THE GROWTH OF DRUMCONDRA, 1875 – 1940

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The evolution of the place known as Drumcondra in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be traced through a sequence of landscapes recorded by cartographers. Landscapes and streetscapes may be thought of as a palimpsest, representing layers of history and reflecting social, political and economic change. As Jeremy Whitehand has commented, each society inherits much of its landscape or built environment from its predecessors, and in turn 'each society leaves its mark on the landscape, creating forms that reflect the aspirations and problems of its day.' In effect, the urban landscape can be seen as 'a physical record of past societies, and of our own, waiting to be read'.[1] To read the landscape of Drumcondra as it grew and developed from the date of the foundation of the College in 1875, we can draw on the cartographers of the Ordnance Survey. In a series of 'snapshots', which highlight the main features of the area at the time they were drawn, we are offered an insight into the preoccupations of Victorian and later society. Before embarking on this task, it is necessary first to engage with the fundamental, if frequently overlooked, question: how can we define Drumcondra?

DRUMCONDRA BEFORE 1875

The exact location of Drumcondra has long been a source of some confusion, which is not eased by the profusion of local and townland names that were used almost interchangeably. Indeed, Lewis's 1837[2] topographical dictionary directed the reader seeking information on Drumcondra to 'Clonturk', as this was the name of the civil parish in which Drumcondra was located.[3] Lewis used data from the 1831 census in his dictionary, which described the parish of Clonturk as having 2173 inhabitants.

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[1] J.W.R. Whitehand 'Development cycles and urban landscapes', *Geography*, 79 (1994), pp 3-17.
[2] Samuel Lewis, *The Topographical dictionary of Ireland* (2 vols, London, 1837)
[3] John D'Alton, *The History of the County of Dublin* (Dublin, 1838), p. 249, notes that the parish was perhaps more correctly named 'Clon-tolk, that is, the plain of the Tolka' and that the townland of Clonturk was among those given by Dermot MacMurrough to his foundation of All Hallows. Francis Elrington Ball's account of the parish of Clonturk defines it as 'the meadow of the swine' and suggests that in the seventeenth century it contained the townlands of Clonturk, Drishoge, Donnycarney and Drumcondra, while when this history was written in 1920, it contained the townlands of Ballybough, Clonturk, Donnycarney, Drishoge, Drumcondra, Goosegreen, Marino and Richmond (F.E. Ball, *Southern Fingal* (Dublin, 1920)).

However, the entity that he described was bounded by the river Tolka to the south and extended eastwards as far as Fairview Strand and Donnycarney House, which is further than contemporary Drumcondra. To the south of the Tolka was the parish of St. George. In 1909, Dillon Cosgrave explained that the name Drumcondra had usurped that of Clonliffe as the district name, as the 'true' Drumcondra lay beyond the river Tolka to the north.[4] The road leading to Drumcondra, called Drumcondra Road, had gradually come to be confounded with that district itself. It might be suggested, then, that Clonliffe, which had formed part of the possessions of St. Mary's Abbey, was the correct name for at least part of the area now known as Drumcondra. Of the three townlands of Clonliffe, two, namely Clonliffe West which lies between the Tolka and the Royal Canal to the west of Drumcondra Road, and Clonliffe East to the east of that highway, extending as far as Ballybough Bridge, gradually acquired the name Drumcondra. Thus, the first site of St. Patrick's College, at number 2 Drumcondra Road, might be described as being in Drumcondra or, equally correctly, as being located in Clonliffe West.

If the more southerly part of what is now considered to be Drumcondra, namely the area on either side of Drumcondra Road Lower, is more properly known as Clonliffe, where, then, did Drumcondra itself originate? From its Gaelic roots, the name Drom Condraighe refers to the 'charming hill' to the north of the Tolka and its derivation has been suggested as 'delightful hill of the water region' or 'fertile ridge of the barren hill of the water'.[5] If, indeed, the name refers to a ridge, it has been suggested by Campbell that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Drumcondra village comprised 'a collection of houses on the road from the river to the ridge proper, and on the ridge'.[6] Once again, however, the author pointed to the fact that the name had been extended to include a larger district 'even south of the river'. The earliest map of the area, that of John Rocque, mentioned above, dates to 1756.[7] On it, the name 'Drumcondra' is clearly marked to the north of the river Tolka, beyond the Church of Ireland chapel, which had been endowed by Mary Coghill and consecrated

[4] Dillon Cosgrave, *North Dublin City and County* (Dublin, 1909), p. 62. The point is supported by Weston St. John Joyce in *The neighbourhood of Dublin* (Dublin, 1912), p. 256.
[5] M.A. McNamara, *Authentic derivations of place-names in County Dublin traced and explained with the aid of real evidence* (Dublin, 1922), p. 64.
[6] John P. Campbell, 'Two memorable Dublin Houses', *Dublin Historical Record*, 2 (1939-40), pp 141-155.
[7] See pp above.

thirteen years previously. A small amount of clustering of dwellings is suggested between the bridge and the milestone just north of Belvedere House, which is depicted, but not named, on the map. The strongly rural character of the area is clearly evident.

Further insight into the shifting boundaries of 'Drumcondra' is provided by John Taylor's 1816 map of the environs of Dublin **(see Map)**. While 'Drumcondra' is employed to refer to the area between the Royal Canal bridge and 'Gorey Lane' (now Botanic Avenue), a second area, further north, beyond 'Belvedere', is depicted as the 'lands of Drumcondra'. The 1816 map indicates that the road from Dublin was becoming increasingly built up, with a ribbon of development stretching as far as the 'nursery' to the north of Belvedere, and with an apparent village cluster close to the bridge over the Tolka.[8]

Taylor's map also depicts some of the features that, traditionally, geographical studies have used to explain the location of particular activities. The fortunes of Drumcondra have long been related to two important locational features, namely the river Tolka which bisects the area in a roughly west to east direction, and the major road northwards, originally known as the 'Royal Way'[9], designated variously as the Drogheda road, Swords road or, more recently, as the Airport road, as the relative importance of these destinations has changed. The river provided a source of power for early industrial activity, discussed above (pp). Indeed, a statistical survey from 1800 listed four corn mills in the area.[10] Further employment along the river was provided by linen bleaching. However, the river also gave rise to some later difficulties in the development of the area, being prone to flooding and, by the later nineteenth century, having become heavily polluted by sewage.[11]

[8] However, there must be some questions as to the reliability of this and other early maps. Taylor includes the unbuilt 'Royal Circus' on his map, close to the North Circular Road. This was a planned development by the Gardiner family, which never came to fruition, although it appeared on maps of the city of Dublin for at least twenty years. See Joseph Brady, 'Appendix', in Joseph Brady and Anngret Simms (eds), *Dublin through space and time* (Dublin, 2001), p. 343.
[9] Douglas Bennett, *Encyclopaedia of Dublin* (Dublin, 1991).
[10] Reproduced in William Hogg, *The Millers and Mills of Ireland of about 1850: a list* (Dublin, 1998).
[11] *Irish Builder*, 15 Sept. 1875.

Similarly, the existence of the road might be expected to have been a boon to the area, but the reality was more complex. Although, as has been seen, the ready access to business interests in Drogheda was a factor in encouraging at least one tenant to settle in Belvedere House, the fact that there was a turnpike on the road between Drumcondra and Dublin, close to the intersection with St. Alphonsus Road, acted as a barrier to development.[12] Ó Gráda has established that the turnpikes, because of inequalities in the road taxation levied, influenced suburban growth to the detriment of the northern side of Dublin city, a fact recognised in parliamentary reports by the early 1830s.[13]

In the early nineteenth century, the economic life of the Drumcondra area was comparable to others adjacent to the capital city in combining agriculture, market gardening, and a small amount of industry with the provision of some leisure pursuits for city dwellers.[14] As it became increasingly fashionable for the professional and middle-classes to segregate spatially from the dirt, disease and high densities of the city, it might have been expected that this district would experience a pattern of speculative suburban development similar to others located within walking distance of the city and on rising ground. By the middle of the nineteenth century, development reached south of the Grand Canal into the areas of Pembroke, Rathmines and Ranelagh, leading to the establishment of new local authorities to regulate and/or promote development.[15] However, suburban development did not readily occur in Drumcondra, despite its apparent advantages, for reasons which have been well rehearsed.[16] The south side of the city was more fashionable in the eighteenth century,

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[12] This was one of the last turnpikes in Dublin, and, as Cosgrave has remarked 'The adjoining lane was called Turnpike Lane long after the unpopular obstruction disappeared.' (*North Dublin City and County*, p. 64).

[13] Diarmuid Ó Gráda, 'The rocky road to Dublin', *Studia Hibernica*, 22-23 (1982-3), pp 128-48.

[14] Indeed, Drumcondra had acquired a reputation for revelry by the early nineteenth century, following the establishment of tea-houses and places of amusement in the district. A pleasure gardens and spa in the grounds of Clonturk House was one such attraction (see Rev. John Kingston, *The Parish of Fairview: including the present parishes of Corpus Christi, Glasnevin, Larkhill, Marino and Donnycarney,* (Dundalk, 1953). D'Alton describes the balloon ascent which took place from Belvedere House on the 1st of October 1812 when James Sadleir attempted unsuccessfully to cross the Irish Sea (D'Alton, *History of the County of Dublin*, p. 251).

[15] Séamus Ó Maitiú, *Dublin's suburban towns, 1834-1930* (Dublin, 2003); see also Mary E. Daly, *Dublin the deposed capital: a social and economic history, 1860-1914* (Cork, 1984).

[16] On this topic, see Patrick Kelly, 'Drumcondra, Clonliffe and Glasnevin township, 1878-1900' in James Kelly and Uaitear MacGearailt (eds), *Dublin and Dubliners: essays in the history and literature of Dublin city* (Dublin, 1990), pp 26-51; also Joseph Brady, 'Dublin at the turn of the century' in Brady and Simms (eds), *Dublin through space and time*, pp 221-281.

and early suburban development continued this trend. Speculative builders preferred to operate in these more reliable areas rather than assume the risk of building in an area where dwellings might prove harder to let or sell. This preference was further supported by a number of particular disincentives to residential development in Drumcondra, which included the lack of a reliable water supply and sewage service, the continued existence of turnpike roads, and law suits arising out of the will of a major local landowner, the Earl of Blessington, which delayed the release of land for development.

Whereas suburban speculative housing development was slow to take place, the institutional framework, which is perhaps the greatest legacy of the Victorian era to north Dublin, develop rapidly. An increasingly interventionist state required penitentiaries, hospitals, barracks and asylums of various kinds, while the growing power of the Roman Catholic church was manifest in the creation of convents, seminaries and educational institutions. The availability of large tracts of land in Drumcondra, most of it associated with large houses which had been residences in a previous generation, suited a range of institutional purposes, and Brady has suggested that the increasingly institutional character of the area during the nineteenth century may have deterred prospective residents.[17] These institutions included the auxiliary workhouse and Whitworth Fever Hospital on Whitworth Road, [18] and 'St Mary's Asylum for Penitent Females on Strict Principles, just above the Bridge in Drumcondra'; the latter was established in 1833 for the reform of 'street Magdalens' (prostitutes) at 2 Drumcondra Road, which was to become the first home of St. Patrick's College, by which time the former institution had transferred to High Park[19]. By the late nineteenth century, the institutional character of the area was well established. The Roman Catholic archbishop's residence was erected on Drumcondra Road, while existing large houses formed the nuclei of All Hallow's Missionary College (1842, Drumcondra House), Holy Cross College (1859, Clonliffe House) and St. Joseph's Catholic Male Blind Asylum (1859, Drumcondra Castle). Other

[17] Brady, 'Dublin at the turn of the century', p. 273.
[18] The Whitworth Fever Hospital was built on land given by the Rt Hon John Ormsby Vandeleur for the purpose and was opened on the 1st of May 1818. At the time that it opened, there was no convenient approach to it, 'except by a narrow lane leading from the former place as far as the hospital only, which, in former times, had been the only approach to the old nursery garden' (*Irish Builder*, 1 June 1892, p. 123).
[19] John Kingston, 'Rev. John Smyth, CC (1791-1858)', *Reportorium Novum*, 4 (1971), pp 19-32.

significant institutional developments included the hospital established in 1825 by Dr John Eustace at Hampstead Castle to cater for 'Patients of the Upper Class suffering from mental and nervous diseases' as well as the Redemptoristine convent on St. Alphonsus Road, High Park and Hampton convents, both located on Goosegreen Avenue (now Grace Park Road), close to the Gentlemen's Lunatic Asylum.

The Ordnance Survey map for 1849 **(see map)** *and Thom's Street Directory* for 1858 provide a revealing snapshot of how underdeveloped Drumcondra was at this time. The street listings show that there were five houses on Charlotte Place, three on Goosegreen and twelve on Goosegreen Avenue, five on Keith Place (of which three are described as a 'lodging house'), five on Millburne [*sic*] Avenue, four on Sally Park, and one on Yellow Lane. Individual buildings listed included the Cat and Cage, the post office, police station and dispensary, as well as Drumcondra mills, then owned by Robert Hoey, who is described as 'flour merchant, Drumcondra Mills, and coal merchant, City Quay'. The 1858 directory includes the first entry for St. Mary's Asylum at High Park. Occupants are also listed for the larger residences in the vicinity, including Lark Hill, Belvedere House, Everleigh, Ellenfield, Puckstown, Hollybank, Hyde Park, Clonturk House, Melbourne House, Wellpark and Highfield. The continuing agricultural emphasis of the area is reflected in the listing of farmers and dairymen, a market gardener, a smith, and 'horseshoer'.

DEVELOPMENT DURING THE TOWNSHIP ERA, 1878-1900

By the time that St. Patrick's College was established in 1875, Drumcondra was beginning to undergo a transformation. Having acquired a reputation for highwaymen, duelling and dubious spas in the eighteenth century,[20] and experienced a flowering of state and religious institutions in the early- to mid-nineteenth, the area was reinvented in the late nineteenth-century as a respectable Dublin suburb. This was overseen by the township of Drumcondra, which was brought into being in 1878.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Dublin had remained a compact city, encircled by the two canals. When, in common with many European cities, Dublin began to experience suburban growth in earnest, it was necessary to reconsider

[20] Some of the more colourful stories are presented by Kingston, *Parish of Fairview*, and Joyce, *Neighbourhood of Dublin*.

political boundaries. However, rather than extending the boundaries of the city to incorporate the newly-developed suburban areas, a series of private acts of parliament provided for the creation of the nine legally-constituted towns which were known as 'townships'. The resultant suburban exodus, led by the wealthier members of the middle classes, contributed to the decline and dereliction of the city, which was still governed by Dublin Corporation. Rather than paying local taxes to that body, suburban residents paid rates to the township authorities. The resulting political fragmentation of the nineteenth-century city was paralleled by an expanding political and socio-religious gulf between the independent suburbs and Dublin Corporation. As Mary Daly has observed of the self-governing townships of Rathmines and Pembroke, the 'Protestant and unionist Dublin middle-class could evade the unpleasant reality that they were a minority which was increasingly losing political control in both Ireland and in the city of Dublin'.[21]

Drumcondra, the last of the townships to be established, never attained the same status as the southern suburbs of Rathmines and more particularly Pembroke.[22] Instead, it served an emerging market for suburban housing among the lower middle classes, typically artisans and clerks on relatively small salaries. The main impetus for the establishment of the township came from two builder/developers, J.F. Lombard, a director of Arnott's, and Edward McMahon, a Home Rule MP. From the middle of the 1860s, the partnership had engaged in the construction of modest houses north of Sackville Street, and, by 1878, they had, between them, built about 600 houses and opened about 30 streets around the Blessington Street and Eccles Street area.[23] When these entrepreneurs planned to expand their activities beyond the city boundaries, they found that the political make-up of the rural area threatened to curtail their operations. In particular, the area had huge drainage problems, while the river Tolka was little more than an open sewer. Establishing a separate township that would regulate drainage, water supply and other services, appeared to be the most appropriate course of action. Thus, building activity spread across the Royal Canal into the still largely rural Drumcondra area by 1875, when St. Patrick's College was founded. By early 1877, the North Dublin Street Tramway Company's Drumcondra

[21] Daly, *Deposed Capital,* p. 123.
[22] Ó Maitiú, *Dublin's Suburban Towns*, passim.
[23] Ó Maitiú, *Dublin's Suburban Towns,* p. 44

line was operational, extending as far as Hollybank Road/River Tolka, which provided a further boost to development.[24]

Despite strong opposition from some of the principal ratepayers in the Glasnevin part of the proposed new township, who feared that 'the pastoral districts of Glasnevin would be taxed for the purpose of improving Drumcondra,'[25] the private bill to create the new township received parliamentary approval and came into effect on 2 September 1878.[26] By 1881, the Drumcondra township had a population of 3,200 and a valuation of £12,000 for its 854 acres. It was divided into three wards, Drumcondra, Clonliffe and Glasnevin, each of which was returned a number of commissioners to the township's governing authority.[27]

Thom's Street Directory for 1875, the year of the township's foundation, well illustrates the continuing semi-rural nature of Drumcondra. Although only two miles from the General Post Office, the nascent suburb was still home to farmers, market gardeners and a number of well-appointed houses, while there were still flour mills along the river Tolka. Quite a number of the residences listed were unaccompanied by street names, because of the scattered nature of earlier development. In addition to the 'gentlemen' residents, the occupiers embraced a range of agricultural and professional classes. The former are represented by the presence of such occupations as a blacksmith and a farrier, a cartwright, farmer, dairyman, market gardener and landscape gardener, the latter by a medical officer, architect and builder, and medical doctor. Service activities were denoted by the vintner at Puckstown, vintner and provision dealer at the Cat and Cage, a postmaster and a laundress.

The street listing was modest. Charlotte Place and Keith Place each contained 5 houses. The only building on Church Lane was Drumcondra Church. To the east of Drumcondra Road, Goose-green was listed, separate from Goosegreen Avenue (now Grace Park Road), as a focus of settlement. The two residents of Goose-green in 1875 were William Hutton, farmer, and Miss Nugent of Ivy Lodge. Goosegreen

[24] Michael Corcoran, *Through Streets broad and narrow, a history of Dublin trams* (Leicester, 2000), p. 9.
[25] *Freeman's Journal*, 8 Jan. 1878.
[26] 'An act for the formation and improvement of Drumcondra, Clonliffe and Glasnevin, in the barony of Coolock and county of Dublin; and for other purposes', 41 & 42 Vic. chap. 157.
[27] *Municipal boundaries commission Ireland*, part ii, report, p. 13 [c.2827], H.C. 1881, 1.

Avenue contained a number of fine houses, judging by their valuations: Beaumont, Laurel Lodge, Drumcondra Castle (£192 15s), Hartfield House (£84), Carmelite Priory, Sion Hill (£85), Ivy Lodge, the Missionary College of All Hallows, Thorndale (£175), St. Mary's Asylum, Belfield Park (£93) and Elm Park (£116). For comparative purposes, it should be noted that the rateable valuation of Belvedere House was £100. St. Alphonsus Road simply contained the newly completed Redemptoristine Monastery and its associated church. Along the banks of the Royal Canal, Whitworth Road, Whitworth Place, Whitworth Lane and Whitworth Terrace were all in existence. In the case of the last mentioned, three of its eight plots were described as building ground, indicating that development was underway. Burnett Place, off Drumcondra Road, comprised ten houses plus 'Burnett Cottage', 'Elm Lodge' and a market gardener's establishment

Clonliffe Road was already well developed, and included several discrete terraces, namely Clonliffe Parade, College Terrace, Mountjoy Park, St. Catherine's Terrace, St. Helen's Terrace and Clonliffe Terrace East. To the modern observer, one of the most surprising features of the manner in which the streets and roads were formed is that Drumcondra Road, like Clonliffe Road, was made up of many discrete developments, each of which was separately named. Thus, there were areas called Drumcondra Bridge, Drumcondra Hill, Drumcondra Terrace (differentiated into East side and West side), and a strip of five dwellings known as Drumcondra Terrace Lower located at Drumcondra Bridge. Riversdale Terrace was another of the elements which was later embraced within Drumcondra Road.

Interestingly, given the perception of Drumcondra as having a high concentration of Roman Catholic institutions, a number of institutions catering for protestants were also in existence. These included the Widow's Retreat and Almshouses which stood almost directly opposite the original home of St. Patrick's College on Lower Drumcondra Road.

Maps from the township period reveal that, between 1878 and 1900, a number of new roads were created perpendicular to the main Drumcondra Road, with some cross streets. However, the streets did not extend as far as the main road in Glasnevin (perhaps reflecting the different constituencies in the township, with the

predominantly agricultural interests in Glasnevin inhibiting development). On the other side of the Drumcondra Road there was little development, apart from a number of streets of small lower-middle class houses between Clonliffe Road and the canal. Census data tells us that 419 houses were completed in the township between 1881 and 1891, while in the following decade a surge of activity resulted in the construction of a further 1,107 dwellings by 1901 (Table 1). The resulting population increase was still more impressive. From less than 5000 in 1881, the population of the

Table 1: Housing and Population in Drumcondra Township 1881-1911.

	1881	1891	1901	1911	1926
Houses	862	1281	2388	3664	n.a.
Population	4878	7624	13818	20255	23173
Housing Change %		48.6	86.4	53.4	n.a.
Population Change %		56.3	81.2	46.6	14.4

Source: compiled from the Census of Population, 1881-1926.
The statistics post-1900 are for the combined Drumcondra and Glasnevin wards, which equate with the Township of Drumcondra, Clonliffe and Glasnevin.

township climbed by nearly none thousand or 183 per cent in the space of two decades, and it was to continue to grow as a rapid rate in the early years of the twentieth century to twenty-one thousand in 1911 (Table 1).

Drumcondra, the most short-lived of Dublin's townships, was (with Clontarf and New Kilmainham) absorbed into the city in 1900. The successful operation of the smaller townships was hindered by limited revenue and a complex structure, which, by inhibiting the efficient provision of services, led to an acceptance of the need for amalgamation with the city. Significantly, the resulting administrative changes did not give rise to any obvious change to speculative housing investment in the area. The rate of building in Drumcondra remained relatively constant, with a further 1,276 houses added to the area's stock over the decade from 1901 to 1911, when the population grew by almost 6,500. This was consistent with the pattern of suburban growth generally. The population of the city as a whole continued to grow, and this combined with relatively low construction costs to ensure that house property was in demand as a desirable investment. Arising out of this, a large number of houses were built and made available for letting by private landlords to tradesmen and clerical workers.

Many of the new houses built after 1900 were located to the north of the river Tolka, which had experienced only limited development prior to the city boundary extension. This was encouraged by the extension of the tramway system, as Corcoran has noted: 'This attractive district, less than two miles from Nelson's Pillar and with obvious immediate potential, provided a rare instance of tramway construction in Dublin opening up an area rather than following its development'[28]. Opened on 7 September 1903, the Whitehall tramway extension brought this form of transport beyond the former horse tram terminus at Botanic Avenue to the site of the present-day Whitehall Garda Station, which extended the service to Ormond Road, Church Avenue and Home Farm Road, where there was incipient development within a largely rural area.

In general, house building was a small-scale operation pursued by speculators. These were mainly house-builders, or small-scale capitalists who employed builders. Houses were generally built in small numbers, and sold off before the next batch was completed. Because land for building was generally released in relatively small parcels (typically, a few fields at a time), streets were laid out in relation to existing roads, lanes, and the shape of the individual plots. This explains the strange angle made by the junction of Wellpark Avenue and Drumcondra Road, as the former was originally a farm lane. During the 1920s Dublin Corporation attempted to widen and correct the original irregular building line of Drumcondra Road Upper, but as present-day observers will note, this was only moderately successful.[29] Individual builders might complete only one or two houses per annum, a pattern also seen in Victorian London, where jobbing builders commonly broke off from repairs and alterations to put up a few houses.[30] Therefore, although developments were completed over a short timeframe, they were far from uniform, with many different builders working within a relatively small area. Even firms, which built more than a few houses at a time, were scattered of a variety of areas rather than clustered on the same road. This pattern is revealed by street directories, which note the addresses of houses by terraces

[28] Corcoran, *Streets broad and narrow*, p. 63
[29] Reports and Printed Documents of the Corporation of Dublin (henceforth RPDCD) (Dublin City Archives (henceforth DCA), 217/1926).
[30] See I. Watson, *Gentlemen in the building line: the development of South Hackney*, (London, 1989); A.A. Jackson, *Semi-detached London: suburban development, life and transport, 1900-39*, (London, 1973).

rather than by the roads in which they were situated. The contrasting building styles that resulted is a further testament to the small-scale builders who constructed them. For example, Upper Drumcondra Road includes Beaumont Terrace, St Michael's Terrace, St Patrick's Terrace, St James's Villas, Charlotte Villas and Clonturk Villas. Builders frequently moved house, partially as a convenience, to be close to the new area under development, but also because prospective purchasers were willing to pay a little extra for the builders' own home!

The resulting piecemeal, largely unplanned nature of housing development in Drumcondra prior to the 1920s is evident from maps, Corporation Reports, and the variety of house styles. However, by the very nature of the speculative market, it is extremely difficult to trace the individual builders involved in the creation of the suburb. One exception is Alexander Strain, whose activities in the Drumcondra and Glasnevin area have been explored elsewhere.[31] In the course of four decades in the construction industry, Strain and his family moved residence frequently, to wherever he had houses under construction at the time. Although it is evident that Strain was a respected and affluent member of society, the nature of the building industry ensured that a large amount of his capital was tied up in property. Thus, the leases of the houses built by Strain on the south side of Hollybank Road in the late 1920s show that he sold a house approximately every two months. The money from each transaction would finance the next house to be built, and so on. Such a 'hand to mouth' existence was characteristic of the building trade at this time. One benefit of this pattern of small-scale development was that the builder was able to 'personalize' each house. Thus, for example, the railings around gardens were customized to suit the requirements of individual purchasers.

We know relatively little, too, about the purchasers of these houses, although it is clear from the way in which contemporary property advertisements were pitched that the most likely purchaser for the pre-World War I speculatively-built house was an investor rather than an owner occupier. In 1901, for example, three 'superior private houses' on St Columba's Road were advertised in one or more lots, suggesting that the builder was willing to sell them either to an investor (as a group for letting) or

[31] Ruth McManus, *Dublin 1910-1940: shaping the city and suburbs* (Dublin, 2002), pp 385-422.

to private individuals as residences. In the same year, number 15 St Brigid's Road and numbers 2 & 4 St Columba's Road were advertised as being 'newly built and let to good tenants', showing that these houses were being sold to investors, probably by the builder who had first let them out. Other houses were sold in twos and threes on Botanic Avenue, Woodville Road and throughout the area.

From the Census returns and the advertisements discussed above, it is clear that a range of housing was available in Drumcondra, from the purpose-built middle class residences of Clonliffe Road, part of Jones Road and the substantial houses in the 'Bishop's Fields', to modest terraced houses in the Millmount area and cottages on St Joseph's Avenue. It would appear that towards the end of the nineteenth century, and in the years prior to 1914, there was a greater demand for 'well to do middle class residences'. Some of these were built by Edward McMahon, particularly in the area where St Brigid's and St Alphonsus Road subsequently emerged. In the late Edwardian period, many advertisements commented on the 'convenient situation', including proximity to the 'penny tram', which supports Corcoran's perception of the importance of transport in the development of this suburb.

The Dublin Corporation reports include many references to small operations by speculative builders, usually concerning combined drainage agreements, projections beyond the building line or the renumbering of houses. Kelly has shown the problem with 'jerry building' during the township era.[32] The problem of builders ignoring regulations and evading bylaws persisted well into the twentieth century. For example, Daniel Daly of Hillsboro', Botanic Avenue, built many of the houses in the area, including parts of St Michael's and St Malachy's Roads, Botanic Avenue, Glendalough Road and Hollybank Road, Church Avenue and Griffith Park. He was also a member of Dublin Corporation. In 1910, he proposed a new road off Botanic Avenue, probably St Michael's Road, for which the bylaws concerning road width and finish of footpaths were suspended. Such allowances were far from unusual.

The 1911 Census provides a vivid illustration of the diversity within a relatively small area, which was one of the hallmarks of the speculative development

[32] Kelly, 'Drumcondra, Clonliffe and Glasnevin', pp 43-45.

process. The nature of development often resulted in a variety of house types on neighbouring streets, with subtle variations in social status. Iona Road was already at the top end of the housing market in 1911. Of the seventy-one houses on the street, eleven were described in Census terminology as being First Class, the remainder were described as Second Class.[33] The remainder of the Iona area also included high quality housing. The higher standard of living in this area is reflected by the presence of domestic servants in twelve of the twenty-two houses on Iona Drive, some having a governess or children's nurse as well as a 'general domestic'. Occupations represented in Iona included the civil service, civil engineering, customs officer and a railway inspector. South of the railway line, there was an evident decline in social status. Although the houses on Wigan Road were described as Second Class, the occupiers were less well off than those in the Iona area. They included artizans (a carpenter, cabinet maker and upholsterer) as well as lesser civil servants (a postal sorter, customs service, telegraphist and a clerk in the Congested Districts Board) and several drapers and commercial travellers. North of Iona, off Botanic Road, Marguerite Road was another street of Second Class housing with a diversity of inhabitants, including Catholics, Protestant Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and others. These were mainly single tenants, a step above the common boarder in social standing. This street marks yet another social difference, given the multiple occupancy of several houses, including one house containing three families.

Much poorer and older housing survived to 1911 on a triangle of land bordered by Tolka Bridge and Botanic Avenue. Forty-two small thatched cottages were crammed into this flood-prone area until their eventual demolition in 1949. To the north of the River Tolka, College View Terrace had been built on Millbourne Avenue in *c.*1898/9. The houses of the Millmount area varied in size, but in the first decade of the century, all were being let to tenants. One Patrick Cotter, 42 & 44 Drumcondra Road, a grocer and 'capitalist', let numbers 53, 44 and 31 Millmount Avenue at various times. All were four-roomed houses described as being close to the penny tram. The Reports of the Dublin Corporation Paving and Improvements

[33] The definitions were based on a count of scores which each house was awarded based on the construction materials used, number of rooms and number of windows at the front of the house. Thus, a first class house was likely to be built of brick or stone, have a slate or tiled roof and have more than six rooms. A second class house was generally built of similar materials but may have been smaller, with fewer rooms and windows. Often the distinction between houses within the second class was greater than that between the different classifications.

Committees suggest the poorer social standing of the residents, as the condition of the roadway seems to have constituted something of a public nuisance, with frequent references to the filth of the thoroughfare and the need to clean it.[34] As late as March 1919, it was noted that a large quantity of manure and mud, which had apparently been swept off the road and deposited at the side for a considerable time, was obstructing the work of Paving Committee employees.

A survey of 507 households from the 1911 census of population demonstrates the social diversity of the population of Drumcondra.[35] In terms of occupation, over one-third of the sample fitted into the 'administrative' grouping, which included clerks, civil servants and postal workers. The next most important groupings were those engaged in commercial activities (29.6 per cent) and those in trade and manufacturing activities (23.2 per cent). The relatively small proportion of those in the professions (10.8 per cent) demonstrates the primarily lower-middle-class focus of housing provision in the area, while just 2.1 per cent of the sample fitted into the unskilled category. Just under two-fifths of the sample population was Protestant, which was well above the average for the city as a whole. Finally, just under a third of the heads of household had been born in Dublin. This was a suburb of mostly rural-born in-migrants.

The 1912 O.S. map **(see map)** is revealing of the impact of the relatively slow but steady development that continued in the early years of the twentieth century on the physical; character of the area. New streets were commenced off Whitworth Road beyond the hospital. The development of St. Columba's church prompted the construction of additional access roads, including the linkage of Iona Road with St. Alphonsus Road to provide a through-street between Drumcondra and Glasnevin. Small houses between the canal and Clonliffe Road (at Elizabeth Street, Bella Street and May Street) were now largely completed.

Facilities were gradually provided for new residents. The considerable population growth led, by the turn of the twentieth century, to plans by both the

[34] DCA, RPDCD 20/1917.
[35] Gerald Fitzmaurice, 'From Home Farm to institutional Suburb: the making of Drumcondra' (unpublished B.A. dissertation, Geography Department, UCD, 2002).

Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic churches to replace temporary places of worship with more permanent structures. A corrugated iron building, erected on Clonliffe Road in 1881 as a chapel of ease to St. George's Church of Ireland, was replaced in 1902 upon completion of the new St. Aidan's church, located on the corner of Dargle Road and Lower Drumcondra Road, designed by architect R. Caulfield Orpen. This was one of the most short-lived churches in Dublin, being closed in 1962 and subsequently demolished. However, the foundation of St. Aidan's served a very real need in the early part of the twentieth century when, the *Irish Builder* reported, the northern part of St. George's parish, an area about a mile and a half long by about a half a mile wide, 'contains already a population of about 6000, of whom nearly 1700 are members of the Church of Ireland; and new houses are springing up in many places, new streets and terraces being built year by year, and the neighbourhood expanding rapidly towards Glasnevin'.[36] The needs of the dead, as well as the living, had also to be accommodated. Thus, in 1892 the trustees of the new parish of St George discussed the selection of a plot of ground for a new cemetery, on the north side of the Royal Canal at Whitworth Road.[37]

Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic Church responded to the major increase in population of Drumcondra by creating the new parish of St. Columba in 1902, covering the areas of Lower and Upper Drumcondra, to the west of Drumcondra Road and extending northwards as far as Whitehall. Previously, most of the Catholic residents of Drumcondra attended mass at the 'wooden chapel' in Glasnevin, which had become wholly inadequate to meet the needs of the population. On 7 April 1903, the foundation stone for the new church on Iona Road was laid and the church was dedicated by the Archbishop of Dublin, William Walsh almost two and a half years later. The contractors were a local firm, W. Conolly & Sons, while the altar was sculpted by Pearse & Sons.[38] The completed church provided seating for over 1,250 people.[39]

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[36] *Irish Builder*, 10 Oct. 1901, p. 888.
[37] *Irish Builder*, 1 June 1892, p. 123. A map included shows the lands of Bishop of Kildare/Christ Church, the Fever Hospital in front of the New Church Yard and an Old Church Yard running along the 'new road from Glasnevin to Drumcondra' (i.e. Whitworth Road). The old cemetery was a narrow strip containing only 1 r. 34 p. which was formerly laid out as a nursery garden.
[38] *Irish Builder*, 21 Oct. 1905, p. 705.
[39] M.J. Egan, *The Parish of St. Columba, Iona Road, Glasnevin* (Dublin, 1961).

The population growth of the area brought with it the necessity for new school premises also. New national schools were opened at Lindsay Road, midway between Drumcondra and Glasnevin, in 1911, with accommodation for 240 pupils. As the *Irish Builder* commented, the premises, which were 'admirably adapted for their purpose', occupied a site which 'was one of the healthiest to be found within the city boundary', while the schools were planned so as to embody 'the most modern requirements' including classrooms, cloakrooms and lavatories.[40] Subsequently, the Catholic parish of St Columba opened a national school in 1925.

THE URBAN-RURAL MIX

Hidden behind the high walls which were an inheritance of its days as a country residence, Belvedere House was in, yet not of, the emerging suburb of Drumcondra. Most of its students, then as now, were rural migrants, the majority of whom would return to country schools once their studies in the College were complete. In this sense, at least, the lack of interaction between the early students and the inhabitants of Drumcondra, paralleled the experience of previous lessees of the residence. The predominantly rural, non-Dublin, origins of the students are evident from the listings of names and addresses, which were printed on an annual basis from 1886 to 1930.[41] For example, of the 1887-8 student body, the 32 senior division students included one from Baldoyle, County Dublin, while not one of the 73 middle division students or 34 junior division students came from the county. This pattern persisted into the late 1920s. Just three students in the 1929-30 cohort had Dublin city addresses (Clarence Mangan Road, Grove Park Rathmines and North Circular Road), while two further students were from county Dublin. What little information is available about the College servants in the early years tells a similar story. The remarks in the servant's register with respect to the (mostly young) men employed from 1883 to 1916 suggest that they were recommended for their posts by priests in country parishes, most commonly in County Meath or Longford, but even as far afield as counties Armagh and Cavan.[42] By the time that records resume in the 1960s, a significant change had

[40] *Irish Builder*, 21 Jan. 1911, article and photograph of the new National Schools at Lindsay Road. The architect was Mr. Andrew Robinson, C.E., while the builder was Mr. T. Farquharson. The foundation stone was laid in June 1910 by his Excellency the Earl of Aberdeen.
[41] Names and addresses of students, 1886-1930 (SPCA, C/6).
[42] Servant's Register (SPCA, B/27). Duties and position included cook, kitchen boy, work in dormitories and community house, dairy, class halls, study halls, refectorian, hall porter, science hall, bath room, butler, scullery, priests house, garden-dairy.

occurred. Not only were most of the 'servants' now female, but the vast majority were from the immediate locality, in Drumcondra or Glasnevin, with a handful from Dorset Street, Ballymun, Finglas and Cabra. This suggests that by this time, there was some degree of involvement between the local community and that of the College, and a greater economic input into the locality from the College, in terms of the wages being paid to the domestic staff.

Like most suburbs, which developed in a piecemeal fashion through relatively small-scale speculative enterprise, Drumcondra long retained a strange mixture of rural and urban characteristics before all available land was built upon. It was not uncommon for land developers to rent out their building land for the grazing of cattle while awaiting an upturn in the market or simply the accumulation of sufficient financial reserves to proceed with development. Meanwhile, institutions like St. Patrick's College utilized their grounds for agricultural purposes, so the country students would certainly have encountered familiar sounds and smells close at hand. Indeed, at the turn of the twentieth century, the College authorities were advised of the 'nuisance' being caused by the farm manure heap.[43] On 19 January 1900, the Inspector of Nuisances for the Drumcondra, Clonliffe and Glasnevin Urban Sanitary District gave notice to the principal, Fr Peter Byrne, that a nuisance existed at the grounds situated at Millbourne Avenue, arising from 'accumulations of manure being collected in close proximity to dwelling houses', and directed that it should be abated within a 21 day period. This was the final portion of an on-going correspondence which had begun in March 1899 with a letter from the clerk of the Drumcondra, Clonliffe and Glasnevin Urban District Council and a letter in December of the same year from a local resident of Hollywell Terrace, Millbourne Avenue, who complained that 'the smell is very unpleasant when the wind is blowing in our direction and I do not think it can be healthy'. A reply drafted on 26 January 1900, which observed defensively that 'we do not think that persons passing along a country road would be entitled to complain that a heap of farmyard manure was a nuisance within the meaning of the Public Health Act…', provides a strong indication that, despite the fact that Drumcondra was about to be absorbed into the Dublin city boundary, the character of the area was perceived as being as much rural as urban at that time.

[43] Miscellaneous records re farm (SPCA, B/11).

In 1884, the total area 'within the walls' of the College comprised 20 statute acres or 12.5 Irish acres. Approximately 8 acres was under tillage, a further 2 acres was used as gardens, while it was calculated that 'the lawns available for pasture would probably afford sufficient keep for 3 cows from May to November'. At the time, the College was in possession of one farm horse, two cows and two pigs. Potatoes, oats, swedes, mangel and hay were produced, while in addition to vegetable and some 'out-door fruit', twelve peach trees were planted in a special 'peach house'. Presumably the latter were intended for the delectation of the priests rather than the students, whose daily menu was rather bland[44]. As late as 1960, the farm continued to supply the College with vegetables, although a report on the catering department in that year mentions that 'the quantity of vegetables … was far from sufficient to meet the needs of the students daily requirements', while the 'variety of vegetables was non-existent, i.e. cabbage nearly every day'.[45]

In 1885, between 15 and 20 workers were listed in the labour account for each week, depending on the season. It is unclear whether these agricultural labourers were locally sourced or, like the other College servants, had come from elsewhere. The latter possibility is suggested by the fact that on occasion their duties included some within the College buildings. The farm was eventually superceded by new land uses, arising out of the ambitious building plans pursued in the late 1960s, but its lengthy survival was not as surprising as might be expected, given that the rural-urban mix characteristic of a new suburb was a feature of Drumcondra as late as the 1930s. At that time, Patrick Geraghty rented fields from Mr Butterly which he used to graze cattle awaiting export to Britain, though the cattle were continually frightened by the footballers of the newly formed Home Farm Football Club. As late as 1934, the rural aspect of the area was being used to good effect in housing advertisements. Michael J. Murphy's houses on 'Whitehall Road', Drumcondra, were in this 'healthiest and

[44] The 'list of diet' in 1908-9 reads as follows: Breakfast: porridge, bread, butter and tea; Lunch: bread and soup; Dinner: beef or mutton, ham occasionally; bread, potatoes, and other vegetables in season; Fridays and Fast days: Fish or eggs; bread, butter and potatoes; Second Course: Pudding or stewed fruit on Sundays, Fridays, holydays and fast days; Supper: bread butter and tea or bread, butter and cocoa. This remained fairly constant at least until 1925-6.
[45] Dietary arrangements (SPCA, C/24).

brightest suburb', overlooking the grounds of High Park Convent, with a 'guaranteed country aspect'.

CHANGING DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1920s

Until the 1920s, development in Drumcondra was undertaken by speculative builders, with the exception of one small public housing scheme at Elizabeth Street completed by Dublin Corporation in 1904. Comprising just 14 three-roomed houses, this development had little impact on the area. By contrast, the decision almost two decades later to develop a significant area of land for local authority housing brought about a major shift in the locus and nature of housing development in the area. The prospect of acquiring and developing land at Millbourne Avenue had been considered in the previous decade, when the matter of developing 166 acres at Drumcondra was afforded specific mention in Abercrombie's *Dublin of the Future*.[46] This is unsurprising, given that the area was so close to the city and was considered to be suitable building land. State subsidies for local authority housing were boosted when the Free State came into existence in 1922, paving the way for the creation of new 'garden suburbs' at Marino and Drumcondra. Dublin Corporation began negotiations to acquire the land in 1923 and, when the owners 'were not amenable to its sale', sought powers compulsorily to acquire 'as much of the 100 acres (*c*.40 hectares) as was required to adequately develop the district and carry out the housing scheme'.[47] It was proposed that approximately 1200 houses would be built, suggesting a density of 12 houses to the acre, at an all-in cost of £900,000. It was also intended that the plan would provide for the continuation of the new main thoroughfare which had been initiated in connection with the Marino scheme, subsequently named Griffith Avenue,[48] in order to link the Glasnevin/ Drumcondra and Clontarf districts. The scheme was to be funded by a combination of government grants, loans and rates, and would have the additional benefit of providing significant employment for a period of three to four years.

[46] P. Abercrombie, S. Kelly and A. Kelly, *Dublin of the future: the new town plan* (Liverpool, 1922). Although the plan was not published until 1922, it had originated as the winning entry in a town planning competition which was held in Dublin in 1914, but not adjudicated until 1916 due to war conditions.

[47] DCA, RPDCD 106/1923, p. 486

[48] DCA, RPDCD 73/1927. In April 1927 this road running from Howth Road to Ballymun Road, previously referred to simply as the '100 foot road', was named Griffith Avenue/Ascal O Gríofa.

Considerable delays followed because of opposition from some of the parties interested in the land to its compulsory acquisition, but eventually the owners of part of the area known as the Butterly Estate consented to the Dublin City Commissioners taking possession of their land (approximately 32 acres; *c.*13 hectares) lying south of the proposed line of extension of Home Farm Road, pending the issue of the Arbitrator's award of compensation. In June 1926, it was decided to seek tenders for road and sewer construction through this portion of the 'Drumcondra Housing Area', 'with a view to facilitating building operations at a later stage, and incidentally relieving unemployment'.[49] The Pioneer Construction Co., East Wall, was awarded the contract. The land stretched from the rear of St. Patrick's College westwards towards Marlborough Hall, which had been a residence for male students attending the training college in Marlborough Street.[50] Its development had a significant impact on the College, as the agricultural landscape to the west of the College farm was replaced by some 535 houses. Meanwhile, a further 100 acres of land north of the proposed line of extension of Home Farm Road was to be considered after the objections had been dealt with. In developing the scheme, allowance was made for the future needs of the community, and space was provided in the more northerly section for both ecclesiastical and school buildings[51]. The extension of development into the upper Drumcondra area was reflected in the creation of the new Roman Catholic parish of Corpus Christi to cater for the area. A tin church was initially provided in 1924 on Home Farm Road, to be succeeded by a permanent 'stately pile dominating the north city' in 1941.[52]

In June 1927, the eight tenders received for the first 266-house section of the Drumcondra scheme were considered. This section was to contain 128 three-roomed houses, 77 four-roomed houses and 61 five-roomed houses. The City Architect, H.T. O'Rourke, finding that the two lowest were from Messrs H. & J. Martin and Messrs

[49] DCA, RPDCD 127/1926, p. 356
[50] In the *Irish Builder* 31 Mar. 1917, p. 160, it was noted that 'Marlborough Hall, Glasnevin, now used as a residence for male students attending Marlborough Street Training College, is to be taken over by the military authorities for the purpose of being turned into a hospital for wounded soldiers.'
[51] In March 1928, the Commissioners agreed with Dr. Byrne, Archbishop of Dublin, to rearrange the boundaries of the site of Corpus Christi Church, situated on the Home Farm Road. The Church Authorities handed over to the Commissioners a section of their original site in exchange for a plot to the North of the existing temporary church, thus enabling the church authorities to have an entrance fronting Griffith Avenue, as well as another from Home Farm Road (DCA, RPDCD 79/1928).
[52] *Irish Times*, Monday 26 May 1941, p. 2.

G. & T. Crampton, proposed that two sections should be undertaken simultaneously, the first by Messrs Crampton and another, for 269 houses, by Messrs Martin, on the same schedule of rates. He reasoned that this would result in the building of 'the greatest number of houses in the quickest time at the lowest cost, and securing for these purposes the two most satisfactory building firms of which the Corporation has yet had experience'.[53] Work proceeded smoothly, so that by the end of November 1927, only five months after the receipt of the tenders, the houses in the Drumcondra area were nearing completion, and a number of roads were fully constructed. Ten roads were named after Irish scholars who had an interest in the preservation of either the Irish language or antiquities,[54] while Walsh Road was named after the Roman Catholic archbishop of Dublin, Dr. William Walsh, who died in 1921.[55]

In terms of house style and more particularly layout, the 'garden suburb' planning of the public housing scheme at Drumcondra contrasts with the piecemeal, varied development which was a legacy of previous speculative development in the area. In laying out the local authority scheme, *culs-de-sac* were used to give a sense of enclosure, houses were set back from the roads to varying degrees and grouped variously in pairs, threes, fours and fives. The overall effect is to give a sense of unity while at the same time avoiding monotony.

Following a precedent set at earlier housing schemes (Marino, Croydon Park and Fairbrother's Fields) built by Dublin Corporation in the 1920s, such as, the houses built at Drumcondra were sold under a tenant purchase scheme. This scheme differed from its predecessors in that it included some smaller houses, including the first three-roomed houses to be provided under the sale scheme. The most expensive of the five-roomed semi-detached style houses cost 17*s*. 7*d*. per week in rental, while the cheapest of the three-roomed houses cost 9*s*. 3*d*. At such prices, the most ill-housed citizens of Dublin were unable to avail of the improved accommodation offered by the scheme, despite the fact that it proved costly to Dublin Corporation, with an anticipated annual deficit of £2,500.[56]

[53] DCA, RPDCD 146/1927, p. 403
[54] Barron Place, Comyn Place, Ferguson Road, Fleming Road, Hardiman Road, Joyce Road, O'Brien Place, O'Daly Road, O'Neachtain Road, Windele Road.
[55] DCA, RPDCD 235/1927, p. 691.
[56] DCA, RPDCD 26/1928, p. 81

It was eventually decided, when the land to the north of the Home Farm Road extension became available, that it would be developed and serviced by the local authority but made available to private builders or housing organizations to build higher quality houses than the city could afford to build. This strategy had already been utilized in the development of the main frontages of the Corporation's Marino housing scheme, particularly at Malahide Road and Griffith Avenue. The amount of land available at Drumcondra was much more extensive than at Marino, however, encompassing Rathlin, Lambay, Bantry, Valentia, Clare and Home Farm Roads. One private speculative builder, Louis P. Kinlen, availed of the opportunity to lease building ground, but most of the plots were leased by so-called public utility societies, a form of friendly society whose objects included the erection and reconstruction of houses for the working classes.[57] The earliest such self-help housing societies provided housing for their members on a co-operative basis and were known as co-partnership housing societies. For the Free State government in the mid-1920s, public utility societies were welcomed because they 'assisted private enterprise'.

The development process undertaken by the public utility societies has been considered in detail elsewhere.[58] In order to understand the changing nature of Drumcondra during this period, it is perhaps more important to consider the socio-economic position of the new residents and how this impacted on the overall mix in the area. Whereas the regulations required that public utility societies should include among their objects the provision of houses for the working classes, it is clear that those housed by such organizations in Drumcondra were reasonably well-off, a fact reinforced by the decision of the Dublin Commercial Public Utility Society to provide garages for each house.[59] Two of the societies, the Saorstát Civil Service Public Utility Society and the Civil Service Housing Association, specifically catered for civil servants, due not only to the preferential treatment afforded to this grouping

[57] Ruth McManus, 'The role of public utility societies in Ireland, 1919-40' in H. Clarke, J. Prunty and M. Hennessy (eds) *Surveying Ireland's Past: multidisciplinary essays in honour of Anngret Simms*, (Dublin, 2004), pp 613-38.
[58] McManus, *Dublin 1910-1940*, pp 235-304.
[59] Nor could it be suggested that the Dublin Commercial Public Utility Society catered for especially needy tenants. It appears to have had a strong commercial focus from an early date. Indeed, in 1929 it could claim that the extent of its operations since May 1926 had made it the largest house-building organization in the Free State, with the exception of Dublin Corporation. It became extremely successful, ultimately converting into a limited company, Associated Properties Limited.

under the housing grants schemes of the 1920s, but also because their steady employment was a guarantee of their ability to repay mortgage or tenant purchase agreements.

Another organization involved in the provision of housing at Drumcondra was the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust (ISSLT), an all-island body established in 1924 to provide housing for de-mobbed World War I veterans. This body purchased four acres of land outright, and its surviving records shed much needed light on the inhabitants of the houses erected by that body on Lambay Road and, indirectly, on the neighbouring Corporation tenant-purchasers. In April 1928, the Trustees observed that their proposed scheme 'should be considered in relation to the general building programme for the neighbourhood', as 'it would be unwise to fall below the general standard of accommodation, equipment and amenity provided by the Corporation; the district is eminently one for the accommodation of the better type of "black-coated" workers, superior artisans, etc'.[60] In 1932, an inspection was conducted of the sixty-six houses, which concluded that 'when one considers that the tenants were rescued out of slum tenements and tumble-down hovels, I think the result is extraordinarily gratifying'. The inspector observed approvingly that 'the tenants seem very happy and contented', while the houses and gardens were well kept and spotlessly clean.[61] Most of the houses were occupied by families with between four and ten children. The report notes that most gardens were fully cultivated; one included a fowl run, while in one case the back garden was in grass for a pony! In terms of the demographic make-up and previous residences of the ISSLT tenants, it is likely that they broadly paralleled the profile of the Dublin Corporation's tenant-purchasers, for whom no equivalent records are available.

The Drumcondra Scheme, which comprised both the Dublin Corporation housing and the 'semi-private' section to the north of Home Farm Road, had an enormous impact on the area. The development of Home Farm Road had halted following the completion of houses 47 and 49 in 1911, and a simple wire fence marked the end of the street and the beginning of fields belonging to Dr Eustace and Mr Butterly. Similarly Clare Road ended with the first two houses, and for many

[60] Memorandum, Drumcondra (ISSLT) (NA, AP1/119).
[61] Glasnevin Scheme T. 31 (NA, AP1/119). ISSLT report on house-to-house inspection.

years a large gate across the road allowed access by manure carts and wheelbarrows to the plots up to what is now the south side of Griffith Avenue[62]. With the acquisition and development of this extensive land holding by Dublin Corporation from 1925, the area was transformed from a rural to a suburban landscape far more rapidly than would have been the case were it left to piecemeal speculative development.

THE 1930S AND BEYOND

By the early 1930s, there was little remaining building land in Drumcondra, although some plots were made available to speculators by Dublin Corporation arising out of road development schemes at Griffith Avenue and (further north) at Collins Avenue. As a result, a new wave of house construction activity commenced further out into the countryside, much as had been the case in the 1870s and again in the early 1900s. These developments included G.M. Linzell's Hampstead Hill Estate, Denis Delany's St Canice's Road, off Ballymun Road, and Maher and Murphy's Walnut Grove, off Ballymun Road. A small amount of infill development also took place, as small tracts of land became available, although the continued possession of much land in the area by religious institutions delayed development, till it was made available for development from the late 1980s onwards.

Among the relatively small speculative schemes of the 1930s, the development of Home Farm Park was noteworthy. The former rhubarb field, which had been used by the local soccer club, remained in the hands of the Butterly Estate after most of the surrounding fields had been acquired by Dublin Corporation for the Drumcondra scheme. In 1934, permission was granted for the development of a forty-eight house estate, which was proceeded with slowly. It was not until March 1937 that the Corporation assumed responsibility for the first two sections of the new Home Farm Park.[63]

More importantly, in February 1932, approval was given to plans for the development by the Royal Bank of Ireland of a portion of the Clonturk Park Estate

[62] Corpus Christi Parish, *Golden Jubilee 1941-1991* (Dublin, 1991).
[63] DCA, RPDCD 2/1937.

which had previously been held in allotments, and in March 1933, a proposal to develop sixty-four houses at Clonturk Park, on the east side of Drumcondra Road Upper, were approved. Construction was undertaken by Louis P. Kinlen, the well-known Rathfarnham-based builder who had previously built more than one hundred houses at Griffith Avenue and Bantry Road. The houses that he built at Clonturk Park and Gardens were typical three-bedroom dwellings of the 1930s, with mass concrete walls rather than the more expensive brick. While the houses were terraced, and no garages were provided, an access lane to the rear of the long back gardens (average *c.*185 feet) allowed for parking. The houses fell within the provisions of the Small Dwellings Acquisition Acts 1899/1919, which had been introduced to encourage home-ownership through the provision of loans to prospective purchasers of small houses below a certain valuation. In general, their purchasers could be described as lower-middle class.

The Clonturk Park scheme was notable in that it provided for a new shopping parade on its Drumcondra Road frontage.[64] Suburbs became increasingly important to retailers in the 1920s and 1930s, as housing developments were on a larger scale, and at a greater distance from the city centre. The builders' response was to incorporate a self-contained row of essential shops or 'parade', more commonly described in Ireland at the time as 'shopping centres', into their developments. The construction of the block of shops opposite the College walls, extending from the old courthouse at the junction of Richmond and Drumcondra Road, up to the newly-built Clonturk Park, indicated that this part of Drumcondra had now attained the critical mass necessary for such retail provision. The courthouse was demolished to make way for the development, which incorporated a range of new businesses including Buckley's butchers, Tomkins chemist shop and a family grocer. That the suburb had truly come of age is indicated by the opening on the 19th of October 1934 of the Drumcondra Grand Cinema, 'the Drummer', owned by well-known Dublin cinema tycoon, L.E. Ging.[65]

[64] DCA, RPDCD 67/1933
[65] Jim Keenan, *Dublin Cinemas, a pictorial selection* (Dublin, 2005). The cinema closed on the 24th of March 1968.

By 1940, the development in Drumcondra was virtually complete. Nevertheless, the suburb has continued to change and evolve, in terms of both the socio-economic status and family structure of its residents. The older housing in the area has already been through several rotations of the family life-cycle. Changes have also been wrought periodically in the area by outside forces. For example, the expansion of St. Patrick's College encouraged the conversion of many houses to flats in the 1970s, a process currently in reverse as gentrifiers move in. Other houses along the main road have been converted to guesthouses, because of the easy access to the airport and the city centre. Whereas Victorian residents were attracted by the high, healthy aspect and country air, the priority today is proximity to the city centre. 'Modern conveniences' such as hot and cold running water, which were important original selling points, have given way to the demand for 'period features'. Older residents still live in the 1930s and 1940s houses which they purchased as young marrieds, but are now surrounded by a mixture of younger families, students and private renters. There is not one simple family life cycle or social cycle being experienced, but multiple layers of cycling being undergone simultaneously. The built fabric, too, has undergone significant change, often paralleling the changes in family make-up and uses outlined above. Drumcondra cannot be solely interpreted as a historic suburb, but rather a living place, which is constantly evolving in both a physical and a social sense.