

A History of No. 25 Fitzwilliam Place



No. **25**
Fitzwilliam Place

Introduction

No. 25 Fitzwilliam Place is one of the youngest houses on Dublin's famous Georgian Mile, it is woven into the history of Dublin courtesy not just of its architecture but also the families who called it home. In researching the history of the house we hope to give new life to some of the people who passed through our doors and to keep their memory alive in a small way.

Our research has brought up certain themes that remain consistent throughout the history of the building: its associations with industry, its occupants' roles in the military, a history of strong and charitable women, ties with the medical world, and a variety of sporting connections.

No. 25 has been and continues to be a microcosm of Dublin life.



No. 25 Timeline

1843

No. 25 first appeared when William Watson III acquired from the Hon. Sidney Herbert a lease for 150 years, beginning on the 25th of March 1841. William and his wife Sarah moved their young family into the house in 1843.

1844

Over the next 40 years at No. 25 William III and Sarah raised their 6 children in the house until their deaths in 1883 and 1885.

1901

No. 25 was in the care of William IV; who lived here with his children Edward and Janet after his parents passed away. He was still here in 1911 with Edward, Janet and her husband Henry Corley, as well as one of his nieces.

1918

After William IV passed away on March 9th the house moved to the care of his son Edward. Just over a month later Edward married Ina Read on April 24th in Roscrea with both then living in No. 25 until their deaths; Ina's in 1941 and Edward's in 1947.

1947

After Edwards death, the house passed to Ina's brother Henry Marvell Read. Henry is notable as one of a select group of sportsmen who represented Ireland internationally in three separate sports – Rugby, Tennis and Cricket.

1960

Catherine Hughes and her family were some of the last residents to live in No. 25, living in the upper floors of the house. The lower floors were used as doctor's private practices, a link to Dr Edward Watsons work as chief radiographer at Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital.

1980

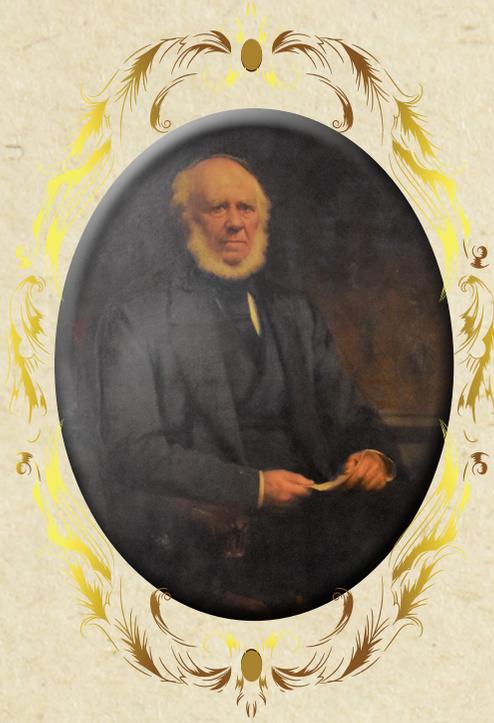
No. 25 was used for business purposes as part of the Bank of Ireland. It continued to be used by the bank until the early 2000s.

2003

The Kelly family purchased Fitzwilliam Hall and with it, No. 25 Fitzwilliam Place. Prior to their purchase of No. 25, it was being used for meeting rooms for the bank.

2012

The Kelly family completed a refurbishment of No. 25, changing its purpose to an event space. The Kelly's have maintained and improved the building since 2005, restoring it to its Georgian hey-day, and continuing the tradition of warmth and hospitality first shown by the Watsons in 1843.



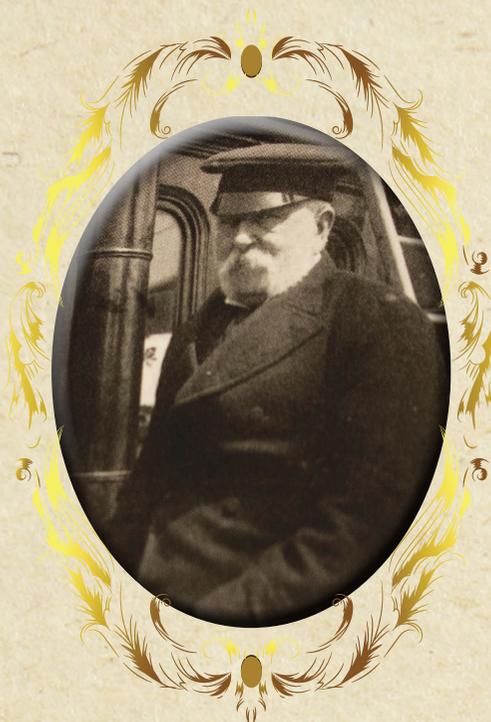
William Watson III (1804-1883)

William Watson was born and educated in Dublin, graduating from Trinity College in 1825. He married Sarah Morgan in 1834 and the two lived at No. 9 Upper Temple Street (now part of the Temple Street Children's Hospital).

There Sarah gave birth to their first two children, Margaret Sarah and William IV. During this time, it was becoming popular for wealthy Dublin families to move from the north of the city to the more fashionable neighbourhoods of south Dublin city, especially Merrion Square, Fitzwilliam Square and Fitzwilliam Place.

The Watsons were one of the many families who relocated during those years. In the 10 years following their move to No. 25 William and Sarah had four more children; Charles Moore, Edward, Anne Agnes, and Arthur John. Two of his sons, William IV and Edward, would eventually join their father in the shipping business at the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company.

When William Watson III died in April of 1883 his obituary praised him as "an example of a man who, beginning life without any special interest or influential friends, formed, by an unwavering course of industry and integrity, a prominent position of extreme usefulness and singular repute."



William Watson IV

Born in 1842 when the family still lived at Upper Temple Street, William would go on to spend most of his life at No. 25. In 1868, at age 30, he ventured abroad to Melbourne, Australia where he married Janet Frances nee Macartney, aged 22, before returning to Dublin. Baptism records inform us that the newlyweds were living at No. 25 two years later when they welcomed their first child on 13 January 1870.

After moving out and spending some time in their own home the family moved back to No. 25 after the deaths of William III and Sarah. From 1886/87 onwards William IV lived at No. 25; the 1901 census shows William living there with his children Edward and Janet, and the 1911 census reflects the addition of Janet's husband Henry Corley, as well as a Macartney niece. The 1911 census also lists one Henry Read as a visitor to the house at the time. Mr. Read would remain a central part of the No. 25 story for many years to come. William continued to live at No. 25 until his death in 1918 aged of 76.

Edward Watson

William IV's brother Edward grew up in No. 25 surrounded by his siblings but also developed a special relationship with his neighbour at No. 24, Adelaide Courtney. The pair married in Surrey in England in 1880 and shortly afterwards returned to live at No. 25. While living here they welcomed their first child, a daughter, Frances Sydney Florence Watson in 1881.

By 1901 Edward and Adeline had moved their young family to 10 Duncairn Terrace in Bray, however, Edward remained involved in the 'family business' of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company alongside his brother William IV. He was invited to the board of directors in 1883 and became joint MD with his brother in 1918.

Edwards passion for the business of transporting mail, cargo and passengers between Ireland and England can be seen in his book "The Royal Mail to Ireland", an account of the origin and development of the postal network between London and Ireland through Holyhead, and the use of the line of communication by travellers. His early life and the passion his mother instilled in him for books clearly stayed with him even after he left No. 25. A copy of his book can still be viewed at the Maritime Museum in Dún Laoghaire. Edward lived a long life, remaining in Bray until his death in 1937 at age 91.

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Dr Edward Watson

Not to be confused with his uncle, also named Edward, Dr Edward was the son William IV and Janet Frances. Although he was born with an address at No. 1 Salem Place in 1872 it wasn't long before he, his sister and father had moved back to the family home at No. 25 Fitzwilliam Place.

Edward's professional calling was to medicine rather than the family shipping business, although he did serve as Commissioner of Irish Lights from 1923-1947. Edward had much success in his career and was well respected in the medical community. In 1903, shortly after graduating Watson was appointed assistant physician and radiologist to Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, where he had trained as a student. Watson specialised in radiology and was appointed radiologist to the hospital, a position he held for over 45 years.

The year 1918 would bring a great number of changes in Dr Edward Watson's life. In March his father passed away, leaving No. 25 Fitzwilliam Place in his possession. Just one month later, on April 24th Edward would marry Ina Read, the sister of his friend Henry Read. Keen eyed readers will remember that Henry was listed as a visitor to No. 25 in the 1911 census.

He and his sister Ina were both keen sportspeople, as was Edward. Although his medical practice took up a great part of his day to day life, Edward also had a keen interest in sport that extended back to his college days. From his time at Trinity College Dublin where he studied medicine, he took an interest in all forms of sport, particularly in rugby, cricket, the harriers, and the athletics clubs. This shared love of sports would most certainly have led to many a spirited sporting discussion throughout the house.

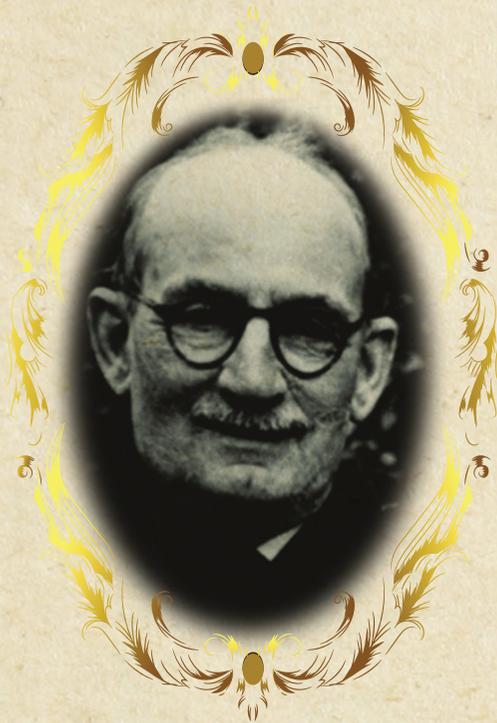
Edward and Ina did not have any children of their own and after Edward's death in 1947, No. 25 was passed on to Henry.

Ina Read

An Irish Times obituary provided by the Royal College of Surgeons gives us some insight into the life of Mrs Ina Watson - a gracious host, successful athlete, and enthusiastic contributor to charitable causes. Ina married Edward Watson on April 24th, 1918 when he was 46 and she was 32, and the two made their home at No. 25. Ina was remembered as a devout member of the Church of Ireland, highly involved in the charitable outreaches of her parish and regularly attending services at Christ Church, Leeson Park - nearly across the canal from her home.

Ina shared the athletic talent of her brother Henry and was known in Dublin as a popular and successful golfer. She was captain of the women's section of the Island Golf Club in Malahide for two years. We can imagine that Ina enjoyed discussing sports with her brother when he was a visitor in her home and that the two took pride in each other's accomplishments, though perhaps their competitive skill led to a friendly sibling rivalry!

Ina's presence at No. 25 ensured that the house remained known in Dublin as a place of warm hospitality. Her obituary in 1942 even includes a mention of No. 25, as it is remembered that Ina and her husband "Dr Watson shared their beautiful home in Fitzwilliam place with many."



Henry Read

From his status as a visitor in 1911 to his continuing close ties after Ina and Edward married, to his inheritance of the house, Henry Read is closely woven into the history of No. 25.

While staying here in 1911 he gained success in three sporting fields. In 1909 he joined the Irish Cricket team, toured North America, and gained thirteen caps between 1910 and 1913, while also playing with Trinity College Rugby Football Club. As a Tennis player, Henry gained selection for Ireland.

Henry joined the army and served in WWI but did not return to sport professionally when the war was over. He did however remain a staunch supporter of local clubs. In 1955/56 he served as the president of the IRFU and performed the official opening of the west stand in Lansdowne Road on December 31st, 1955. In the same year he was also president of the Roscrea club for a second term.

Henry was based in his family home in Roscrea, Co. Tipperary but was a frequent guest at No. 25 throughout his sister Ina's marriage to Edward. After both of their deaths the house was bequeath to him and remained under his care until his own passing in 1973.



The Kelly Family

No. 25 served as a family home for three generations of Watsons and as a Dublin base for the Read family up to the 1970s. It gained new life as a place of business for Bank of Ireland from 1982 until 2003 when the rooms in No. 25 that began life as family spaces served primarily as meeting rooms for banking executives.

Michael Kelly purchased Fitzwilliam Hall and No. 25 from Bank of Ireland in 2003 and carried out a full refurbishment of No. 25. He then leased Fitzwilliam Hall and No. 25 to Glandore, the Kelly family company which provides high quality flexible space in Dublin, Belfast and Cork. Glandore initially used No. 25 for meeting rooms but following further refurbishments and decoration in 2012 opened No. 25 as an exclusive private dining and event venue.

In 2012, No. 25 changed from a place primarily used for meetings to the private event venue it operates as today. It is a popular choice for weddings, civil ceremonies, PR launches, private parties, corporate entertaining, and private fine dining. The intimate setting and the feeling that you're walking into someone's home makes No. 25 an ideal place for these events.

The building that was once a family home still holds a warm welcome for everyone who crosses its threshold, something that we hope Sarah Watson, the original lady of the house, would be glad to see.

Being a family run business with three female directors who happen to be sisters, we take particular delight in the discovery that we are continuing the long line of strong women at the heart of No. 25. From Sarah, the original lady of the house, to Ina Watson and her reputation for benevolence, we hope that the people who come to No. 25 for their events, particularly those who choose to get married here, feel the warmth of over 170 years of hospitality.

In researching the house and its past we've come to have an even greater appreciation of those who looked after the house before us and we look forward to being the caretakers of No. 25 for many years to come. We will continue our endeavours to maintain it in all its Georgian glory for those who will use it in the future and to honour its unique place in Dublin history.





Georgian. Intimate. Elegance.

No. 25 Fitzwilliam Place Today

No. 25 Fitzwilliam Place is your own house in the heart of Dublin. Located on one of Dublin's most elegant streets, the 'Georgian Mile',

No 25 Fitzwilliam Place spans over 3 floors catering for private functions and weddings.

Each floor encapsulates the building's classic yet contemporary style with impeccably restored Georgian features which highlight the property's original period heritage. The stone floor of the entrance foyer for instance, is charmingly worn from over 150 years of dignified footfall.



The Lovett Pearce Lounge



Meeting Rooms

For events that require sophistication and discretion
Our meeting rooms, each with natural daylight, have been decorated in a classic yet contemporary style highlighting the elegance of their original Georgian features. Each space can be adapted for a variety of uses, from meetings and breakout lunches to dinners and networking events.

We also offer coffee, luxury teas, and access to our on-site sister restaurant Suesey Street. Our dedicated team will ensure that all your requirements are met efficiently, and your event runs smoothly on the day.



Meeting Areas



Private Dining

You are guaranteed a warm welcome, excellent food and flawless service.

Whether you are planning a business breakfast, a canapé and champagne reception, a three course lunch or an elaborate six course dinner, our professional and experienced team will be delighted to create a truly unique experience for you and your guests.



Private Dining



Contact Us



Please feel free to contact us for a viewing of the house.
we would be delighted to show you around in person.

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www.25fitzwilliamplace.ie

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