

Glenfield, (Thornhill Villa), Thornhill Road, Old Connaught, Co. Dublin

“Detached three-bay two-storey house, built 1840, on a cruciform plan originally three-bay two-storey on a T-shaped plan centred on single-bay single-storey projecting porch to ground floor on an engaged half-octagonal plan; single-bay (single-bay deep) full-height central return (north). Leased, 1901. "Improved", 1911, producing present composition. Pitched slate roof on a T-shaped plan centred on pitched slate roof (north) with clay ridge tiles, concrete or rendered coping to gables with rendered chimney stacks to apexes having stepped capping supporting terracotta pots, and cast-iron rainwater goods on timber box eaves retaining cast-iron octagonal or ogee hoppers and downpipes. Creeper- or ivy-covered slate hung walls to front (south) elevation; roughcast surface finish (remainder ...

A house representing an integral component of the mid nineteenth-century domestic built heritage of south County Dublin with the architectural value of the composition confirmed by such attributes as the symmetrical footprint centred on a polygonal porch; and the diminishing in scale of the openings on each floor producing a graduated tiered visual effect with the principal "apartments" or reception rooms defined by bay windows: meanwhile, aspects of the composition, including the distinctive slate hung surface finish, clearly illustrate the continued development or "improvement" of the house in the early twentieth century. Having been well maintained, the elementary form and massing survive intact together with substantial quantities of the original fabric, both to the exterior and to the interior, thus upholding the character or integrity of a house having historic connections with the Buckham family including Robert Buckham (1854-1908) and Susan Maxwell Buckham (1864-1944) 'of Thornhill Villa Bray County Dublin'(Buildings of Ireland /NBHS)

Formerly an ordinary farmhouse on a rectangular plan, as shown on the early OS Map, the house had been altered and extended recently when put up for sale by Mrs Susan Buckham in 1914, and it was named Thornhill Villa. It was described as a “modern villa residence standing on 26 ¼ acres of prime Land”, and the property was held on a lease from the landowner, the Honourable Lord Powerscourt, subject to an annual ground rent of £30. There were two reception rooms, three large bedrooms, a bathroom with hot and cold water, servants’ accommodation and kitchen etc. The gardens were fully stocked with fruit and vegetables, and there was a stable, cow shed and paddock. There were two slated and brick or stone built cottages on the holding which were let for 4s 6d per week. One came with a small shed for keeping a pig or hens, free gratis. The remainder of the land was let for grazing at £45 for the season. For sale again in 1930, the house was shown with the projecting ground-floor bays and porch to the front. It was then freehold, the ground rent having been bought out. The cottages, said to be let out to weekly tenants at below their market value, were producing rent of £18. 4s.

0d. per annum, while the land was achieving just £73. 4s. 0d. p.a. Part of the land was a glen, with a picturesque stream running through it.

Born in England, Robert Buckham was a 'gentleman's outfitter' or draper with a shop at 14 Lower Sackville St (O'Connell's St), Dublin, formerly McWilliams. He was the youngest son of James Buckham of Thornhill, a land steward, and his wife Rebecca. In 1874 Mrs Buckham advertised in the Irish Times: "Furnished Lodgings. To be let in the vicinity of Bray, two sitting rooms and two bedrooms in a detached house pleasantly situated in the midst of beautiful scenery; good attendance, terms moderate; the rooms, which are large and airy, be let separately, if required." James died at Thornhill in 1893, and his wife two years later, and they were both buried at St. Patricks, Enniskerry. Their son Robert was an active member of the Presbyterian church and a former office holder at the church on Ormond Quay. He married Susan Maxwell Gilchrist, daughter of Andrew Gilchrist, a farmer at Powerscourt, at the Presbyterian Church in Bray in 1886. A long-time member of the Masonic Order, he later served as Master of the Prince of Wales Lodge, No 222, Bray.

At the time of the 1901 Census Robert Buckham was living with his wife and family over the shop on Sackville St, but he was the owner of Thornhill Villa and the land and cottages built on it. His sister, Rebecca M. Buckham had married Philip Crampton Bruce, a son of the farmer, Town Commissioner and property owner John Bruce of Crowbank, Herbert Road, Bray, in 1875. In 1901 Rebecca was recorded as living with their children at the house at Thornhill. They had previously lived at a house belonging to the Bruce family, Rose Cottage, which was located beside the Bray Laundry on the Dargle Road in Bray, one of several small properties in Little Bray which Mrs Bruce later signed over to Philip Bruce and James Buckham. Philip had a farm as a yearly tenant at Fassaroe, adjoining that of the Barringtons of Fassaroe House, which his father had acquired from Judge Crampton of St Valerie, and in which James Buckham subsequently invested £200. John Bruce had an excellent relationship with Judge Crampton as a friend and confidential advisor, as well as serving as his land steward and farm manager. However, after the judge's death, Mrs Crampton wanted the land back for building purposes, and Philip fought her through the Land Commission Courts to establish his rights as the statutory tenant and to get a rent reduction. He joined the Michael Davitt branch of the Irish National League in Bray, and the chairman said he was delighted to have a 'Protestant gentleman' as a member of the committee.

Robert Buckham died in 1908 at Thornhill Villa and Mrs Susan Buckham was listed as living there with her family in the census of 1911. One of the sons, Andrew, was running the business in Dublin. Mrs Buckham eventually sold the house in 1920 to Charles Hutchings Denroche, by which point it was known as Glenfield. From Co. Tipperary, Denroche was a former bank official and secretary of the Irish Banker's Association. He later became the principle of the firm of Messrs. C.H. Denroche and Sons, Solicitors, 32

Nassau Street, Dublin. He died in 1932, having retired to Tipperary some years previously, and was buried at Deansgrange Cemetery, Co. Dublin (Photos: Knight Frank estate agents via Google)