

George Street, Churchtown

by

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When I was growing up in Churchtown there was little reference to street names let alone house numbers though I do recall my father referring to "George's Street" as a youth. After I purchased what is now Boss Murphy's back in 1997 and was examining the title deeds and the accompanying map of properties in the village I noticed that numbers had been applied to some properties and I always had it in my mind to fill in the blanks on the street map of George St and now finally the job is complete. Note I am now using the description George St which I believe is authentic rather than George's Street which has been used more recently by myself included. From now we should just use George Street. So how, did I finally come to fill in the house numbers on George St? Last week, I received an email from Richard Hogan, who lives in Florida, enquiring about purchasing a digital copy *The Annals of Churchtown*, and in discussion with him he explained that his family lived at what we agreed was number 7 George St (now with post code P51 V6YH). With Richard's help – using house surveys completed in 1849 and Griffith's valuation maps of 1851 - the house numbering system for George St which runs from number 1 (Parson's House) to number 23 (Boss Murphy's) has been reconstructed.

Fisher's is number 3 as number 2 was allocated to Bruhenny graveyard. The old "Quikpick" shop on the right as you walk north on George St is number 9. O'Flaherty's home and original shop which operated from 22nd May 1978 to 6th March 2000 was located across the road at 20 George St. The numbers on the eastern side of the street run in sequence northwards and end where Kay O'Donovan lives in what is now a double house numbered 13-14 George Street. The numbers then cross the street so the Dorney home is number 15 George St. Two doors down from this you have Gail and Jack Mortimer's house at 17 George St which was the most recent RIC barracks. The original RIC barracks was where Eddie O'Donovan's house is located immediately after you leave George St on the western side and is not numbered.



So who lived in the houses in George St in 1851? According to Griffith's Valuation it was as follows: at number 1 (Parson's House) lived Mrs Sarah Barry, number 2 was the graveyard, number 3 Francis Flannery, number 4 Honora Lynch, Number 5 Garret Roche, Number 6 John Dunne, number 7 James Smyth, number 8 John Crean, number 9 Patrick Meagher, number 10 Kennedy O'Callaghan, number 11 John Power, number 12 William Buckey, number 13 Michael Donegan and number 14 John Clarkson. Running down on the other side number 15 was Edward Roche, Number 16 was Humphrey Winter, number 17 was the RIC Barracks, number 18 James Cleary, number 19 Margaret McAuliffe, number 20 Daniel Crowley, number 21 John McAuliffe, number 22 Edward Howard and finally in 23 – what is now Boss Murphy's – was Owen Bench (a forebear of the Binchy family in Charleville and the writer Maeve Binchy). Number 23 would

have operated as a public house / inn / hotel around this time and had accommodation in the buildings running up Kerry Lane for a baker and other out offices.

In the 1911 Census house number 1 (Parson's House) was occupied by Catherine (Katie) Tierney (Teacher) and her brothers Tom (Teacher) and Eugene (Tailor), number 3 which is now Fishers's was owned by Patrick O'Keeffe (Eily Mary and Nora's father) which operated as a pub (and later a Post Office) and number 13-14 was occupied by Hannah Kirby (who at that time ran a shop with her sister Mary Ann O'Connor whose son Jimmy (born in Australia) later operated this drapery shop. This shop was owned by May Gordon in the 1960s after which it closed and was purchased by the O'Donovan family.

Denis Hickey reminds me who lived in and what enterprises flourished in some of these houses in the 1950s. Number 1 (Parson's House) housed Cork County Library Unit before it relocated to what is now the Community Centre on Kerry Lane and was subsequently replaced by the Mobile Library. Number 7 was the old residence of the Bowe and Murphy families. Ina Bowe went on to be awarded an MBE in the UK for her contribution to Nursing and had a bronze plaque erected in her memory on the Pillar of Honour in the village centre in June 2010. The McGill family lived at number 4 where they also operated a small shop, the creamery manager Michale Aherne and family were at number 5, the Joyce family were at number 6, and Paddy Flynn was at number 8. Denis also proposes that George Street was most likely named for the Parson, Rev Eustace George who is resident there at the time of Griffith's Valuation (1851). Of course, my grandmother operated a pub (O'Keeffe's and later Murphy and then later again O'Keeffe's) at number 22 which was eventually sold out of the family in the 1950s when it was acquired by Charlie Hedigan and James Downey before it closed as a pub in the 1960s. My grandfather also purchased number 21 as an adjoining residence for the pub at number 22 which my Uncle Bill sold to Mick Thompson in the 1960s.

In the early 1950's Bilda O'Brien lived at number 12, Birdie and her brother Paddy "Dines" O'Flynn lived at number 11. Paddy Russell was at number 10. Number 9 was empty at this time and Paddy O'Flynn lived at number 8. Across the street number 16 was occupied by Condon's who had a shoemaker business, number 18 was the 'dispensary' owned by Maggie Noonan, Pad Relihan was at number 19 and his ground floor was partitioned off with a counter area behind which Jack Mahony operated as a harness-maker.

In my next article on street numbering in our village we will examine the street numbering on Kerry Lane which starts at the Pound Corner and runs up past the Community Centre which is in fact number 1 Kerry Lane as the numbers run up the street and down to the Pound Corner. We will also reveal the original street numbers for all the houses from Booneys to the Pound Corner. More Churchtown street number revelations coming soon. See also *The Annals of Churchtown* (ISBN 978-0-9524931-3-6) where more detail on the history and heritage of Churchtown is available. See also www.churchtown.net.

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George's Street West before and after a major visual transformation in 1998 organised by Churchtown Village Renewal Trust with support from the EU's Village Renewal Programme.



Sr Ina Bowe MBE who was born and raised at 7 George Street is pictured here on the occasion of her award of Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in London in 1975. An MBE is an award given by the Queen to an individual for outstanding service to the community.

