

## Did you notice..?

A column for the curious stroller

Séamus Cannon

### 1. Ironwork in Monkstown

In his book, *Decorative Dublin*, Peter Pearson, a former resident of Monkstown, writes of the growth in the use of ironwork in functional and decorative architecture during the Victorian era, precisely at the time when Monkstown was growing into the residential suburb we know today. There were a number of prominent iron foundries in Dublin, one of which was owned by Robert Mallet, who pioneered the science of seismology and who lived for a time at 1, Grosvenor Terrace, Monkstown. I've often wondered whether the unusual cast iron panels in the garden walls there owe anything to him.

There are very many fine examples of ironwork in gates, monuments, property boundaries, street furniture, stair balustrades, boot scrapers and occasional balconies in the Monkstown area. Ironwork can be cast or wrought and frequently the processes are combined, with cast iron elements attached to wrought iron structures. Look carefully at the wonderfully elaborate railings along Brighton Vale, or along Longford Terrace. You can also find work that may lack sophistication but has the well-crafted appearance of having been made by a skilled local blacksmith. In fact you can see ironwork of the highest quality almost anywhere in our area, unlike England which lost much of its ironwork to the manufacture of arms during WWII.



*St. Anne's, the Hill*



*Longford Terrace*

Several patterns are repeated illustrating the development of cast iron during the nineteenth century enabling efficient production of complex ornamental ironwork. A common motif is that of the honeysuckle. Studying particular railings reveals details that are missed in a casual glance. In some cases, for instance, the foot of the vertical rail will end in an animal's paw! Finials, the top of the railing, can also be of interest, whether a fleur-de-lis or an elaborate urn or floral image. You can also spot an occasional pinecone! One to look out for can be

found on a number of finials in our area. As you will see in the photo, the rose and the thistle are entwined with the shamrock (no leek, I'm afraid!) symbolising the United Kingdom of the time. There are examples on Longford Terrace, Alma Rd., Monkstown Avenue and Richmond Hill. See if you can spot them.

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