SITE AT
BLACKGLEN ROAD
SANDYFORD

ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE
IMPACT ASSESSMENT

26th November 2024

Historic Building Consultants
Old Bawn
Old Connaught
Bray

1190/02

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Background

This report has been prepared for Zolbury Ltd as part of the documentation to be submitted with an application for permission to develop lands at Blackglen Road.

The report addresses the potential for the proposed development to have an impact on of a ruined building that is outside the application site, but adjacent to the boundary, and which is believed to have been occupied by Constance Markievicz in the time leading up to the Easter Rising of 1916.

The site was inspected for the purposes of preparing this report on 2nd May and 26th November 2024 on which occasion some of the photographs incorporated in the report were taken and the site examined to prepare the descriptions contained therein. Other photographs in the report were taken on a previous visit to the site on 19th April 2021 and one from earlier visits to the site in 1983 and 1985.

Historical research was carried out on the background history of the property and the results are set down below.

While this report contains comment on aspects of the condition of the buildings it is not a condition report or a structural report and must not be read as such.

This report has been prepared by Rob Goodbody BA(mod), DipEnvPlanning, DipABRC, MA, MUBC, MIPI.

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Historical background

The ruined structure close to the northern boundary of the application site was formerly two semi-detached stone-built cottages of a type used in this locality by farm workers, quarrymen or stone cutters.

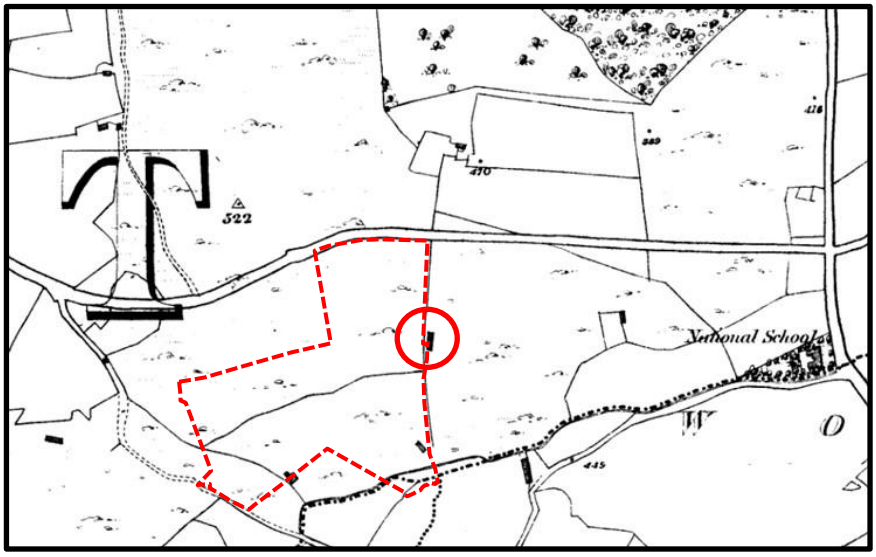


Figure 1: Detail of Ordnance Survey map of 1843 with approximate site boundary

The building probably dates from the early nineteenth century and was definitely present by 1843, when it was depicted on the first-edition Ordnance Survey map of the area. The map extract above shows Blackglen Road, which had only recently been laid out, while at bottom left is Woodside Road and towards the right is Enniskerry Road. While the scale of this map is relatively small, it appears that the building was the same length then as it is now, indicating that the smaller northern section is not a later addition.

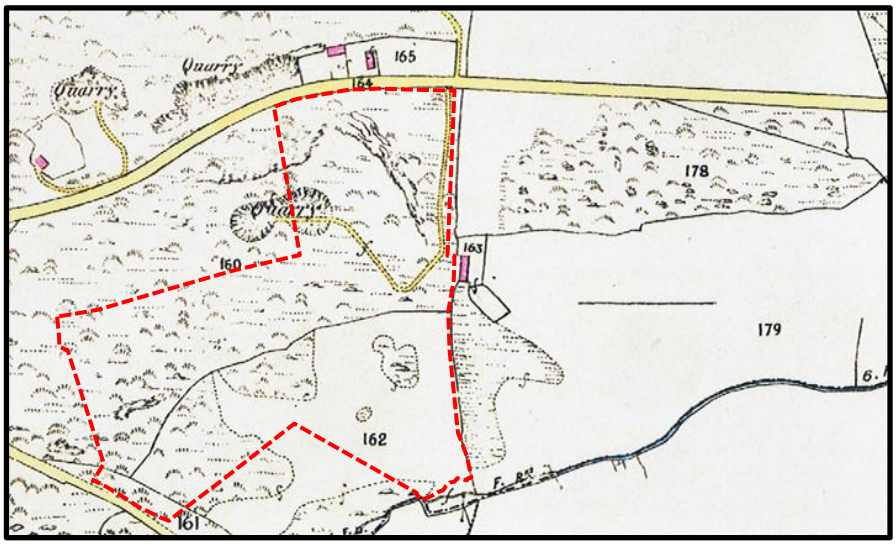


Figure 2: Detail of Ordnance Survey map of 1866

The edition of the Ordnance Survey map that was published in 1866 was produced to the larger scale of 1:2500 and shows more detail than the earlier map. The map extract above shows the building coloured red in the centre, with the field boundary running north-south alongside. The building is within a small enclosure and there is another enclosure to the south.

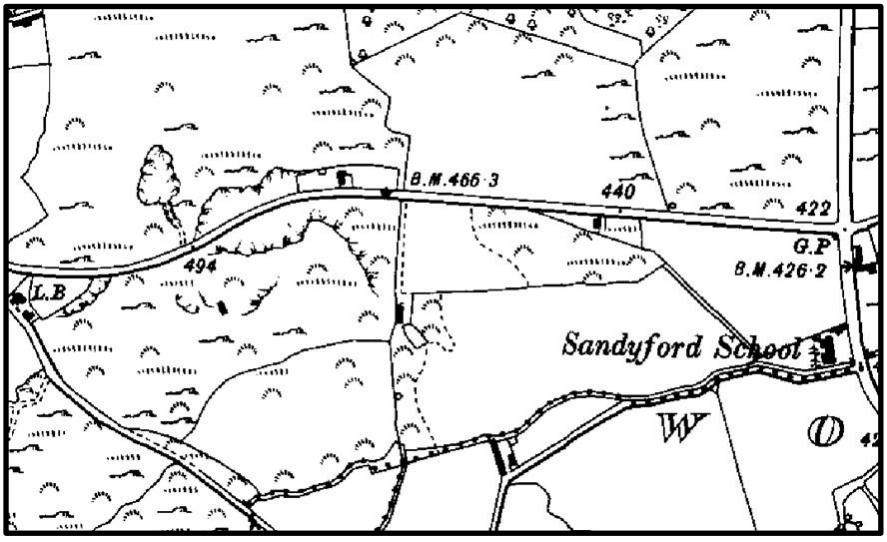


Figure 3: Detail of Ordnance Survey map of 1912

Very little had changed by 1912, when the Ordnance Survey published the third edition of its six-inch map of the area. The extract above shows that the only notable change was that a pathway was now shown running northward to connect the building to Blackglen Road.

The occupier at the time of the 1912 map is of particular interest. In about 1899 the land on which this building stands was acquired by Daniel O'Connell Fitzsimon, a descendant of Daniel O'Connell. The building was then comprised of two cottages, the larger of which was occupied, while the smaller one was vacant. In 1906 he rented the smaller cottage to Constance Markievicz.

Constance Markievicz was born Constance Gore-Booth, one of the daughters of the Gore-Booth family of Lissadell, County Sligo and she was brought up as a member of the privileged landed gentry. She developed a strong interest in art and studied at The Slade School of Fine Art and in Paris. While in Paris she married fellow student Casimir Markievicz and the couple moved to live in Rathgar.

It appears that Constance Markievicz's reason for renting the cottage was to enable her to have somewhere in the countryside where she could be relaxed and undisturbed and concentrate on painting. According to Anne Marreco, one of her biographers, it was in that cottage that Markievicz became converted to the nationalist cause. This version of the story has it that the cottage had previously been rented to Padraic Colum and he left a number of magazines such as *Sinn Féin* and *The Peasant* behind him. Markievicz was apparently appalled by the injustices she read about those who were not from a wealthy background and thenceforth dedicated her life to nationalism.

It is quite possible that Padraic Colum rented the cottage. He began to be recognised as a writer in the opening years of the twentieth century and in 1903 a benefactor awarded him a five-year scholarship. He did not use this funding to attend university, but merely to free him from the need for paid employment so that he could devote his time to reading, studying and writing. That was three years prior to Constance Markievicz renting the premises.

However, Diana Norman, another of Constance Markievicz's biographers disagrees with this narrative, saying that it makes out that Markievicz was naïve and impulsive.

Whichever of these biographers is correct, there is no room for doubt that Constance Markievicz rented the cottage. The information is well known from the writings of her fellow nationalists and from memories in the Sandyford area and she was also recorded as the occupier of the premises by the Valuation Office, as the one responsible for paying the local rates on the property.

One of the principal activities that she became involved with was Fianna Éireann, which she established in 1909 as an organisation similar to the boy scouts but based on nationalist ideals. She used the mountain lands in the vicinity as a training ground, bringing the boys on camping expeditions and teaching them military skills such as drilling and the use of arms and encouraging them with nationalist ideals.

While Constance Markievicz was not directly involved in the Howth gun running in 1914, some of the rifles brought into Howth were brought to the cottage and from there they were smuggled into Dublin.

In 1916 Constance Markievicz took part in the Easter Rising in St Stephen's Green, while her cottage played its own part as the place of refuge for James Connolly's wife. From the hillside they watched the smoke rising from the burning buildings in Sackville Street and Henry Street.

Constance Markievicz was elected to the Westminster Parliament in 1918, becoming the first woman ever elected to that parliament, benefitting from a change in the law that for the first time allowed women to go forward for election. She did not take her seat, however, as she, along with the other elected members of parliament belonging to the Sinn Féin party and others opted to establish Dáil Éireann in Dublin instead.

In about 1919 she relinquished the tenancy of the cottage on the hillside at Blackglen Road due to her straitened financial circumstances, the need to spend more time on constituency work and the fact that she was on the run from the authorities for much of the time during the War of Independence.

As the twentieth century progressed the cottage formerly occupied by Constance Markievicz fell into bad repair, particularly from the 1940s when it ceased to be occupied. During the 1970s it was deemed to be unsafe and was partly demolished. The other cottage to which it was joined remained occupied for a longer period but eventually deteriorated and it was unroofed by the early 1980s.

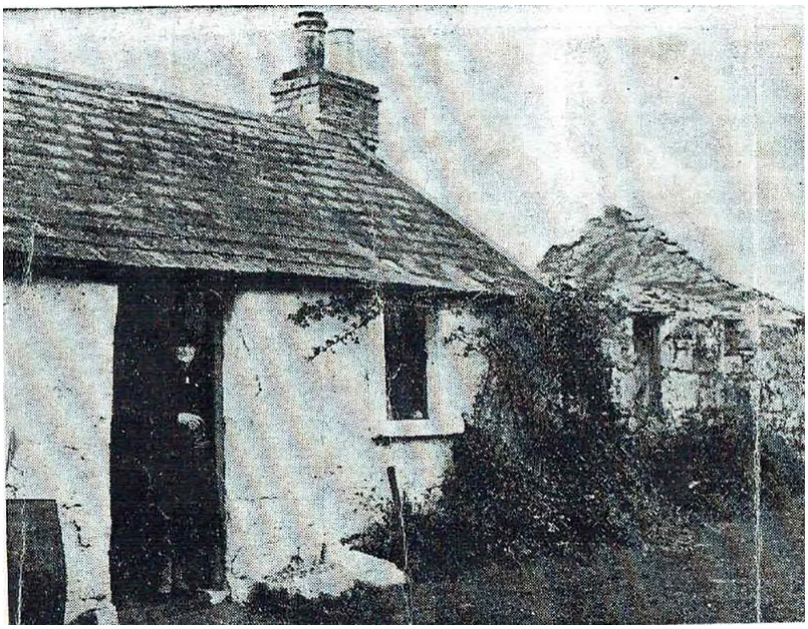


Plate 1: Markievicz cottage, at right (Irish Press, 1953)

Constance Markievicz's next-door neighbours in the adjoining cottage were the Mulligan family. The photograph above shows Mary Mulligan at the door of her house in 1953. This photograph accompanied a brief account published in the *Irish Press* on 6th March 1953 that read:

> In a Dublin solicitor's office, yesterday, Mrs. Mary Mulligan, of Balally, Sandyford, Co. Dublin, became the owner of the cottage once tenanted by the Countess Markievicz, at the foot of the Three Rock Mountain.
>
> The cottage, which was condemned some years ago, is now a roofless ruin; but it is Mrs. Mulligan's plan to save it from further destruction until such time as plans for its restoration have been worked out by friends and comrades of the Countess. Built ninety years ago by Mrs Mulligan's father, the cottage is next door to her own house in which she reserves a place of honour for the relics of the Republican Heroine. These include a salad bowl, a teapot and a jug which the Countess bought to replace one of Mrs Mulligan's which she had broken.
>
> "The Countess's Cottage" was a place of call for many patriots. It was occupied by Mrs James Connolly and her three youngest children during the Rising.



Plate 2: View from the north (Courtesy of Patrick Healy, origin and date of image unknown)

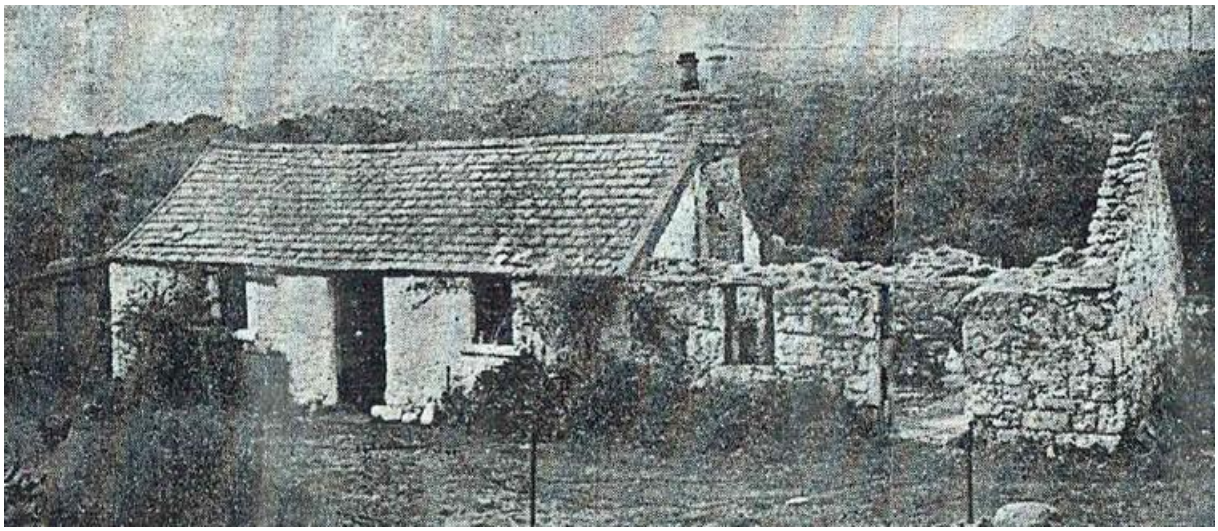


*Plate 3: The cottages in 1961 (*Irish Press)

Eight years later, on 1st June 1961, the *Irish Press* again ran an article about the house, though there had been no progress on the plan to refurbish the ruin. This longer article read:

> Patrick Pearse often knocked on the door which used to be in Countess Markievicz's cottage at Balally, Sandyford, Co. Dublin, so did Arthur Griffith and James Connolly and his daughters and many who are now gone to their reward.
>
> What is left of the cottage gets less and less every year; of course it is boys who are blamed for knocking it down. No matter what happens boys so often are blamed and there are times when people who blame them seem to be on the right target!!
>
> In the field in front of the cottage, owned by Mr and Mrs Bob Kane, the young Fianna used to camp and learn their drill.
>
> You might not be able to see Mrs Mary Mulligan in the door way of the cottage which is still standing. She was a very beautiful young woman in the days when she used to caretake in the absence of all the company who made use of the place.
>
> One of the very few important events in which the Countess Markievicz does not seem to have figured was the Howth gun-running. I deduce that from the description of the scene when someone arrived at the cottage that July evening with four rifles in a car to be hidden, they were quickly sent on to a safe place.

In 1983 Dublin County Council became concerned that the cottage was in dangerous condition and demolition was considered. Local residents notified the council of the historic connections, and the present writer visited the site on behalf of the council to establish what remained on the site. The two ruined buildings were very overgrown with brambles at the time and the extent of the surviving masonry could not be determined without extensive clearance of brambles and other vegetation. It is not clear whether any action was taken to part demolish the building at that stage. All that would have been necessary was to take down any masonry that was in danger of falling and causing injury.



Plate 4: View of the cottage from the north, 1985

The photograph above was taken in 1985, when the structures were barely visible beneath heavy growth of brambles. The masonry that is visible is the party wall, the bricks being part of the lining of the chimney flue of the Markievicz cottage.

Building survey



Plate 5: Western side of cottages, seen from application site

The pair of cottages lies near to the boundary with the application site, with one window facing westward over the site. About 1½ metres from the rear wall of the cottages is a low bank on which is growing a multi-stemmed ash tree, probably coppice regrowth having been cut down in the past. A number of other trees are growing close to the wall of the cottages.



Plate 6: View southward along rear of cottages



Plate 7: View of Markievicz cottage from the north, 2021

The two cottages are built of granite rubble, though with squared granite blocks at the quoins and at the margins of the door and window openings. Squared granite was more readily available than brick in this area where quarrying was a major employer. Brick survives in part of the chimney flue. The photograph above is taken from the same place as the 1985 photograph in plate 4 above, though there has been a reversal in the vegetation, with the top of the party wall now concealed and the rest of the masonry visible. The photograph below shows squared granite quoins, while in the distance squared blocks are seen at the door jamb, at left and at the side of the window opening beyond it.



Plate 8: View of Markievicz cottage from the north-west



Plate 9: Mrs Mary Mulligan's cottage, 2021

The southern of the two cottages is the one that was occupied by Mary Mulligan, as seen in the newspaper articles from 1953 and 1961. This is built with similar materials to the Markievicz cottage, and the squared granite of the opening is seen in the photograph above.



Plate 10: Cottages as seen from the application site

Assessment

There is no doubting the historical record that Constance Markievicz rented a cottage on this hillside and that the northern of the two cottages now in ruins adjacent to the application site is the one that she rented.

Examination of the ruin has not revealed any part of the structure that is in danger of collapse, though the vegetation conceals parts of the buildings, particularly the party wall that carried the chimneybreast. It is noted that the 1985 photograph shows that the chimneybreast had already collapsed by that time, suggesting that it was of brick, which would have provided a thinner wall than if it had been of granite. It is also noted that there has been further collapse in that wall and plate 8 shows a sizeable hole through it that was not evident in 1985.

Conservation status

The ruined cottages adjacent to the application site are not protected structures and have not been included in the survey carried out by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The site is not in an architectural conservation area and not adjacent to or close to an architectural conservation area. The site and its surrounding area is zoned residential.

Proposed development

It is proposed to develop the lands to the west of the ruined cottages for housing, on a site stretching between Blackglen Road and Woodside Road. The proposal includes a spine road running between the two abounding roads, with apartment buildings distributed at intervals on either side of the road.

The proposed spine road would run past the ruined cottages on an alignment parallel to the rear wall and at a distance of approximately 16 metres. The area between the proposed road and the cottages is to be part of the landscaped perimeter of the site.

Effects on cottages

The proposed development will affect the setting of the ruins. This is inescapable if the lands are to be developed, as the zoning indicates it will be. The proposed layout will keep the apartment buildings at a remove from the ruins, the closest being a two-storey section of apartment building B2 at a distance of 30 metres, though at a higher elevation than the cottages. The closest part of building B2 to the cottages will be two-storey, while a higher element, with three storeys and a penthouse over a basement level set into the hillside, will be just over 40 metres from the ruins. At the 30-metre distance block B2 is to be 7.5 metres high, rising to 14.1 metres high at 40 metres distance and with the higher penthouse level at a greater distance again.

The potential for damage to the ruined cottages during construction due to machinery operating on the site would be minimal. It is noted that the ruined

cottage that was associated with Constance Markievicz survives only as the lower sections of the walls, not more than about a metre high and hence has a significantly reduced potential for collapse. The surviving walls of the other ruin rise higher, though that structure does not have the same historical associations.

In order to eliminate the potential for any accidental damage during construction, a post and rail fence 1.2 metres high is to be erected and the low bank and trees adjacent to the cottage are to be retained as part of the landscaping. This will ensure that no heavy machinery can approach close to the ruins during construction, though the application boundary runs along the rear wall of the ruins and the low bank is within the application site.

The other potential source of damage could be vibration caused by blasting or rock breaking. The site is for the most part outcropping granite with a thin soil cover and much of the site slopes steeply. In order to provide the platform for the spine road and reasonable gradients it will be necessary to regrade the land, and this is also likely to provide suitable bases for the apartment buildings. Care will need to be taken to ensure that vibration levels are not of such a magnitude as to result in collapse of the masonry of the cottages.

Conclusion

Given that the application site and the area in general have been zoned for residential purposes it is accepted that development will occur. The layout now proposed will ensure that development is kept away from the immediate vicinity of the two cottage ruins and the proposal to retain a belt of landscaping along the boundary of the site near the cottages and to locate the nearest building at a reasonable distance will ensure that the effect on the cottage ruins will be minimised.

The building associated with Constance Markievicz has not been occupied for about eighty years, was unroofed by the early 1950s and part demolished forty years or more ago. At this point the buildings are ruinous and the proposed development adjacent would have no appreciable impact on their settings or any remaining historical qualities.