Notes for Cornelius Townsend [128]

Betsborough or Fern Hill



BETSBOROUGH, OR FERN HILL.
(Photo by Colonel Grove White, May, 1909.)

Extracts from various sources concerning

Betsborough or Fern Hill

Betsborough or Fern Hill (as it was later called) was situated on the edge of the village of Dromahane in the Parish of Kilshannig, about three miles south-west of Mallow. Between 1730 and 1853 the property was home to three members of the Townsend family and the history of it is set out below in chronological order as far as it can be ascertained – there are some anomalies.

1730. 1 August. Lands and houses at Dromahane leased by John and Mary Strange to Cornelius Townsend on the occasion of his marriage to their daughter, Elizabeth, for 99 years at £100 p.a

1738. Cornelius' wife, Elizabeth, inherits the Dromahane estate on the death of her father.

1753. 18 August. Cornelius Townsend drew up his will bequeathing his title and interest in the lands of Dromahane (Betsborough) to his brother, Horatio Townsend, with various legacies to nephews and nieces.

1755. October. Rev Francis Townsend (Cornelius' brother) assumed management of the estate and leased Betsborough and the lands to the Rev Robert Nettles for 15 years at £52 p.a. – ten months before the death of Cornelius.

1766. Lieutenant John Russell and Henry Heggert were living at Betsborough.

1767. 21 November. "Thomas Russell, born at Betsborough. He was the right-hand man of Wolfe Tone and subsequently commanded the United Irishmen in Co. Down. Arrested 1796, liberated and landed on the Continent 1802. Returned to Ireland in disguise, was re-arrested, and executed in 1803."

1798. 9 June. Lease of lands of Betsborough between Bridget Flynn, Cork City (lessor) and Lieutenant Henry Porter, late of Co. Limerick (lessee) for rest of 42-year term at £68 p.a.

1799. Captain Henry Porter of Betsborough enrolled a member of the Duhallow Hunt.

1815. 14 January. Sale of lands in Betsborough, Co. Cork, previously owned by Henry Porter. Sold by John Townsend, Sheriff of Co. Cork to Edward Reed of Mallow, Co. Cork for £82.

1817. 2 July. Henry Porter buried at Kilshannig graveyard.

1827. 17 March. Lease of dwelling house and demesne lands of Betsborough previously held by Henry Porter between Richard Perry, Cork (lessor), and William Magnier, Cork, (lessee) at £100 p.a.

1837. Lewis' Topographical Dictionary shows Mr Magner Esq living at Betsborough and Kilshanig Parish register shows Mr William Mayne as residing at Betsborough (probably the same man).

1838. 8 July. William Kelso Foster Esq of Betsborough buried in Kilshannig churchyard.

1840. "Betsborough, now called Fern Hill by the present occupier, is a good dwelling-house, the residence of Dr. Townsend. There is some ornamental ground surrounding the house. Dr. Richard Townsend, eldest son of Thomas Townsend, of The Retreat, Mallow, lived here from 1839 to 1843, when he died."

1843. "The Rev. Philip Townsend, vicar of Kilcorney, resided here after he left Gurtmore Cottage, and after Dr. Townsend's death. He was well-known in the neighbourhood of Mallow, and was a first cousin of the late Adam Newman, of Dromore, and of Dr. E. R.Townsend, a well- known physician of Morrisson's Quay, Cork. He died Oct., 1853, aged 73, and was buried at Castlemagner."

1863. 31 July. Renewal of lease of dwelling-house and demesne lands of Betsborough

between Richard John Perry, Monkstown, Co. Cork (lessor), and Michael Joseph Magnier, Fermoy, Co. Cork (lessee) at yearly rent of £100. 2. 10.

1881. June. "The house and demesne of Fernhill were advertised for sale. Barclay Correy was the owner, holding on a lease dated 1863 from Richard John Perry to Michael Joseph Magner. The house was demolished in the early 20th century and a new house built on the site."

1909. May. Dr. H. F. Berry visited Betsborough and was informed by Mr. Peter Sheehan, the present farmer, that the last occupier of Fern Hill House was a Mr. B. Correy, who was in residence about 1880. The house was in a bad state of repair.

Post 1909. The house was demolished in the early 20th century and a new house built on the site.

Sources include:

Historical and Topographical Notes, on Buttevant, Castletownroche, Doneraile, Mallow, and Places in their Vicinity, page 209 et seq.

The Preston Collection IE CCCA/U195, Section B: Property in County Cork, 1735 – 1944, Serial B5 and Section E: Strange Estate, 1715 – 1767 concerning Dromahane, Serial E112, E113, E115, E116, and E117 in Cork City and County Archives.

Dr Caulfield's Notes on Cork 1769 - 1781 in The Journal of The Cork Historical & Archaeological Society. Volume XI. Second Series 1905, page 34.

National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway Connacht and Munster Landed Estates Database

For internet access to these sources please refer to Cornelius' Notes