

- part of the original Mt. Brilliant — a Wheeler property — which was built in 1769.
15. “Perhaps the best general view of Kilkenny and the country around is obtained from Altamont (alis Fennell-hill), the little verdant hill capped with a neat cottage adjoining the Dublin entrance to the town, which rises to a considerable elevation above the surrounding plain”. Fraser. **Handbook for Ireland, 1844.**
 16. These Purcells are buried at St. Mary’s. Madge Buggy. **Memorials of the Dead.** Rothe House.
 17. By Indenture dated 1/6/1838 John Helsham who died on the 26th of the same month and Arthur his son and heir had agreed to bar the entail.
 18. A Memorial Tablet to this uncle and his wife may be seen in the Ormonde transept of St. Canice’s Cathedral.
 19. See Stained Glass Window to the right of the porch at St. Canice’s Cathedral.
 20. Both are buried at Kilfera in holy ground, on the site of St. Fiachra’s cell (Carrigan, *op.cit.*, Vol. 111, p.219).
 21. “Between the steep and lichen-covered cliff on one side and the beautiful Kilfera woods on the other . . . one sees on an eminence over-hanging the river with its timely-kept lawns and parterres the pretty and secluded residence of Mrs. Helsham Hunt, an architectural gem in the midst of its beautiful surroundings”. **Kilfera — St. Fiachra.** Anon. before 1890.
 22. Age of the Ascendancy. Kilkenny Corporation was a rather select and elitist body until the Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Act of 1840, when Borough corporations were reformed and reconstituted.



Doninga House

BETTINA GRATTAN-BELLEW

The original plan of Doninga House can still be traced from the present structure. It is an H-shaped house of a type usually associated with the late 17th century with some irregularities in the wings, one of which is of three stories and one of two stories.

The house still contains an early staircase in a staircase tower at the rear. This staircase has a balustrade with moulded bannisters, deep treads and shallow rises leading to the two upper floors with a branch to a mezzanine room over the back door. This staircase which survives unaltered dates from the 1st or 2nd decade of the 18th century and probably indicates that Doninga was built at that time. Possibly the lands had been made into a new estate during the land sales and grants that followed the Williamite wars. There is a possibility that it may incorporate an even earlier house. A new staircase was added about 1790; this still survives on the left side of the centre block. When the house is first mentioned in print in Samuel Lewis’s *Topographical Dictionary* (1837) it was already the seat of the Bookey family but it is not certain if they were its original builders. It was they who added

about 1830 the most distinguished architectural feature of the house, the Doric granite colonnades at the former front entrance facing the river Barrow and a smaller colonnade at the rear opening into a fine stable yard.

The most interesting association of the house dates from some years later when in 1842 Thackeray visited Doninga on his tour of Ireland and has left an interesting account in his *Irish Sketchbook* of the hospitality he received there, his party of 12 persons being easily accommodated (there are still 34 bedrooms) and entertained by a numerous family. He also mentions the good husbandry of what would then be considered a small estate farmed by a lessee. The tradition of good farming is carried on to the present day by the Mullins family, now owners.

It would seem at the time of Thackeray's visit that the Bookeys had over-stretched their means, probably by the addition of the new portico, etc. a decade earlier. Thackeray also mentions "the lack of finish of the interior compared to the exterior".

The first Bookey of Doninga recorded is Thomas Poer Trench Bookey, born 1819. He was the eldest son of Thomas Turlock Bookey of Doninga, by his wife Florinda, daughter of Power le Poer Trench, Archbishop of Tuam. He was educated at Rugby and matriculated at Essex College Oxford in 1839; Magistrate for Co. Kilkenny and Captain Kilkenny Fusiliers. There is a monument to him and to his wife in Grange Sylvae Church. She died in 1887, aged 80 years.

Their son Thomas Power Trench Bookey married (1864) Frances, younger daughter of Harvey de Montmorency of Castle Morres. He was also Magistrate for Co. Kilkenny and Carlow and High Sheriff for Co. Kilkenny in 1885, late Captain Kilkenny Fusiliers. (The acreage of Doninga was given at that time as 770 acres). He died in 1881 aged 60. His sister Florinda Bookey then inherited Doninga. She had married William Greenwood of Ballyduff but he died in 1867, leaving her a widow. She lived to the age of 84 and died in 1916. She left Doninga in her will to her cousin Major Malcolm Brown Bookey Riall, who lived there until 1923 when he sold it to Mr. William Mullins of Old Grange, near Graignamanagh. William Mullins and his sons were prominent in farming and sporting circles and Mr. Paddy Mullins is a successful trainer whose stables are at Doninga. The Mullins family made some small alterations to the house, adding a new entrance at the left wing.

Mrs. Greenwood is remembered as a benefactress in the locality, especially amongst the then numerous Protestant population. There was a school and rectory at Doninga and the church, known as Grange Sylvae after the old parish, is outside Goresbridge.

Sources:

Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, by Samuel Lewis, 1837.

Hand Book for Travellers, Ireland, by James Fraser, 1844.

The Irish Sketch Book, by William Thackeray.

Walford's *County Families*, 1886.

Architectural features examined by Dr. R. Hetherington and Mr. R. Lightbrown.