

Francis Greenway, Architect

1777-1837

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FRANCIS GREENWAY 1777-1837

The Greenways Greenaways or Grinways — had been West Country builders and masons for generations. Francis Greenway — he added the name Howard in adult life was the fourth son of Francis Greenway and Ann (nee Webb) who had five other sons William, Olive, John, Daniel and Charles and two daughters Elizabeth and Mary. Francis was baptised in the parish church of Mangotsfield, Gloucestershire, on 23 November 1777.¹

How Francis Greenway, the mason's son became Francis Howard Greenway, architect and painter is purely speculation. All that we know is that in 1800 'F.H. Grinway, Architect, giving: his address as 'At Mr Nash's', exhibited at the Royal Academy a drawing of 'The Saxon Gateway, College Green, Bristol' and another of the West door, Magdalen College chapel, Oxford'.² In what capacity Greenway was engaged to Nash is unknown. He is uncharacteristically modest about his architectural training. The link, through these Royal Academy entries, with Nash, and, by association, with Nash's partner, the landscape gardener Humphry Repton,³ seems certain but it cannot be assumed that Greenway was apprenticed to Nash: he may have been in Nash's office as a draughtsman or clerk,⁴ and it is not known how long he was in London. It is surely more than chance that Greenway's earliest known work dates to the time of his association with Nash and was at Carmarthen.

The new market house at Carmarthen, a simple, quadrangular structure - whose plans (perhaps somewhat embellished) Greenway was later to show proudly to Governor Macquarie - was opened in April 1801. In 1802, and again in 1803, Greenway's entries to the Royal Academy exhibition have the address 'New Palace Yard', by coincidence or not the address also of the Board of Works.⁵ By the beginning of 1805 Greenway was back in Bristol, when he, with his brothers John and Olive, opened 'a room and a yard, at No. 7 Limekiln Street, opposite the Riding School'. Francis set an allegorical relief above his doorway and advertised 'his services to the Public in the capacity Architect, Statuary, and Landscape-Gardiner [sic]'. For two or three years the sun shone on Francis, and on his brothers. Not yet thirty years old, Greenway secured a major commission to build a large assembly rooms and hotel whose successful completion would establish his architectural reputation.

By 1808 the Greenway brothers had expanded their premises from Limekiln Street to Clifton and were engaged not only in the building of the Assembly Rooms but in the speculative finishing of houses in the unfinished shell of the Lower Crescent, including one for whose completion they had contracted with a retired army officer, Colonel Richard Doolan. It was these houses, rather than the ambitious scale of the Assembly Rooms, that led to their financial downfall. Greenway's involvement with the Assembly Rooms ended with his bankruptcy and a dispute with their speculative developer, John Lewis Auriol. It must have been bitter for him to see his major work completed by another hand, praised, and himself ignored and bankrupt. Less than two months after the opening of the Assembly Rooms, Francis Howard Greenway was committed to Newgate Gaol, Bristol, charged with the capital offence of forgery. The Assembly Rooms were roofed in by January 1809, but by May, Greenway and the Greenway brothers were bankrupt.

In 1814, Francis Greenway the convict arrived in Sydney, but he may have his first commission in the Colony aboard the *General Hewitt* courtesy of Dr John Harris, returning to the Colony from England after defending his part in the rebellion against Governor Bligh in 1808, and, the newly appointed Naval Officer, Captain John Piper.

By the middle of 1814 Greenway was planning an enlargement of Dr Harris's house on his estate, Ultimo, on the edge of town. By the end of July Governor Macquarie had requested

Greenway to copy the design of a court house. Immediately Greenway's impolitic temperament evidenced itself. The convict wrote to the Governor that it was 'painful to my mind as a Professional man to copy a Building that has no claim to classical proportion or character', he proceeded to promote himself and lecture the Governor, offering his services as the Governor's architect.⁶ However, Macquarie was astute enough to realise that Greenway the convicted forger was the finest architectural talent the colony was likely to receive.

Greenway as Civil Architect went on to show that noble building was possible, even with inferior materials, in the degradation of a desert-gaol. But inferior workmen and ignorant officials ruined his designs. He envisaged a fine city of churches, squares and monuments, but an inferior populace laughed at his dreams. He offered Art and the structure of a civilized society and was rebuffed. Receiving the gift of Architecture from the goddess Minerva, he offered it to the philistines in a remote penal colony, and they gave him free coals and a miserable grant of eight hundred acres of swampy land on the edge of settlement. On his farm in the Hunter River Valley, Francis Greenway died, aged 59, in September 1837. In that heady period of rash speculation and delusive prosperity, he was remembered, if at all, as a querulous 'old hand', a relic of the time of Governor Macquarie. He died embittered and desperately poor; there was no notice of his death in the Sydney newspapers, and no obituaries. He was buried on 25 September, 1837 by the local schoolmaster in the absence of the chaplain, probably in the cemetery at East Maitland.⁷ No memorial stone marks his grave. His wife, Mary, who had been the stabilizing influence in his life, had died in Sydney five years before.

1. St James's Church, Mangotsfield, baptism register 1771-1790: no entry for the eldest son William, Olive [male] bapt. 11.9.1774, John Trip bapt. 31.1.1776, Francis bapt. 23.11.1777, Daniel Webb bapt. 10.10.1779, Charles bapt. 17.3.1783, Elizabeth Ann bapt. 25.12.1783, Mary bapt. 13.5.1787.
2. A. Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: a Complete Dictionary of Contributors... 1769-1904*, London, 1905, vol. 3, p. 329
3. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, pp 802-3 entry for Humphry Repton.
4. Personal comment, Professor J. Mordaunt Crook, 1996.
5. Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts*, vol. 3, p. 329.
6. Greenway to Macquarie, 27.7.1814 (copy), Greenway Papers, ML.A1451 pp. 379-80.
7. Register of Burials in the Parish of East Maitland, 1837, p. 16, extract in Greenway Papers, ML A1451, p.21. Greenway was probably buried in Glebe Gully Cemetery, East Maitland (formerly known as St Peter's Old Burial Ground, earliest known burial 1828).



Grantham. Pencil sketch by Henry Campbell, c.1842. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

GRANTHAM
POTTS POINT, SYDNEY
TENDER ADVERTISED 1836,
REBUILT 1871, DEMOLISHED 1937

Sir John Wylde, who had become Chief Justice at the Cape, sold 442 acres of his Potts Point grant to the newly-moneyed, retail merchant, Caleb Wilson in July 1830 for £450.¹ In September 1836 Wilson advertised in the *Australian* for tenders for the erection of a house on the land.² Wilson died in 1838, but lived to see his battlements and towers ornament the headland and to hear them mocked as 'The Pepperpot' and 'The Frying Pan', slighting references to the source of his wealth, his prosperous ironmongery shop.³

It was later purchased by Henry Dangar whose son employed Edmund Blacket in 1871 to remodel the house. It was demolished for flats in 1937.⁴

Grantham was built as a mimic rival to Government House, rising on the further point. From a distance Grantham's towers and battlements massed Picturesquely, but at close quarters the superficiality of the design was obvious: a two-storeyed double-piled plain house with square, multi-paned sash windows and an oddly Classical porch, tricked out with gothick corner turrets and battlements to resemble Government House. It was 'a fugacious toy', an old-fashioned Georgian gothick folly not unlike Greenway's designs for the Macquaries.

No buildings are known to have been designed by or can be attributed to Greenway in the 1830s. The most that can be claimed for Grantham is that it is in the style of Greenway's work. The planning is simple but shows the form, favoured by Greenway, of expressing the geometric staircase externally as a faceted or circular bay — here extended as at the Supreme Court and at Liverpool hospital into a tower. The Georgian character Grantham's lightly assumed gothick ornament is like Greenway's work at Dawes Point Battery, as is the simple but scenographic planning of screen-like wings.

Perhaps, at last, Greenway had his chance to build his castle, effete as it was and deserving of the stinging epithets with which his old rival Henry Kitchen had taunted him years ago, and to thumb his nose at officialdom that he believed had betrayed him and now wished to demolish his stables. There is, however, no documentary evidence to support this speculation.

1. Wylde to Col. Sec. 20/4/1829, AONSW 2/8012
2. *Australian*, 16/9/1836
3. Macdonnell, *Before King's Cross*, Melbourne, 1967, p. 44
4. For measured drawings (1870) before the house was altered see Blacket Papers ML PXD205/4



Wooloomooloo [sic] by Charles Rodius, 1832 [detail] Dixson Library, State Library of NSW

SPRINGFIELD
POTTS POINT, SYDNEY
BUILT 1830, DEMOLISHED

When Woolloomooloo Hill was opened up, with grants to the colony's leading civil servants, special conditions defined the appearance, siting and cost of the houses on each allotment.¹

The first plan for a house approved, by Governor Darling in December 1828, was submitted by the Attorney-General, Alexander Macduff Baxter to be built on his promised grant of over nine acres.

Baxter submitted the plans for the house that he proposed building on his allotment at 'Ollamaloo' in October 1828,² and it is unlikely that Springfield was finished before his bankruptcy 1831. It was still building in December 1830 when the Office of Public Works reported to the Colonial Secretary that it was in conformity with the conditions,³ but it had been completed by 1832 when Charles Rodius made a watercolour of the house and its raw, newly planted garden.⁴ Rodius's delightful drawing is the most detailed and reliable evidence of the appearance of the house, for although some photographs survive these were taken after the house was extensively remodelled in the late nineteenth century.

The most striking feature of the design is the five-bayed, ground floor arcade with a covered balcony above, the solid balustrade of which is formed by the upper part of the arcade. This has an undefined 'colonial' or possibly Mediterranean, character about it, in that it appears to be a direct or sensible response to a warm climate, but it is not typical of the detailing of early colonial houses in New South Wales where columned verandahs and trellis-work screens were generally used rather than masonry arcades, and two-storeyed verandahs were uncommon.

It appears from Baxter's letter accompanying the submission of his plan of the house for approval that the arcade was an afterthought.⁵

with regard to the enclosed plan now submitted, I may mention, that the first story [sic] will be raised one foot higher than the present elevation, and that the second story will be lowered two feet from the present plan. The upper windows will be cut down to a balcony (not shown in the plan) which will run along the front of the House facing Sydney.

Baxter was required by the colonial secretary to submit another plan showing these alterations, but whether this second, more sophisticated and original design was by the same architect as that first submitted, or whether Baxter had changed to a more innovative designer, remains unknown.

Other unusual features of the design are the use and detailing of the roof pediments. Instead of the ubiquitous hipped roof there are gables to either end of the house as well as a central pediment on the main front. These, and also the arcade, are echoed in the design of the offices. Again, this arrangement is not typical of early colonial houses but it is remarkably similar in general arrangement, as well as detailing, to Greenway's design for St John's Parsonage, Paramatta.

In particular, the fronts of the outbuildings of each house — single-storeyed with two blind arches beneath pedimented gables — are almost identical, as is the relationship of each to the main block of the house. At Springfield there was no balancing out-building on the northern side of the house and, as at St John's Parsonage, the pavilion form of the Springfield outbuilding does not appear to have been intended as part of a triadic Palladian composition. In this it also relates closely to the detached offices at Glenlee, Menangle, which are similarly positioned and have a corresponding gable.

In 1830 Edward Hallen was identified as Baxter's architect,⁶ but Hallen could not have been responsible for either the first set of submitted plans or their amendments, for they were both prepared in 1828 a year before Hallen arrived in the colony. What, if any, contributions Hallen may have made to the design cannot be identified and the authorship of this distinctive house remains unknown. Owing to the similarities to his other work however, it may be speculated that Greenway was Baxter's original architect, replaced by Hallen by the beginning of 1830 when building appears to have begun. Like Campbell of Bungarabee, Baxter would have been an unusual client for Greenway, a 'new chum', aligned with the exclusives despite his deplorable character.

1. J. Broadbent, *The Australian Colonial House...* Potts Point, NSW, 1997, chs 8 & 9.
2. Baxter to Col. Sec., 13.10.1828, AONSW 2/1751.
3. Public Works to Col. Sec. 3.12.1830, AONSW 2/1751.
4. Charles Rodius, *Wolomoloo*, 1832, Dixon Library SLNSW, Pd 258
5. Baxter to Col. Sec. , 13.10. 1828, AONSW 2/1751
6. A. Hallen to Baxter, 4.2.1830, AONSW 9/2700