

Asset Ref No.	Thornhill Registered Historic Garden L033; HB01/25/001A-D House, Stables, Gatelodge, Church	
Heritage Type	Built	
	<i>Post-Medieval</i>	
Location	OS 6-inch map sheet	
	Townland	Ballynashallog
	Parish	
	LCA	Derry Slopes
	ITM Coordinates	246012, 421090; 245789, 420990
	NG Coordinates	
Protection Status	Registered Garden; House & Stables, Lodge and Church (listed)	
Condition		
Ownership (if known)		
Site Description	<p>HOUSE</p> <p>Built 1880-1899</p> <p>A large stone built 2 storey house with many stepped gables of varying size, natural slated pitched roofs with moulded stone chimneys and having attics and basement. The style is severe with Scottish Baronial overtones. The west and main entrance decoration is some 8 or 9 bays wide having a central square projecting entrance bay, one storey high with recessed arched opening containing an almost diminutive square headed door. The entrance is at the end of a higher ridged part which thrusts forward and at the other end another projecting single storey bay likewise with a flat roof. Behind these bays 2 narrow stepped gables break the roofline and that behind the entrance rises another storey. Windows generally are narrow and tall in groups of 2 and 3 and some singles. Multiple windows are divided by stone transoms and mullions. Over the entrance bay coupled windows are all capped with angular pediment, while, over the other, a segmented pediment. This block which is 3 rooms deep contains the principal spaces. To the north of the entrance and set back from it is a lower two storey wing which terminates in the kitchen with its separate entrances. The kitchen wing thrusts forward with a crow stepped gable and its round headed mysterious entrance has a lean-to roof. Windows are again a mixture of singles, doubles and triplets with two round headed singles at first floor abutting the higher block. Over these a pleasing oculus, one of the few refinements in the overall composition. Chimneys are tall, rising well above the ridge line, built in ashlarwork with rounded narrow sides and with moulded bands and caps. Roofs are steep pitched and there are two, two light dormers with square heads on the higher roof. Walls are built of snecked sandstone obtained from Dungiven. Windows are timber, painted white. Kitchen windows are wider and taller and divided in five panes, not unlike those in the stable block (see HB no. 01-25-001D). There are no roof overhangs with a simple plain string course under cast iron gutters with matching rectangular downpipes. Where necessary there are trunkheads. The north elevation of the kitchen wing is three bays long with a double pitched projecting porch at the NE end. The porch has crow stepped gable with a pair of round headed windows and oculus placed centrally over. The windows on this side are irregularly spaced and square headed with sliding sashes on first floor. To the side of the projecting porch, steps lead down to basement doorway. The steep pitched roof has three no. two light dormers. The east elevation has some symmetry in the composition of the high block which thrust boldly forward from the service wing. It is five bays long with stepped gables at each end projecting forward and containing between a veranda with curved metal roof supported on slender cast iron columns. A central polygonal bay pushes</p>	

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through the veranda roof and forms a steep sloped pyramid roof. Each end bay has large square windows at ground and first floor, subdivided with sandstone mullions and transoms. The intermediate windows are two light similarly divided on first floor while at ground floor these become French windows. One bay of the veranda is open, the other two have metal decorated balustrading. The service wing has a mixture of square and round headed windows. A group of three windows to the service staircase express its semi circular flights. The gable of the main block has irregularly spaced two light windows and the return walls of the bays are punctuated with single light square headed fenestration. Usually each stepped gable sports a slender round headed window. Unfortunately this gable has a recent square window fitted. The south elevation has changed since the convent chapel was added in the 1960s. However it is a repeat of the others with square and round headed windows displaced here and there and a rectangular bay at ground floor on the west gable. There is a contemporary narrow conservatory which abuts the connecting porch to the chapel. Originally there was a curved glass roof conservatory. (See slides c1920). Thornhill enjoys a magnificent site on the west bank of the River Foyle where it flows between Rosses Bay and Culmore. Set on sloping ground well elevated above the river, panoramic views are had of the surrounding landscape. The grounds around the house are well laid out with mature trees dotted in lawns. From the veranda steps lead down to a formal path which dips to the river. Further down and to the side of it is a cemetery for deceased members of the community, (Sisters of Mercy). A winding avenue sweeps from the Culmore Road past the former walled garden which is presently a commercial nursery.

STABLES

Built 1880-1899

A 3 pile stone built, slated, 1½ storey building with part basement gabled, with single chimney stack. This is a former stable block converted to educational use. The S. elevation has 3 gables, that to the W. has 2 vertical windows 3 pane, 2 opening vents at ground floor, centrally above a door under the barge apex with a metal spiral stair giving access to it. The middle gable has 2 coupled tall vertical windows with 5 panes and 2 opening vents, the E. gable is unaltered and the spiral stairway was located internally. There is a window instead of a door under the gable apex. The building is 5 bays long, W. elevation has central projecting and gabled porch. On each side 2 pair of vertical windows with 3 panes each and 2 opening vents. Above 4 gabled and slated dormers over the eaves line. Formerly there were brick trimmed oculii on this facade but they have been built up in stone. The E. side is 2½ storeys high. The lower floor was formerly coach house with brick trimmed gateway and windows. On the first floor the windows are similar to the W. side and the dormers likewise. The N gables have a series of vomitories or covered corridor connecting links joining onto them in an almost confused fashion as they attempt to negotiate the level changes. The roofs are natural slates and there is one chimney stack. Patent roof glazing provides daylight to the inner pile. The walls are built of random rubble stonework of the schist variety.

LODGE

Built 1880-1899

A small single storey stone built gate lodge 1 bay wide by 3 bays long with steep pitched slated roofs. The polygonal bay/gable, facing the avenue, has 3, 2 pane s/s windows in 3 facets dressed around with ashlar sandstone and a pyramidal slated roof terminating in a tall decorative metal finial. The bay returns as far as the entrance door which occurs on a stepped gabled offset. The square headed doorway is shouldered in ashlar work with timber door having one glazed panel. Centred on the gable a single 2 pane s/s window and

above it a small oculus lighting the roofspace. There is another small setback with a single 2 pane s/s window the wall of which continues to form part of a flat roofed extension but probably originally enclosed a yard or formed a screen. On the opposite long wall there is a slight projection after the polygonal bay and another stepped gable with similar fenestration. The flat roof extension encloses the original wall. Walls are built of rockfaced partially snecked sandstone similar to Thornhill House. All the roofs are slated with Bangor Blue slates with plain ridge tiles. There is a single tall chimney stack in smooth rendering but retaining its moulding. The apex of each stepped gable has a neat small stone sphere. The roofs have no overhangs and the ogee C.I. gutters project from a plain chamfered string course. The bottom of the walls have a chamfered plinth. Downpipes are in C.I. The flat roof extension has roughcast plastered walls and a mineral felt roof. The lodge is adjacent to the avenue and main gates with well kept lawn. To the rear of the lodge a small hedge enclosed garden. The wrought iron gates are set between 2 tall square pillars with moulded coping rising in a pyramid and topped with a sphere. On either side of the pillars there is a run of moulded balustrading which turns outwards for a short distance in a shallow curve. At the turn there are further lower pillars and similar at the end of the curved balustrading. A low random rubble wall continues along the roadside and bounding the convent property. Six low blocks of masonry capped with spheres guide the carriageway to the gates. The pillars and balustrading are now painted a striking cream colour. Presumably underneath the paint is ashlar sandstone. As the random rubble wall proceeds northwards forming the road verge it rises to a height of approximately 3.0 metres where it forms one side of the former walled garden.

Church

Built 1960-1979

A long simple hall church with its main axis orientated east/west and joined to the main house by a wide corridor porch with a small S.W. porch, partly stone built with low pitched copper roof. It is located at the southern side of Thornhill House. The east gable is plain without fenestration built in rock faced snecked sandstone with the quoins having a slight batter. The overhanging verge dressing is copper. The south elevation has an asymmetrical arrangement of windows. Each gable stonework is returned a short distance and the remainder of the nave wall rendered except for a battered stone pier defining the chancel end. A small S.W. porch with low pitched copper roof and stone gable projects from the rendered wall. The door is on the east side, recessed, and there is a 3 light stained glass tall window in the gable. Copper is dressed over the barges and fascia with concealed copper gutters and downpipes on each side. The chancel end is emphasised by 5 square headed lancets divided by mullions which continue from ground to underside of roof soffit. Beneath the low cill there are 5 stone panels. A continuous run of clearstorey windows divided by mullions goes from chancel to the SW porch with emphasised head and cill. Immediately over the porch roof there is a small narrow vertical square headed window. The welted copper roof is unadorned except for a small metal cross at west end mounted on a boss. The copper is dressed over verges and fascias and has a slightly greater overhang at gable apexes. Gutters and downpipes are in copper. There is a stone plinth at the base of the rendered wall. The west wall is similar to the east but with a large low pointed 5 light stained glass window with projecting mullions and surround all of which reach ground level. It has a low steeply weathered cill. Transoms are arranged on the 3 centre lights to form a cross defined by square panes. The north elevation is cement rendered with projecting flat roof sacristy block which stretches from the connecting porch and overlaps on the first light of the chancel windows. There are 5 chancel windows similar to the south side except that one is truncated. There is a matching run of clearstorey windows over the sacristy. The sacristy has a high stone plinth at the east. There is a ground level change. The sacristy is lit by groups of 4, 3 and 2 square proportioned windows. Roof is asphalted. The

	<p>connecting porch from the convent has a wooden door on west side with a large square headed window on either side, unimposing, but was not the principal access to the chapel. The porch connection to the convent house is neatly done giving access to the main staircase. Gravel paths surround 2 sides of the chapel while at the west end there is a sea of bitmac. The chapel occupies a prominent location at the south side with lawns sweeping away to south and east. It contrasts sharply with the architectural style of the house.</p>
Landscape Context (setting)	
Site Appraisal	<p>HOUSE</p> <p>A substantial Victorian Villa in a severe almost harsh, Scottish Baronial style with Tudor influences, well constructed in Dungiven sandstone, magnificently sited on the west bank of the River Foyle and built as a fine home for one of the most prosperous of the City of Derry merchants. Well preserved by the present owners. Set in well laid out grounds with good mature planting and fine avenue approaches. The generous landscaped gardens around the house are an essential part of its ambience.</p> <p>STABLES</p> <p>A substantial stone building of late 19th cent. construction without any architectural pretensions.</p> <p>LODGE</p> <p>A picturesque if somewhat harshly detailed small gate lodge. Its materials and detailing in sympathy with main house. Well sited and well kept as is also the adjoining gates, pillars and balustrading and the whole composition makes an imposing approach to the entrance avenue.</p> <p>CHURCH</p> <p>A simple modern style rectangular chapel built with good materials. Its style and form contrasts bluntly with the earlier house and is not in sympathy with it.</p>
Sensitivity	
Associations	<p>HOUSE</p> <p>A long low building existed on this site in the 18th century and was enlarged to an L-shaped plan illustrated on the O.S. Map of 1832. The map shows the site landscaped with double avenue approach. The O.S. Memoir records a William Leathem in residence and the Thornhill property belonged to Captain Hart. The Griffith Valuation of 1856 indicated a Rev H Scott a lessee with a valuation of £23-0-0 and Leathem as Lessor. Later in the century Watt acquired the property and began building in 1882. Andrew Alexander Watt was the owner of distilleries in Abbey Street and Waterside. These distilleries, especially the Abbey Street enterprise had immense production with an output of 1,260,000 gallons of Patent Grain Whisky in 1887. The Waterside distillery produced Old Pot Still Whisky (Bernards spelling). Watts distillery in Abbey Street was acquired by the Watt family in 1826 and greatly enlarged thereafter. Watt does not appear to have taken much interest in the political scene but he most interested himself in the social environment and kept well equipped stables and horses. The distillery closed down in the 1920s and the nuns of the Convent of Mercy acquired the property in 1928 and a college for girls was established in it in 1932, the boarding pupils occupying the attics converted to dormitories. The nuns made little change to the house apart from rooms changing use. Chimney pieces, mouldings, disposition of windows and doors have remained relatively unchanged. In 1998 the entire premises were renovated and exterior and interior is in very good order. Architects Loughrey & Agnew.</p>

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LODGE

There was a previous gate lodge as shown on the 1856 O.S. Map. The present one is contemporary with the house. The flat roof extension was added in the post war years probably c1960. Dean gives the date of the present lodge as 1885 and describes its style as 'Scot Baronial manner' and states that Turner was 'more at home in the handling of Picturesque outline of small buildings'. Turner and Babington were the architects.

STABLES

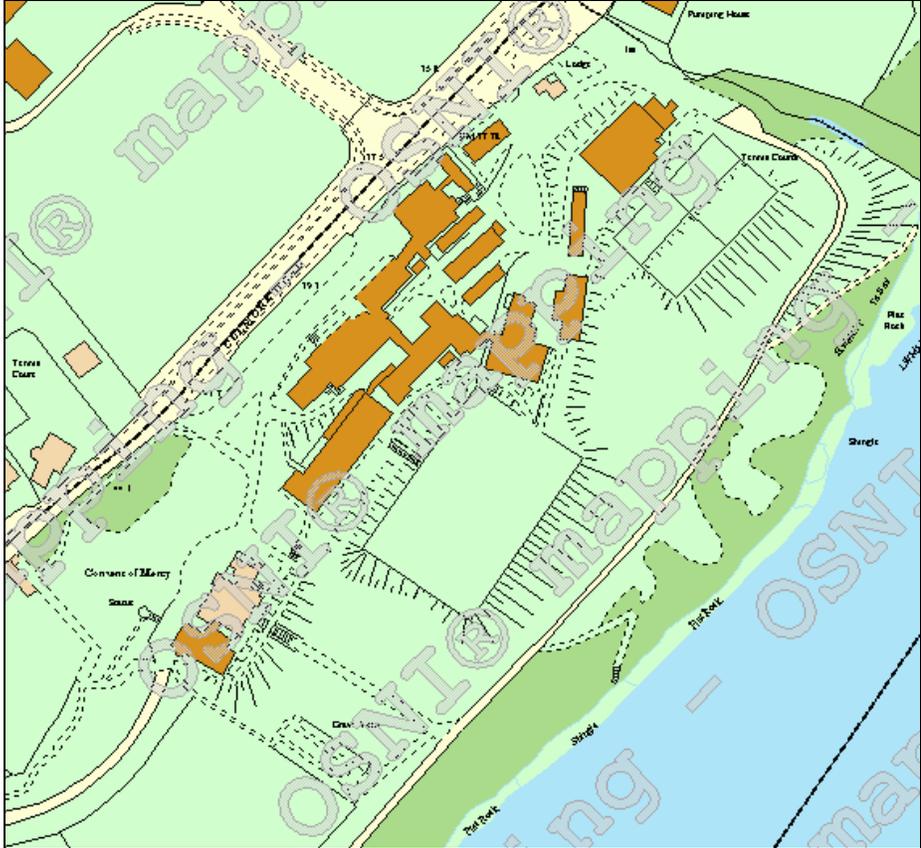
The stable block appears to contemporary with the house and is therefore of 1885. The stables were converted to classrooms after the college was moved here in 1932.

CHURCH

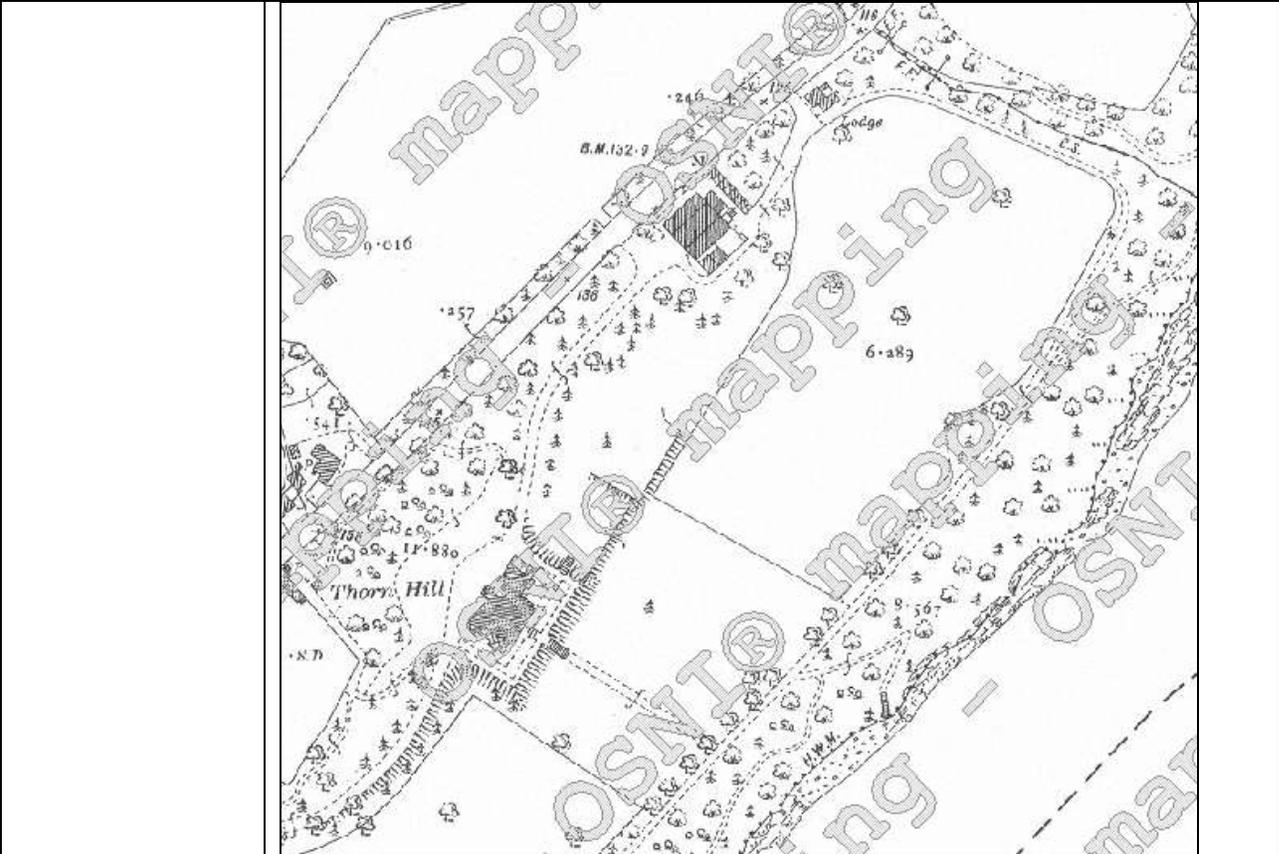
The original chapel occupied the former billiard room in the S W corner of the ground floor of Thornhill House. The present chapel was dedicated in 1965 by the Dr N Farren, Bishop of Derry to serve the spiritual needs of the convent and the boarders and day pupils of the Convent Grammar School. With the ending of the boarding school and the decrease in the community of nuns it is larger than necessary in the circumstances of today. However in 1996 a new parish of Culmore was formed and the chapel acts as parish church pro tem. References Primary Sources 1. Convent of Mercy 2. Foundation Stone Secondary Sources 1. E Daly & K Devlin The Clergy of the Diocese of Derry. p179

Recommendations

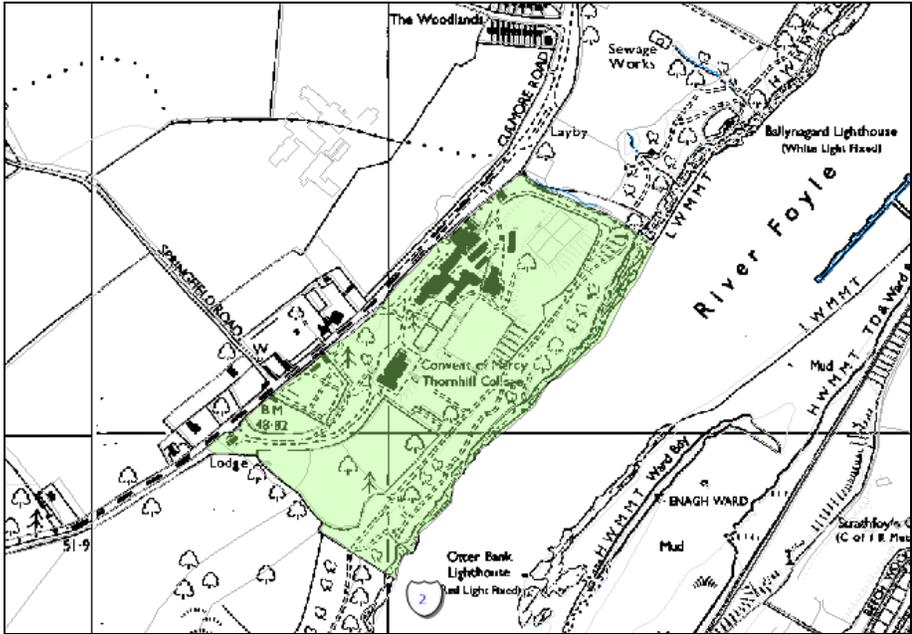
Mapping



Present-day mapping extract (www.osni.gov.uk)



1st edition 25-inch OS map extract 1873-1954



Extract from NIEA SMR MapViewer of the site

References	http://maps.ehnsi.gov.uk/MapViewer/Default.aspx
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	<p>UAFP O.S. Map 1832 Co Londonderry No.13.</p> <p>UAFP O.S. Map 1st Rev. 1856 Co Londonderry No. 13</p> <p>Griffiths Valuation 1831 Parish of Templemore TD Ballynashallog.</p> <p>Griffiths Valuation 1856 Parish of Templemore TD Ballynashallog.</p> <p>Ordnance Survey Memoirs of City and North West Liberties of Londonderry</p> <p>A Rowan Buildings of Ireland North West Ulster p.p. 402, 403.</p> <p>J.A.K. Dean The Gate Lodge of Ulster p.121</p> <p>Alfred Barnard: The Whisky Distilleries of the United Kingdom p.440-443</p>
Plates	
Additional Notes	

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