

# VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY USING ONLINE SOURCES

## DAY PLACE, TRALEE



Day Place, Tralee is a terrace of ten three storey buildings, located in the middle of Tralee town, built in circa 1800. All are protected structures and located in an Architectural Conservation Area. The terrace comprises three storey over basement buildings with pitched roofs, timber front doors with fanlights and ionic columns built of limestone, limestone entrance steps and delicate wrought iron railings to the street edge. Some buildings have quoin stones, others do not; some have more steps leading from the street to the front door than others; the roof line and building line differs slightly throughout. Look carefully at the buildings and they can tell you a story.

The online world has opened an immense quantity of material and can help us to see our world from behind a screen. What we can glean from archival sources, images, photographs, maps, can tell human stories of hopes, dreams and long-forgotten people. I hope this article will help show how online material can help tell this story.

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Day Place, 2020, Looking northwards – note the surviving timber sash windows on the first building on the left and the vertical rhythm to the terrace afforded by the substantial chimney stacks. The principles of Georgian design are evident in Day Place with classical proportioning and simplicity of design core design principles.

### **START OF THE STORY**

The story of Day Place begins with a man; Justice Robert Day. Others have written books on this figure, so I will not delve into his background, other than to say, he was an eminent figure in high society, was born in Lohercannon outside Tralee, was a contemporary of Daniel O’Connell, and a proponent of a unified Ireland and England. He was the father of Elizabeth Day, who married Edward Denny, Third Baronet, the last Tralee landlord to live in Tralee Castle.

Justice Day resided in Dublin during the Georgian development of the city core; he saw the immense change in town planning terms. Imagine a city defined by wide boulevards, buildings unified by classical design and proportions, the delicate fanlights, landscaped squares, and finely worked cast and wrought iron railings and balconies. Perhaps this guided Robert in his approach to the development of Day Place; a chance to bring beauty and improvement to his hometown. Perhaps it was the chance to make some money too; as these Georgian squares, terraces and boulevards, were developer-led. They were surveyed and laid out, and sold as development plots, like today.



Day Place, 2020, looking southwards – the façades of the terrace remain unpainted allowing the simplicity of the proportions to shine

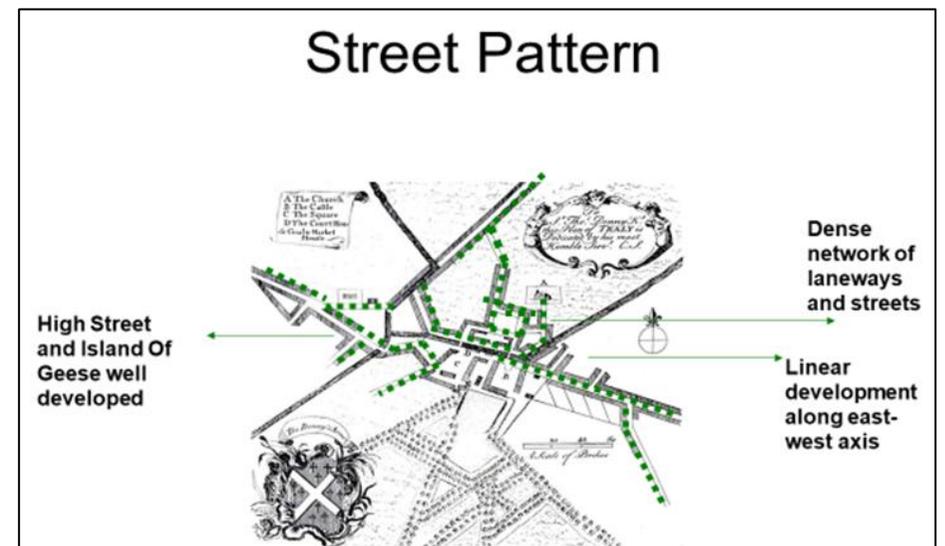
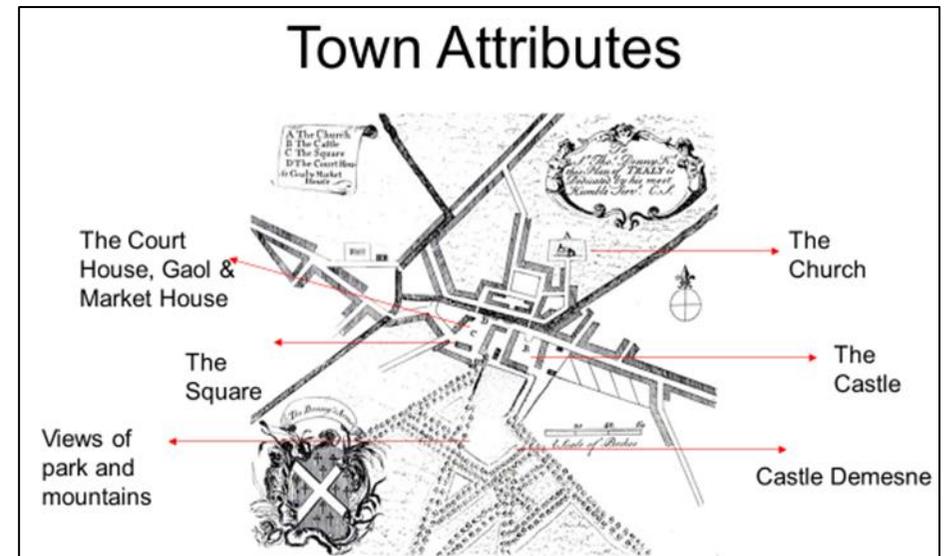


The beauty of light reflected on Day Place

## MAPS -GETTING STARTED

To provide context, immerse yourself in Tralee at the end of the eighteenth century. A good starting point is Charles Smith's map of Tralee town. Smith was the eminent author of the "Ancient and Present State of the County of Kerry", published in 1756. Smith's map tells a story about the 18<sup>th</sup> century Tralee town; it was a socially advanced place, boasting a town square, a market, gaol and a church, as well as Tralee Castle, residence of the local landlord (top map to right--highlighted by author). This map is available to view online in a variety of areas ([askaboutireland.ie](http://askaboutireland.ie), [kerryheritage.ie](http://kerryheritage.ie)) and is a wonderful starting point.

The street pattern shows that Tralee was compact at the time with a dense network of lanes radiating from the main street (Castle Street). These lanes were important routes facilitating pedestrian permeability through the town at the time, consolidating development around the key elements of church and state infrastructure. This medieval street plan has shaped the town's current street and plot pattern and is retained into the fabric of the town today (bottom map to left, highlighted by author).



The first Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1841/42 (see map to the right), is a wonderful map and online at [geohive.maps.arcgis.com](http://geohive.maps.arcgis.com) or [osi.ie](http://osi.ie). Day Place is clear at this time and we can see its railings, outbuildings and gardens. The distinctive formal building line is visible, along with the rear laneway, which provides access to lands behind Day Place. Of note is the Big River which remains over ground in front of Day Place and Prince's Quay with a line of trees shown along the river's western bank. Houses on Prince's Quay are also large, with gardens to their rear, railings to their frontages. Development to the rear of Day Place seems rather haphazard with outbuildings built to the rear of the houses with a line of coach house structures at the very back of the houses.

The plot pattern associated with Day Place, Stoughton's Row and Prince's Quay, is particularly significant when it is compared to the densely packed buildings associated with Mary Street, Abbey Street and the other laneways which radiate from the main streets (marked on the map to the right). The formal layouts are quite distinctive compared to the more organic medieval layout of the remainder of the town centre.

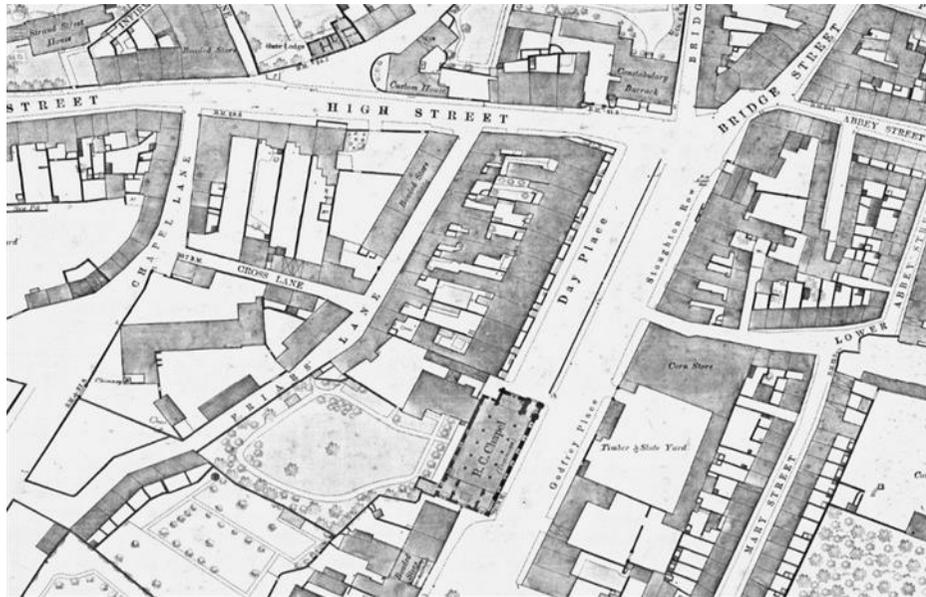


Tree-lined western bank of the Big River

Day Place

Abbey Street

Mary Street



The map above shows Day Place in 1878 and we can see that the Big River has been culverted to the front of Day Place. The presence of railings, the formality of the layout, mews buildings and plot pattern morphology of the terrace are clearly different to the rest of the surrounding town and buildings. We can compare this map with that of the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map overleaf to track changes to the street. An example is that the tree lined bank to the Big River has disappeared and is replaced with a defined boundary which now divides Day Place from Stoughton's Row. This map can be found on [kerryheritage.ie](http://kerryheritage.ie).



Day Place

Abbey Street

The map above is an excerpt from the 1898 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS Map, again available on [osi.ie](http://osi.ie). This map provides social clues, as well as physical building clues to help us discover what Day Place was like at the turn of the twentieth century. It shows for example the limited extent of railings in Tralee (Day Place and western side of Prince's Quay only) – railings would have been expensive and certainly not common to see along back lanes of Tralee. The huge difference in plot size is also evident in this coloured map (compare the size of a building on Day Place to one on Abbey Street).

These historic maps show that despite change, the distinctive character of Day Place remains to this day. Tralee is unique in that its street layout is as important as its structures. Day Place embodies the charm and success of formal town planning from the nineteenth century; geometric lines a somewhat odd feature within a curving medieval centre. Imagine what the terrace was like when it was first built – set back from the tree lined Big River – a glorious aspect. Maps can help tell this story and can explain why buildings are the way they are.



This house is on Prince's Quay -both the street name and the steps to the entrance at upper level provide us with clues to a past linked defined by the Big River.

## STREET DIRECTORIES

Street directories, now available online (for example failteromhat.com), provide incredible sources of social information, and are key to understanding Day Place and its context within the early nineteenth century town. Pigot & Co's Provincial Directory of 1824 lists the occupiers of Day Place; some well-known names are included, names that even now are still associated with Tralee (Busteed, the Days, McGillicuddy, O'Connell, Rice and Stoughton). We can see from Pigot that Day Place was predominantly residential at this time comprising a terrace of homes, with only the town post office and the Kerry Evening Post (both operated by John Busteed), and one physician and one barrister operating from Day Place.

Slater's Commercial Directory of Ireland dates from 1846 is a good online resource also. This directory provides us with street numbers, allowing a more detailed socio-economic analysis of Tralee town. In the case of life in Day Place, William Denny is listed as residing in Number 1 Day Place, John Busteed in Number 8, two Blennerhassett families live in Numbers 3 and 6 and Daniel De Courcy McGillicuddy lives in Number 4. Compare these findings to other areas to tell the story of streets and their people.

## GRIFFITH'S VALUATION

Another resource which links the physical and social environment together is Richard Griffith's Valuation, undertaken across Ireland during the 1850s. The valuation is accessible on the Ask About Ireland website, a most educational resource and well worth a visit. Griffith's Valuation provides us with tools to analyse a town at a detailed level. The Primary Valuation was the first detailed survey of every taxable property in the state; a nineteenth century property tax survey if you will. The Kerry valuation was published in 1852. We can use Griffith's valuation to show who was living in Day Place and we can gather information about the types of properties from the valuations provided for each one. Number 10 Day Place for example, was rated at £30 whereas a property on Friar Lane, a stone's throw away, was rated at just 3 shillings. We can also learn from Griffith that there was little change in occupancy from Slater's time; those well-known Tralee surnames are still resident in Day Place— McGillicuddy, Day, Hickson, Blennerhasset, Quill, Hilliard and Denny.

The screenshot shows the 'Ask about Ireland' website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with a 'GO' button and navigation links for 'About Us', 'Links', 'Contact Us', and 'Accessibility'. Below this are four menu items: 'Reading Room', 'Learning Zone', 'Libraries', and 'ENFO'. A large blue banner features a map of Ireland and the text 'Griffith's Valuation' with a sub-headline: 'The Primary Valuation was the first full-scale valuation of property in Ireland. It was overseen by Richard Griffith and published between 1847 and 1864. It is one of the most important surviving 19th century genealogical sources.' Below the banner is a navigation menu with links: 'Griffith's Names', 'Griffith's Places', 'Name Books', 'Thoms', 'Search Tips', 'Upload', 'About GV Maps', and 'Read More'. The main content area contains instructions: 'On this form, you can search for particular place-names. You may narrow your search by searching only within a particular county, barony, union or parish. If you do not enter a place-name, the search will return all the place-names in the county, barony, etc. that you select from the pull-down menus. The search will take a few moments if you ask for all the place-names in a county. The results will show a list of places that match your search, and give you the option to view the map or to see the recorded occupants.' The search form is divided into two steps: 'Step 1 - Mandatory' with a 'Place Name' input field, and 'Step 2 - Optional' with 'County', 'Barony', 'Union', and 'Parish' dropdown menus. A 'Search' button is located to the right of the optional fields. A small footer at the bottom right reads 'Thursday 13 August 2015'.

askaboutireland.ie

## TOUR DIARIES

Excerpts from tour diaries, some online and some in libraries (the Local History department at the County Library in Tralee is a wonderful resource and well worth a visit), often provide first-hand accounts by visitors of life. The Grand Tour was often documented in diary or book form and, on occasion, they have survived to provide us with insights into the experiences of visitors. Henry Inglis is one such visitor who in 1834, visited Tralee and refers to the poverty of the area stating that “The indications of prosperity visible in the outward appearance of Tralee, I found upon inquiry, to be just indications. Twenty years ago, Tralee was little else than a congregation of cabins”<sup>1</sup>. John Barrow in 1836 refers to the “miserable” mud and turf cabins and stated that there were “innumerable beggars” who were more “numerous here and more clamorous”<sup>2</sup> than elsewhere. Imagine then the splendour of Day Place, built during these times. Imagine the townspeople living in poor accommodation seeing these strong sturdy slated houses being erected...

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<sup>1</sup> Inglis, Henry, “A Journey Throughout Ireland during the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834”, Volume 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Whittaker and Co., London, 1835, p.259

<sup>2</sup> Barrow, John, “A Tour Round Ireland Through the Sea- Coast Counties in the Autumn of 1835”, John Murray, London, 1836, p.295

Other accounts however have different opinions. Atkinson in 1815 refers to “the recent values of lands and the growing spirit of improvement which pervades this county”<sup>3</sup>; and Isaac Weld in 1812 says “Tralee is a very thriving town, in which many new houses have lately been erected: it contains an inn with commodious apartments but cleanliness and regularity were not to be enumerated amongst its recommendations”<sup>4</sup>. Even Henry Inglis, previously quoted, further comments he had “no hesitation in pronouncing Tralee, the county town of Kerry, to be altogether the most thriving town I have seen since leaving Clonmel...Tralee has streets that would not disgrace the best quarters of any city; and these, not streets of business, which it also has, - but streets containing gentlemen’s houses, or at all events, houses which no gentleman might be ashamed to live in”<sup>5</sup>.

How bad!

<sup>3</sup> Atkinson, A., “The Irish Tourist in a series of picturesque views, travelling incidents and observations statistical, political and moral, on the character and aspect of the Irish Nation”, Dublin, Thomas Courtney (printer) 1815, p.23

<sup>4</sup> Weld, Isaac, “Illustrations of the Scenery of Killarney and the Surrounding Country”, London, 1812, pps.239-240

<sup>5</sup> IBID, pps.251-252

## NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES

Newspaper archives provide us with snippets of information, town gossip and scandal, in addition to information that is helpful from an academic research point of view. These are available online through the newspaper archives at [archive.irishnewsarchive.com](http://archive.irishnewsarchive.com). In 1834 for example, we learn that Miss Hussey's sash windows on Day Place were smashed, a "most disgraceful and cowardly outrage...committed by some malicious person"<sup>6</sup> An auction of the contents of Number 4 Day Place in 1834 describes a most extraordinary array of furniture including chairs from the Dining, Parlour, Drawing Room and Bedrooms, damask table cloths, wardrobes, nobbies and house presses and, an eight day clock (an expensive item as it only needed winding once a week!).



<sup>6</sup> Kerry Evening Post 1813-1917, Saturday, October 11, 1834

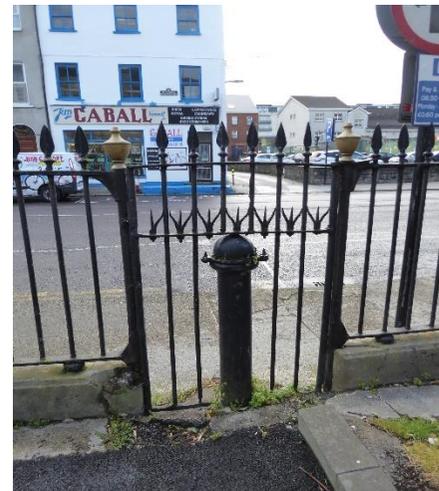


Even today, the architectural splendour of Day Place is evident in its execution and finish.

Later in 1861, we learn that “The Tralee Town Commissioners are laying large sized gas mains towards Day Place and Princes- street”<sup>7</sup>. This explains the remains of a gas light bracket which remain affixed to the front of one of the properties on Day Place. In 1863, the newspapers carry many letters and editorials regarding the “Day Place Obstruction” which was a story about an argument regarding the closure of a gate located at Day Place. Reverend Edward Day, then responsible for Day Place, wrote a letter he to the editors of the Kerry Evening Post and the Tralee Chronicle. He stated he had directed his smith “usually employed by me (and whom, in conjunction with others, I hope to immortalise for the erection of the line of railings in 1852, by their skill), to make and put up the gate in question...This far-famed gate was put up to keep the mischievous, stone-throwing urchins of the adjacent lanes from annoying the inhabitants of Day place, and not from any feeling of paltry ill-will towards the members of one of the most illustrious orders in the Christian church”<sup>8</sup>. This except, not only provides an insight into social conditions in town at that time but also sheds light the construction dates of the railings, which we can link back to the OS map information (see page 5 and 6).



Gas bracket



Railings today outside Day Place

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<sup>7</sup> Kerry Evening Post, 1813-1917, Wednesday, September 18, 1861

<sup>8</sup> Kerry Evening Post, 1813-1917, Wednesday September 23, 1863

## HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS

By the turn of the twentieth century, we have access to a most wonderful photographic collection, the Lawrence Collection, courtesy of the National Library of Ireland (NLI). This collection, and others, has been digitised which has had a hugely beneficial impact on learning and research. This image below provides a tantalising snapshot of Day Place as it celebrated its centenary (late 1800s/early 1900s).



Lawrence Collection Photograph, NLI, Day Place set apart by line of railings from the main thoroughfare. Gas lights and chimney stacks are prominent, as is the Dominican Church.

Already we can see change in the street including replacement of the Georgian style six over nine and six over six timber sash windows to two over two and single pane over single pane. These changes are typical in Irish buildings, reflecting advancements in glass and joinery construction methods. These photographs provide evidence of architectural fabric and we can compare change between then and now.



## CONCLUSIONS

There are lots of ways we can tell our stories. Keep an open mind and use a variety of sources and research options. By comparing what you find you can build a narrative about our buildings and those who lived there.

For more information, please visit the kerrycoco website where you can find Kerry Building Conservation Project publications.

The Buildings of Ireland website provides a wealth of information about a wide variety of buildings throughout the state and is a must-see when starting any building research project.

The Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society has a wealth of good publications and their website is also well worth a visit at [www.kerryhistory.ie](http://www.kerryhistory.ie).



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Day Place Conservation Project, 2019, see [kerrycoco.ie](http://kerrycoco.ie)