sons)
Coombe	212	1880	1881	Thomas Drew (J. Beckett & Sons)

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<i>scheme</i>	<i>no of dwellings</i>	<i>start date</i>	<i>occup date</i>	<i>architect (contractor)</i>
Portobello	154	1883	1883	** (J. Beckett & Sons)
[Pimlico Cottages / Tripoli]	---	1883	---	***
Rutland Cottages	46	1883	1884	* (Michael Meade & Son)
Harold's Cross Original	150	1884	1885	* (A. Hammond & Co)
Infirmery Road	185	1885	1886	** (J. Beckett & Sons)
John Dillon Street (Plunkett St)	142	1885	1886	* (A. Hammond & Co)
Clanbrassil Street	124	1886	1886	* (Michael Meade & Son)
Bray	62	1888	1888	* (Michael Meade & Son)
Seville Place	87	1889	1890	* (S. Worthington)
Rialto	84	1889	1890	* (Michael Meade & Son)
New Row	9	1889	1890	* (J. Beckett & Sons)
Crampton Buildings	72	1889	1891	James Beckett (J. Beckett & Sons)
Thomas Court [a]	118	1890	1892	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)
Meath Terrace	5	1891	1891	Charles Ashworth (J. Beckett & Sons)
Aughrim Street	200	1891	1892	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)
Seville Place (Oriel St: 1 cottage)	1	1892	1892	Charles Ashworth (Benjamin W. Whyte)
Clanbrassil Street (4 cottages)	4	1892	1892	Charles Ashworth (S. Worthington)
Kirwan Street (2 houses)	2	1892	1893	Charles Ashworth (Benjamin W. Whyte)
John Dillon St (4 houses)	4	1893	---	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)

THE DUBLIN ARTISANS' DWELLINGS COMPANY

<i>scheme</i>	<i>no of dwellings</i>	<i>start date</i>	<i>occup date</i>	<i>architect (contractor)</i>
Aughrim Street New Scheme	60	1894	1895	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)
Rialto New Scheme	83	1895	1896	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)
Rialto Extension	20	1896	1897	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)
Blackpitts: Warrenmount Place	25	1897	1898	Charles Ashworth (Benjamin W. Whyte)
Eden Road, Dun Laoghaire	116	1897	1899	Charles Ashworth (J. Beckett & Sons)
Harold's Cross: Mount Drummond	168	1897	1898	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)
Rialto (19 cottages)	19	1898	1899	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)
Bray (5 extra cottages)	5	1899	1899	Charles Ashworth (J. Beckett & Sons)
Manor Place / Mount Temple Lr	344	1901	1903	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)
Manor Place / Mount Temple Middle: 1 [b]	50	1904	1907	Charles Ashworth (Michael Meade & Son)
Manor Place / Mount Temple Middle: 2 [c]	280	1905	1908	Charles Ashworth (George J. Crampton)
Manor Place / Mount Temple Lower (2 shops)	---	1906	---	Charles Ashworth (George J. Crampton)
12-13 South William Street (new company offices)	---	1906	---	Charles Ashworth (J. & P. Good)
Manor Place / Mount Temple Upr	322	1906	1908	Charles Ashworth (George J. Crampton)
Temple Cottages (4 houses)	4	1908	1909	Charles Ashworth (George J. Crampton)
Manor Place/Mount Temple (extra houses [d])	9	1908	1909	Charles Ashworth (George J. Crampton)

<i>scheme</i>	<i>no of dwellings</i>	<i>start date</i>	<i>occup date</i>	<i>architect (contractor)</i>
Coombe: Meath Square (1 cottage)	1	1908	1908	Charles Ashworth (George J. Crampton)
Coombe: Brabazon Square (2 cottages [e])	2	1909	1909	Charles Ashworth (George J. Crampton)
Infirmiry Road / Montpelier Gardens	53	1929	1930	J.B. Smith (George J. Crampton Ltd)
Halliday Road	10	1932	1933	J.B. Smith (George J. Crampton Ltd)
Rialto Park	20	1933	1933	J.B. Smith (George J. Crampton Ltd)

NOTES * Schemes probably laid out by contractor or the Company clerk of works
 ** Scheme laid out by contractor
 *** Scheme developed by the Company for Lord Meath

- a Built for the Guinness Trust as part of the 1890 arrangement between the Trust and the Company, and subsequently purchased back from the Trust by the Company in 1896.
- b Contract for 50 houses (mainly Ivar Street). The contractor, Meade, also agreed in 1904 to build the balance of the Middle Section, but due to internal business difficulties was unable to execute the contract, which was therefore opened up to tender. The contract was eventually awarded to George Crampton.
- c Contract for 280 houses, the balance of the Middle Section.
- d Nine extra houses on vacant plots – four on Ivar Street and five ‘near’ Manor Place.
- e Following a request from the residents of Brabazon Square that one of the entries to the square be closed off, it was decided to fill the gap from Meath Place to Brabazon Square with two new cottages.

ENDNOTES

Unless otherwise stated, all information in this article comes from the archives of the Dublin Artisans’ Dwellings Company in the Irish Architectural Archive (collection ref. 79/26).

- ¹ For an account of the meeting and a report on various speeches made, see *The Irish Builder*, XVIII, 1 May 1876, 117-18.
- ² *ibid.*, 118.
- ³ *ibid.*, 117.
- ⁴ 79/26.1/1, 2.
- ⁵ 79/26.1/2, 3.

- ⁶ Drew, who, while the Company was being established, had set forth his views on working-class housing in *The Irish Builder*, had submitted the first proposals for schemes of houses, ostensibly for the Coombe area, as early as 1876. Thomas Drew, 'Mistakes made in Artizans' Dwellings as Heretofore Planned', *The Irish Builder*, XVIII, 1 August 1876, 219 ff.
- ⁷ 79/26.2/1/1, 267-68.
- ⁸ *ibid.*, 217.
- ⁹ *ibid.*, 152.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, 234.
- ¹¹ *ibid.*, minutes for meeting held on 10 December 1888.
- ¹² *ibid.*, 307.
- ¹³ 79/26.2/1/2, minutes of meetings held on 30 August 1887 and 28 May 1889.
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*, minutes of meeting held on 3 February 1890.
- ¹⁵ 79/26.2/1/3, 175 and 189. The Company eventually bought back the Thomas Court property from the Guinness Trust in 1896 for £5,000.
- ¹⁶ 79/26.2/1/5, 66.
- ¹⁷ 79/26.2/1/6, 301.
- ¹⁸ 79/26.2/1/7, 143.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, 216.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, 198. In March 1922, in the wake of the rent settlement, the secretary reported to the board that he had 600 names on the application lists for houses, and requested permission to stop taking more names for the present.
- ²¹ 'Outsiders' had always been excluded from board of the Company. The death of a director was the only occasion on which new additions were contemplated, and the pool from which those new members might be co-opted was kept small, with the ties of family evident from an early date. Thus, Pims tended to replace Pims on the board until 1958, while Martins were succeeded by Martins until 1984. F.D. Martin served as the last chairman of the Company prior to its takeover by Rohan Holdings.
- ²² 79/26.2/1/7, 492.
- ²³ 79/26.2/1/8, minutes of meeting held on 29 September 1949.
- ²⁴ 79/26.2/3/6, 2 and 11. The reporting of tenant population was a regular feature of the chairman's speech to the AGM.
- ²⁵ 79/26.2/1/8, notice to shareholders pasted into minutes of meeting held on 31 July 1951.
- ²⁶ *ibid.*, 68.
- ²⁷ 79/26.2/1/9, 76.
- ²⁸ *ibid.*, 237. In all, 151 entries were received and the competition was won by Michael Lysaght and Mark Byrne of UCD. A report on the competition was published in *Plan*, VIII, no. 3, November 1976, 5.