

St Paul's, Herbert Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow

A substantial two-storey, three-bay, end-of-terrace house located at the town end of the Herbert Road in Bray. The terrace consists of a pair of three-bay houses and one two-bay house in a matching style, with a full-height projecting canted bay to one side of the main door and a shallow pedimented roof. The upper floor is finished in a plain render with a moulded string course and cornice above at the eaves; while the ground floor is finished in a rusticated style with incisions made to simulate the appearance of smooth, cut stone, masonry (ashlar) on the building's exterior. The window openings are flat headed with moulded, beaded and stopped surrounds on the larger upstairs windows. The part glass panelled front door, with plain and leaded glass rectangular fan light and side lights, is inset within a small porch situated in a segmental headed opening, framed by a moulded surround. The front gardens are enclosed within walls finished in lined and ruled render and topped with decorative cast-iron railings, featuring alternating decorative bud-shaped finials. A matching iron gate incorporates a prominent trefoil design near the centre. The interior has a wealth of period features intact, including plasterwork, joinery and fireplaces from the late Victorian or early Edwardian era.

The name of the house is presumably a reference to the local parish church in Bray, originally known as Bray Church, but later re-named as St. Paul's. The same name was given to St. Paul's Church of Ireland National School on the other side of the road. That was designed by the architect James Franklin Fuller in 1903 and constructed in the following year by the contractors McLaughlin & Harvey of Belfast & Dublin. Fuller also designed the adjoining schoolmasters' house on Herbert Road, known as St Paul's Lodge, (demolished just a few years ago to make way for a carpark, some decades after the school itself went the same way). The site for the terrace on Herbert Road was purchased by local builder and contractor Robert Heatley from Shields N. Robinson in 1904. Robinson was a young electrical engineer who trained at the nearby Bray Electrical Works, and the son of Edward Robinson, the Official Valuer of the Irish Land Commission, who resided at Newcastle House, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow. It is interesting to speculate how Robinson had acquired the site, which was on land formerly owned by the Bray Mill that would have been transferred to the electrical works.

Robert Heatley (1856– 1937) was a brother of George Heatley and John Heatley who were both farmers residing in Little Bray (another brother, Frederick, had a farm at Glencormack). He was an experienced builder who in 1902 constructed the first technical school at Brighton Terrace in Bray. It is possible that he was a sub-contractor during the construction of the St. Paul's school and schoolhouse, as in 1908 he did alterations to the Bray Convalescent Home for which J. Fuller acted as the architect. Other work undertaken by him around then included the roofing of an ambulance shed at the Fair Green in Bray, and alterations and extensions added in 1907 to Ballyorney House, Enniskerry, residence of the Right Hon Viscount Monck. By 1910, he was living at St. Paul's on Herbert Road, which he had probably built himself, and in the following year he was offering another house there for sale, the advertisement reading: "Bray, Herbert Road, newly built house, 11 apartments; charming position; free mail ticket £65, freehold. R. Heatley, St Pauls". Other property owned by him included Ventnor, Loretto Avenue, Sidmonton, which he purchased in 1910. In the 1911 census Robert was listed as a building contractor, aged 47, living at the house

with his wife Harriet Annie, and 5 children ranging in age from 3 to 16 years old. Mrs Heatley was a national teacher at St Paul's School. The couple's eldest son, Edward Norbert Heatley, a private in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died from illness contracted in action during WW1. The adjoining houses were occupied by George Burnett, a Clerk in the Forestry Department (Woodville), and George Albert Stanley, a bank official. In addition to his building work, Robert was active in the fields of politics and voluntary work. He was a member of the Bray Amusements committee and Chairman of the local Maternity and Child Welfare Committees. He successfully contested the 1920 local elections in the East Ward as a candidate for the Ratepayers. Described as an 'ex-unionist', he was appointed a Peace Commissioner in 1923 and faithfully carried out his duties. In 1927 he stepped in to buy the financially distressed French School at Sidminton Place for his daughter Elizabeth, and she went on to serve as headmistress of the school from 1934 to 1955.

Robert Heatley died in 1937, and after the funeral at St Paul's church he was buried with his son at the graveyard in Enniskerry. The chief mourners were Mrs Heatley (widow), Miss Eveline A Heatley and Miss Elisabeth Heatley, daughters; the Rev G R Heatley son, Mr John Heatley, Mr George Heatley, and Mr Frederick Heatley (brothers); Mrs McLennon (sister), Mrs George Heatley (sister-in-Law). His eldest surviving son, Dr Robert Arthur Heatley, was unable to attend, being in India. He had served as an artillery officer in Mesopotamia in WW1 and qualified with a degree from Trinity in 1921.

(Sources: registry of Deeds; Valuation Records; Contemporary Newspapers; Google Images; MyHome.ie)