

# DUBLIN CIVIC TRUST

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*A company limited  
By guarantee with charitable  
status for the purpose of  
residential renewal,  
cultural enhancement  
& maintenance of  
the historic fabric  
of the city*

## **Re: Submission on the architectural significance and preservation of Moore Street**

Dear Sir/Madam,

1<sup>st</sup> November 2016

Dublin Civic Trust welcomes the opportunity to make the following submission to the Moore Street Consultative Group, the majority of which originally comprised an observation to the major 2013 planning application by Chartered Land. While we understand that significant research and opening-up works have been conducted at the National Monument site in the intervening period, the below information on the significance of the buildings at Nos. 14-17 will prove instructive.

We also make an observation in relation to other buildings on Moore Street that were recently assessed by the NIAH as part of the Dublin 1 survey. While we welcome the in-depth survey as carried out, we are concerned that at least two early buildings that are critical remnants of the original layout of Moore Street have been omitted or incorrectly classified as part of the process.

This includes No.56, a two-bay brick-fronted building near the junction with Henry Street, which appears to retain early/mid 18<sup>th</sup>-century characteristics, including diminutive façade proportions, a central chimneystack and closet return to the rear. While the closet return may be a modern addition, in totality this appears to be the substantial carcass of the house depicted on this site on John Rocque's map of 1756. In this context, it may be viewed as architecturally significant as the National Monument terrace of early houses at Nos.14-17 and in all likelihood it is a formerly gable-fronted house. Next door, at No.55, the building is classified by the NIAH as a c.1915-1920 rebuilding, however it is possible that this building also retains early fabric behind its façade, as it appears to exhibit a shared corner chimneystack with No.56. Both of these buildings require further investigation.

As part of a wider vision for the enhancement of Moore Street, we would be keen that the handsome post-1916 rebuilding of sections of the street – near Henry Street in particular – be acknowledged for their architectural quality. Nos. 2-7 feature unified limestone shopfronts at ground floor level – a rare surviving composition in Dublin city centre - that require a coordinated removal of fascia signage to reveal their quality. Likewise, upper floor facades along the street require a design strategy that showcases the high quality red brick facings, cut stone dressings and original windows. Efforts should also be made as part of this process to reinstate authentic, early 20<sup>th</sup>-century joinery colours to further enhance the traditional building stock of the street.

### **Architectural Significance of Nos. 14-17**

From preliminary research into the Moore Street terrace at Nos.14-17, carried out as part of a wider assessment of the Dublin gabled house tradition by Dublin Civic Trust, enough evidence has emerged to suggest that the Moore Street terrace may have been one of the last examples in Dublin of a complete terrace built in the gabled house, or 'Dutch Billy', tradition. If this is the case, this would be remarkable for two reasons:

- 1.** It would establishing that the 'Dutch Billy' tradition, which evolved from common antecedents in the British and northern European gabled house traditions and gathered into a distinctive Irish architectural movement after 1690, extended into the 1760s, at least two decades after it has been widely supposed that the tradition had been superseded by the pan-British Georgian forms that came to dominate urban development in Ireland into the early 19th century.
- 2.** It would demonstrate that the high Georgian aspirations long believed to have been central to the Gardiner family's vision for the development of the city, as evidenced in the second phase of the development of Henrietta Street, from c. 1730 onwards, and even more conspicuously in the development of Gardiner's Mall from 1749 onwards, may have had more to do with gaining a property market advantage than the style-ideological position generally believed.

### **Analysis**

Our analysis of the Moore Street terrace is based on historical research, comparative analysis and the information provided in the Chartered Land planning application and EIS. We did not have access to the buildings in question where a great deal of further information could have been gained.

It is clear that Nos. 15, 16 and 17 Moore Street feature the classic 'Dutch Billy' house plan, complete with corner fireplaces and closet returns. In section and stair detail, these three houses conform to Dutch Billy precedents, with the sole exception that there seems not to have been a cruciform element to the roof structures of these houses. The cruciform roof had been a defining characteristic of the gabled house tradition in the early 18th century, but it is known that this feature declined in importance by the mid-1730s where examples like No. 20 Molesworth Street featured the cruciform roof element only on the chimney side of the house. In later houses this cross element, abutting the central chimney stack, reduced further so that its ridge was no longer aligned with the primary front-to-back roof ridge, so it is perhaps not surprising that roof structures constructed in 1760 may have completely omitted any cross element to the roof while still belonging to houses that were fully within the gable-fronted house tradition.

The three houses at Nos. 15-17 Moore Street were built by a Dublin merchant called Joseph Ryan between June 1759 and July 1760 on three adjoining plots each of 20 foot width acquired from Charles Gardiner Esq, the son and heir of Luke Gardiner, senior, for lives renewable forever.

Joseph Ryan was a developer rather than a builder and is recorded on the leases as a tailor by trade, however other members of the Ryan family were plasterers and painters and a number of brick-layers, and carpenters active on Moore Street at this time suggest themselves as the possible building contractors for the houses, including George and John Darley who developed No. 14 Moore Street next door on foot of a lease from Gardiner dated October 1758.

The Darleys were 'stone-cutters' and members a Dublin building dynasty that was among the most prominent in the development of the city in the later 18th and 19th centuries. The floor plan of No. 14 is different than that of the adjoining Ryan terrace houses in that the rear return is omitted and the back room instead features a fireplace between a pair of windows. This feature was to become common in the 1770s and is found throughout the streets primarily of the north Georgian district. Modest houses of this type were developed by George and John Darley on the lower end of Dominick Street in the 1760s, one of which was sold on completion to Francis Ryan, painter. It is more difficult with No. 14 to establish that it was a gable-fronted house because of this novelty in the floor plan, but again we would suggest that the preponderance of evidence would support that gabled interpretation and the opportunity to carry out detailed investigation of the fabric of the house should determine the matter.

The assertion in the original EIS submitted by Chartered Land that the existing 'half-hipped' roof to the front is 'original' is certainly open to question given the extent to which this feature has long been recognised as a characteristic intervention by which originally gable-fronted houses were modified well into the early 20th century.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence that the entire terrace was indeed originally gable-fronted comes from oblique photographs of the streetscape taken in the 1930s. One photograph in particular taken by the Irish Independent and widely reproduced in later publications shows that No. 13 retained what looks like an open pedimented gable in something very close to standard 'Dutch Billy' form (pictured on following page).



**Above:** Moore Street in the 1930s, with a gable form evident at No.13

No. 13 was built by John Dowling, brick-layer, on a 21 foot plot acquired from Charles Gardiner also in October 1758 and the photographic evidence confirms not only that it retained a gabled frontage into the 1930s, but also that the house featured another characteristic of the gabled tradition, flush mounted window frames. O.S. maps confirm that No. 13 also featured the characteristic closet return that the Ryan houses also featured, as did all the house on the 'Old Brick Field' site on the east side of Moore Street, except the Darley house at No. 14.

Given the strong gabled-house characteristics evident also in the Ryan houses, it is highly likely that the complete terrace, developed as it was within a short period of months on either side of the turn of 1760, shared a common architectural expression and that this expression belonged to the distinctive gable-fronted tradition.

Even if this analysis is accepted, it would still be possible to dismiss the Moore Street terrace as an anachronism in the unfolding story of the development of Georgian Dublin, but this would be a misunderstanding. The transformation of the city in the later 18th century, to conform to Georgian taste, did begin in earnest with an aggressive marketing campaign of 1749 announcing the development of Gardiner's Mall, but the new stylistic regime was not an instant hit and the likes of the Moore Street terrace and other terraces on Kildare Street etc. attest to the strength and enduring appeal of a gabled-house tradition that had defined the city in the period of its greatest exponential growth that flourished here in the period of unprecedented peace following the decisive events of 1690. The Moore Street houses suggest that ordinary Dubliners retained a deep attachment to their distinctive tradition of street-architecture. Nor would it be accurate to characterize the ordinary Dubliners who bought the newly developed houses on the Moore Street block as marginal figures who could be expected to be ignorant in matters of taste. The purchaser of no. 16 Moore Street, in October 1760, for example, was William Collum 'man-midwife' and surgeon for whom the address was convenient to his place of work in the new Lying-in Hospital at the Rotunda. Collum had been the chief assistant to Bartholomew Mosse in the old premises on George's Lane and he rose to become the Master of the Rotunda in 1766 while continuing to live at No. 16 Moore Street. Collum's neighbours in 1760 were Edward Griffith, distiller, in No. 17 and a Mrs. Rutledge in No. 15.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The preponderance of evidence suggests that the National Monument houses at Nos. 14-17 Moore Street, in their original form, belonged to the great Dublin gabled-house tradition that subsequent rebuilding, dereliction and a want of research has all but extinguished from our consciousness of the building record of the city. Nevertheless, it has become widely accepted in recent years that the gabled-house tradition was a distinctive chapter in our urban history and strenuous efforts are being made by Dublin Civic Trust and others to bring more of this lost chapter to light.

As a particularly late example of the gabled house tradition, the Moore street terrace has a particular significance in demonstrating the longevity and enduring appeal of the tradition and as such the surviving houses at Nos. 14-17 have an architectural significance in addition to the major events that took place there in 1916.

It is not our position that the original façades of the Moore Street houses must necessarily be restored to their original likely appearance, but it is our position that further research is required to establish, in so far as possible, the original appearance of the structures and, more importantly, the state that the houses were in when they were witness to the historic events of Easter Week 1916. Only then will it be possible to determine how far the restoration of the buildings should go and in what form a centre to commemorating the events in 1916 should take.

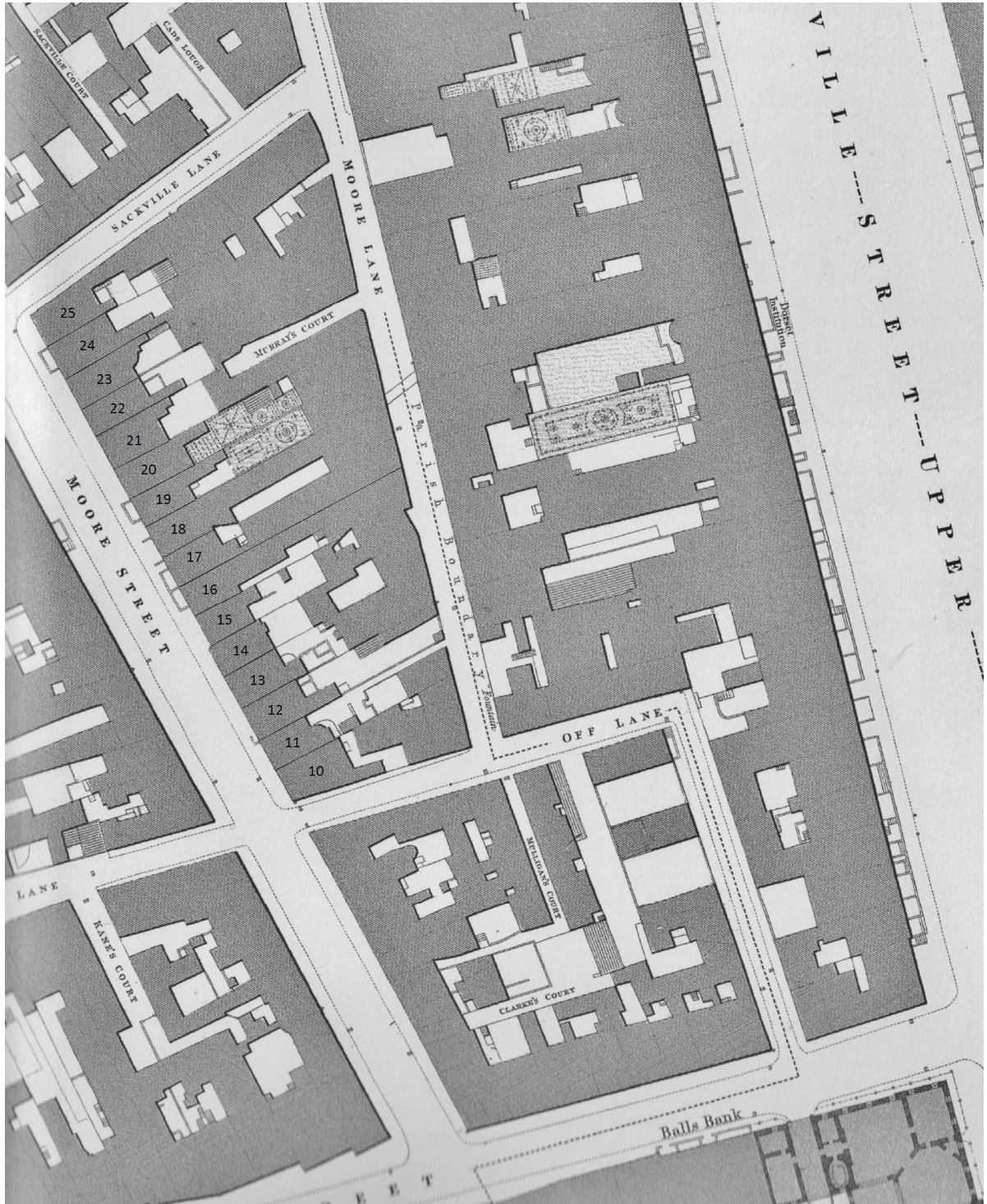
Most people involved in Ireland's heritage support the protection, conservation and restoration of these important 18<sup>th</sup>-century houses, and their conversion into use as a commemorative centre connected with their pivotal role in the 1916 conflict. However, these houses also have particular architectural significance within Dublin's building tradition and its record – a significance that has the potential to greatly enhance the value of any such heritage centre. It is essential that this architectural story is told as part of the wider historical interpretation of the site.

Yours sincerely,

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Dublin Civic Trust

Peter Keenahan, MRIAI  
Board Member  
Dublin Civic Trust





**Above:** OS Map, 1866