

New to the Market



House hunter Don Morgan. Photograph: Eric Luke

It's time to trade in our mobile home - our car - as well

HOUSE HUNTER

By Don Morgan

Now that we're renting in Dundrum with public transport close at hand, our jalopy is being parked

WE HAVE a home. It's stinky, it's bijou, but it's been our true home for the last three-and-a-half years: our car. And do you know what, I love it nearly as much as the person I share it with. Like a padded cell painted white, it had an incredible influence until a month ago.

Until three weeks ago, I felt like a prisoner of it. The last three weeks I've avoided its lure. I'm like a morbidly obese person who you might see on the Discovery channel. Sick of being winched out of the house in order to get washed down at the local car wash with a powerhose, I cut down on nachos and started to exercise.

I lost my back fat, and that size six Oscar de la Renta ball gown is more than just a dream! Donny, you're back to being a string bean again. And thank God for that, because the missus was getting faintly embarrassed by my tubbiness.

We don't drive much anymore at all. Nevertheless, when it was suggested that our search was

being warped by our car, I felt really defensive about our jalopy. We were apparently missing the big picture about houses we were viewing. Could it be true?

I sobbed like the little girl on those anti-Lisbon posters, eyes like saucers because Declan Ganley had murdered her pet kitten in front of her at the photo shoot. You just don't diss a brother's car, it's not done, even when it's not really yours. It's your wife's. What's mine is the dirt and the dent on the front wing.

Our car is part of our story. We had our big conversations there, we lived in there, laughed, slept and ate in there; our own four walls (plus six windows and four wheels).

We drive to house viewings for two reasons. One is that it's an easy mode of transport. The other is that we can figure out fairly quickly if a house will be, ironically, a runner. On-street parking has always been a sticking point because it has to be. I'm easygoing about it, but if I'm

coming home from the shops, and have the car full of crap which needs to be brought inside, then I need to know for sure that some bozo hasn't gone and plonked their gi-normous Land Rover Panzer in front of my as yet non-existent house. Discount these options, and strike off half the city, it's true. And in doing so, you rule out areas where all the nice, pretty houses are, with wonderful features like character. Them's the breaks.

Without a doubt, we do drive a lot even still, but not because we like it. Public transport is still like a chain reaction of misadventure: the bus may not turn up, because the bus played chicken with a tram, after the tram got pelted with rocks by a gurrrier on a rental bike he nicked from a man who stopped taking the bus, because men who think washing isn't necessary kept sitting next to him on his morning commute.

Driving doesn't mean you're going to get anywhere on time, however. We're always late, and not just because I like to claim the

lady's prerogative and keep folks waiting. When choosing to live somewhere in Dublin, the best thing therefore could be to figure out how long you need to walk before reaching public transport.

Where we're renting now, we're a four-minute walk to the Luas, which takes about 10 minutes to get into town.

I met a friend in town, had a few pints, was asleep early enough to be as fresh as a daisy the next morning, bounding into work as Aine Lawlor was hectoring her first guest on *Morning Ireland*.

The place we'll leave the car ultimately is the knacker's yard. It's on its last legs, following four services, a replaced exhaust and the injection of approximately €6,000 worth of petrol.

Our mobile residence witnessed it all in three-and-a-half years: emotion, marriage, breakfast rolls. Now the catalytic converter's gone. It's time to bike it and scout for a three-bed semi in Dundrum I saw for under 400k. Let's hope I wasn't dreaming.

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RANELAGH: FROM €2.25M TO €3.15M

Great expectations – in Dublin 6

MICHAEL PARSONS

A terrace of houses in an exclusive new enclave in Ranelagh come with home cinemas, walled gardens – and are ready to move into

SPARE A thought – if you can bear to – for the chattering classes of Dublin 6. They haven't quite escaped "The Terror" you know. Just last year, Mint, an achingly fashionable restaurant in Ranelagh, was reportedly closing its

Swaggeringly ostentatious diners, displaying all the sensitivity of the Sun King's "let them eat cupcakes" courtiers, flocked to savour the dizzyingly pricey cuisine of "celebrity-effing-chef", Dylan "bad boy" McGrath.

Monsieur Doorley memorably noted that "the carrot purée looked like a frenzied crime scene" and braised pig's cheek was "incorporated into a kind of mousseline, sandwiched between two slices of just-cooked celeriac". Oh dear. Not quite "dinner-in-the-middle-of-the-day" fare.

Fast-forward 12 months and, according to the smouldering chef, "big spenders just disappeared overnight", the liquidator arrived, the shutters came down and the Michelin starlight dimmed.

Today, Mint is "to let" and stands like an Ozymandian reminder of our national *Jolie de grandeur*. "Look upon my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Well, not yet. Dublin 6, the country's second smartest postcode (for now) isn't quite on the ropes. There's still a palpable air of affluence in Ranelagh where the ambience is not dissimilar to London's Islington – spiritual home of the left-leaning intelligentsia.

The *Guardian* is alarmingly conspicuous in the newsmag's and tapas socialists (formerly known as smoked salmon comrades) edgily coexist with a slightly sniffy



old money crowd. This quintessential urban village, with excellent public transport (including the Luas), a good mix of shops and restaurants, and some of Ireland's very best schools, is one of the city's most desirable locations.

So there is likely to be considerable interest in today's launch by Sherry FitzGerald of Sandford Square, on Merton Drive, a development of five large period-style family homes.

The half-acre site was once owned by the neighbouring Sandford Park School and reputedly cost €10 million. The terrace of

four-storey, four-bedroom houses was designed by architects Niall D Brennan Associates and built by developers O'Mahony Finnerty.

Sensibly, the development is not electronically gated; after all, neighbouring Donnybrook isn't quite *sans-culottes* territory.

Each house has a private, landscaped, walled rear garden; a large, secluded, granite-paved patio area in the basement lightwell; and two dedicated parking spaces in front – although visitor parking is pretty tight.

In homage to the prevailing architectural style of the area,

period features include redbrick façades, smart black railings, imposing granite porticoes and leaded-glass panels framing impressively solid hall doors.

High-ceilinged interiors are cleverly light-filled and the fittings and fixtures are of the highest quality – from American walnut flooring to the electric dumb waiter linking bright basement kitchen to ground floor diningroom.

The houses range in size from 263sq m (2,745sq ft) to the largest, at 350sq m (3,768sq ft) and overlooks the school's playing fields.

Prices range from €2.25 million and rise to €3.15 million.

All the houses have a home cinema in the basement – fitted with eight squishy, cream leather recliners.

Perfect for kicking off those Louboutin slingbacks, pouring a glass of Moët et Chandon and finally watching that boxed-set of *Sex and the City* (ah, nostalgia!) while Mr Big unwinds with a fat Cohiba after a hard day transferring loans to Nama.

These are houses built for a society with great expectations. They're fully furnished and deco-

Sandford Square, Merton Drive, Ranelagh, Dublin 6
Terrace of five 263sq m (2,745sq ft) to 350sq m (3,768sq ft) four-bed new homes overlook the playing fields of Sandford Park School
Agent: Sherry FitzGerald

rated – down to paintings on the walls and sequined scatter-cushions in the bedrooms – and are ready for immediate occupation.

CO DUBLIN: FROM €129,950



Prices cut by 50% on mix of homes at Newcastle village

BERNICE HARRISON

MAPLEWOOD Developments has made price reductions of over 50 per cent on apartments and houses at its Newcastle Lyons scheme in west Dublin which was launched in 2007 but still has a mix of apartments, duplexes and houses on offer.

Prices are now starting at €129,950 for one-bedroom apartments; from €159,950 for two-beds – down from €295,000 in 2007 – and from €225,000 for two-bedroom houses. The choice of styles in the development – there is a mix of apartments, duplexes and two, three and four-bedroom houses – and the prices should make it worth a look, especially for first-time buyers. All homes have a B3 energy rating, and homes on upper floors benefit from solar heated hot water.

Buyers have a choice of kitchens, either white or champagne high gloss or walnut Shaker-style units. Bathrooms come with heated towel rails and shower screens in en suites.

There are two types of two-bedroom terraced houses: one of 95sq m (1,023sq ft) has an open

plan livingroom-cum-kitchen-diningroom on the first floor with floor-to-ceiling windows. The gardens can be accessed from both the ground and first floors. The other 100sq m (1,080sq ft) two-bed terraced houses cost from €225,000. The 123sq m (1,322sq ft) three-bedroom, three-storey houses are spacious and have two en suite bathrooms. Prices are from €240,000.

There are over six different styles of duplexes with sizes ranging from 100-132sq m (1,072-1,424sq ft). Some of the duplexes are larger than the houses and prices start from €215,000. Newcastle village is 20km from the city centre and while it has seen some development in recent years it still retains some village charm.

Newcastle Lyons, Newcastle Village, Co Dublin
New development of apartments and houses, with prices starting at €129,950
Agent: Douglas Newman Good

DUBLIN 6: €895,000

Refurbished house on a redbrick road

ROSE DOYLE

KILLEEN ROAD is one of those quiet Victorian redbrick roads in the heart of Ranelagh which has distant views of the Dublin mountains. Number 27 was built around 1890 and was serving time in beds when the vendors moved in and began refurbishing it three years ago.

The result, a thoughtful retention of its Victorian origins seamlessly blended with a two-storey rear addition, makes for a relaxed, stylish and family-friendly house.

The 145sq m (1,560sq ft) three-bedroom house has two reception rooms, an open-plan kitchen-cum-breakfastroom-cum family room, and small gardens front and rear.

A large attic space, typically converted in many Killeen Road houses, could make an extra bedroom and/or study.

Douglas Newman Good is looking after the private treaty sale and the asking price is €895,000.

The ground floor open-plan extension is an easy-living area where the ceiling has a glass atrium and where a wall of windows overlooks the garden/patio. Surrounding walls give privacy; there is a door to a laneway with vehicular access.

High old trees behind this, belonging to the large gardens of Palmerston Road, make for addi-



tional privacy and a pleasant backdrop. Co-ordination in the open-plan extension is pleasant: a marble breakfastroom table is built into a cherrywood wall panel similar to cherrywood shelving on another wall.

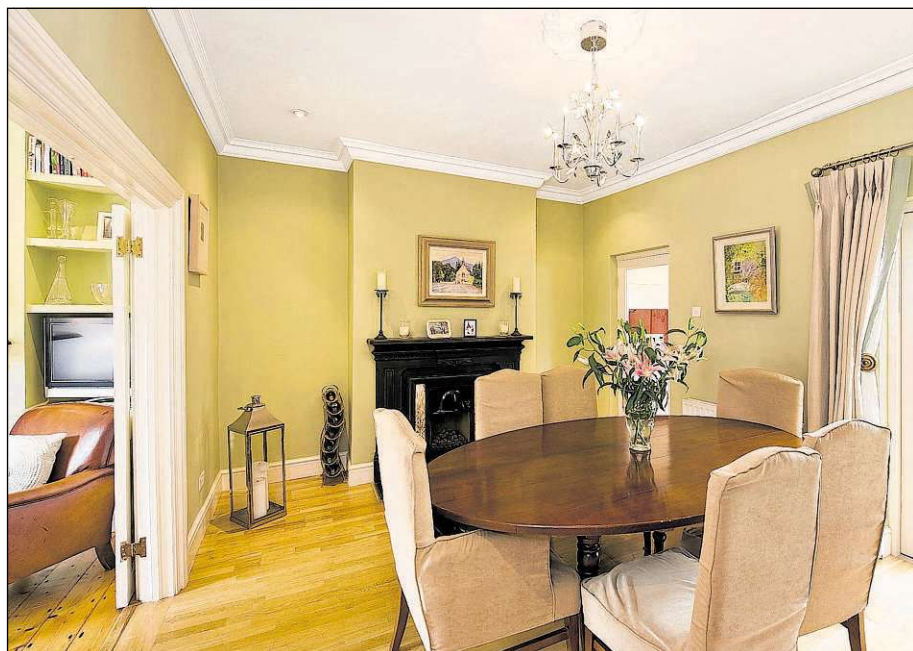
The floor is of taupe coloured Italian ceramic and the splash-back in the galley-style kitchen is in red glass. Worktops are of polished, silt stone.

The traditional ground floor reception rooms have an original pair of cast-iron fireplaces with inset tiles and the interconnecting double doors have been given glass panels. The walls are a cool apple green. All of the front facing sash windows have been remade and double glazed.

The main bedroom is to the rear and, with its bed tucked into an alcove and an en suite in the exten-

sion, cleverly gives the impression of a separate suite. The ceilings are high, the bedroom has a cast-iron fireplace and the en suite is large enough for a double shower and two wash-hand basins.

The other good-sized bedrooms are to the front and have sash windows. The family bathroom, on the return, is a sharper apple green with mosaic tiling and Fired Earth sanitary ware.



27 Killeen Road, Ranelagh, D6
Refurbished three-bed Victorian redbrick has a two-storey extension at rear
Agent: Douglas Newman Good