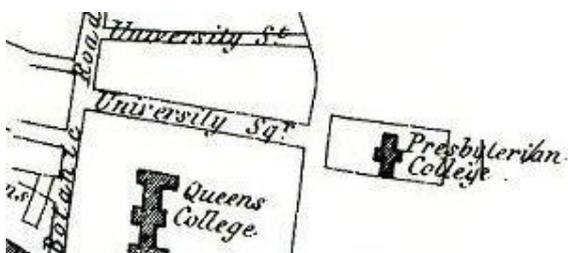


Fitzroy Avenue – Origin of the street name

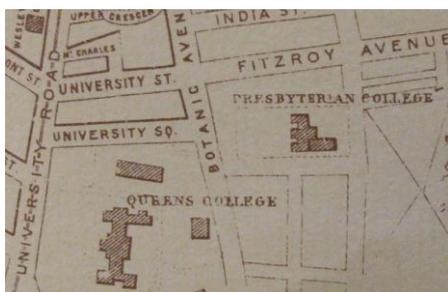


Fitzroy Avenue Church (c1877)

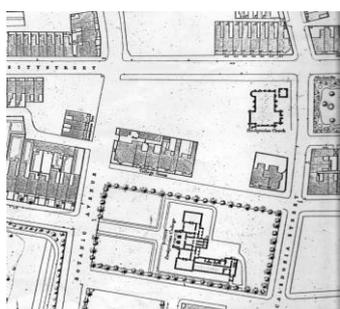
Note: the four houses of Fitzroy Terrace beyond the Church and the end two houses in College Green behind it.



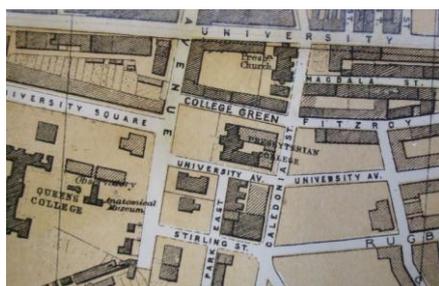
University Area (early 1860s)



University Area (late 1860s)



1871 Street Plan



University Area (c1897)

The Church was constructed on a site bounded by:

South – College Green,

East – Caledonia Street (Rugby Road by 1900)

North – Fitzroy Avenue

West – undeveloped between the Church and Botanic Avenue (until after 1877).

1863 – University Street runs from Botanic Road (now University Road) to Botanic Avenue – the area to the east of Botanic Avenue was known as “The Plains”.

1870 – Fitzroy Avenue runs from Botanic Avenue to Ormeau Avenue, and included a block of four houses called **Fitzroy Terrace** immediately after a recreational park [now a car park] at Fitzroy Avenue’s intersection with **Caledonia Street** (now part of Rugby Road).

1870 – Fitzroy Place (running parallel to Fitzroy Avenue) was a continuation of College Green at its intersection with Caledonia Street.

1870 – Caledonia Street runs from **Fitzroy Avenue** until it merges with Rugby Road.

1877 – Caledonia Street runs from **University Street** until it merges with Rugby Road.

1877 – University Street runs from University Road to Ormeau Avenue and included the block of four houses called **Fitzroy Terrace**.

An **1883** map shows **Fitzroy Avenue** (including College Green) as running from Botanic Avenue, traversing Caledonia Street, to Ormeau Avenue. In effect, **Fitzroy Avenue** had been moved back two streets, replacing **Fitzroy Place**.

By 1897 **Fitzroy Avenue** and **College Green** are designated as distinct thoroughfares.

There are three “contenders” for the reason why the thoroughfare was called “Fitzroy Avenue”

Henry Fitzroy

The illegitimate son of King Henry VIII and Elizabeth Blount, Henry FitzRoy was ennobled as the 1st Duke of Richmond and Somerset in 1525 and served as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland between 1529 and 1534. There does not appear to be a specific familial relationship with Belfast or Ireland.

Charles FitzRoy (1683 – 1757)



Charles Fitzroy, 2nd Duke of Grafton, was Lord High Steward at King George I's coronation and served as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland between 1720 and 1724. Whilst he did not have a familial relationship with Belfast or Ireland, he is a direct ancestor of Robert FitzRoy (below). His father, Henry (1st Duke of Grafton), was the illegitimate son of Charles II and his grandson, Augustus Henry FitzRoy (3rd Duke of Grafton), held the post of Prime Minister in His Majesty's Government.

Robert FitzRoy (1805-1865)



The son of Charles FitzRoy and Frances Ann Stewart (of Mount Stewart), daughter of the first Marquess of Londonderry. A direct descendent of the 2nd Duke of Grafton (above), Robert FitzRoy died in 1865 and it was in the 1870 Belfast Street Directory that the first reference to streets in this area bearing the name of 'Fitzroy' occurs. Given his familial relationship to one of the significant landowners in nineteenth century Ulster, it is reasonable to assume that Robert FitzRoy was the person after whom Fitzroy Avenue, Fitzroy Terrace and Fitzroy Place were named.

Robert FitzRoy – a brief biography

Robert's great-great-great grandfather (Henry FitzRoy Palmer, 1st Duke of Grafton) was the illegitimate son of King Charles II by Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland – hence the name **Fitz** (son of) **Roy** (Roi or King).

His maternal uncle was Viscount Castlereagh who held several post Government posts, including Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Chief Secretary for Ireland and Foreign Secretary. Viscount Castlereagh, later the 2nd Marquess of Londonderry, suffered from depression and committed suicide in 1821.

Robert FitzRoy's half-brother, Sir Charles Augustus FitzRoy, held Governorships in New South Wales, Price Edward Island and Antigua.

Robert FitzRoy pursued a naval career (starting at the age of 12 he eventually rose to the rank of Vice-Admiral) and served as the 2nd Governor of New Zealand from 1843 to 1845. He was also a pioneering meteorologist and hydrologist and invented a Storm Barometer which made accurate weather forecasting a reality amongst the maritime fraternity it was affectionately known as the ***Fitzroy Storm Barometer***.

Robert FitzRoy had assumed command of *H.M.S. Beagle* in 1828 (after Captain Pringle Stokes committed suicide during a period of depression) and retained command for its second voyage (1831-36) in which Charles Darwin, a naturalist and a student clergyman, participated. One of the reasons that FitzRoy wanted Darwin on board was to provide him with spiritual comfort should he show signs of suffering from the depression that blighted his family and haunted him. Robert Fitzroy did indeed suffer from depression in later life and committed suicide in 1865 (using the same method as his uncle).

Robert FitzRoy was a strongly evangelical/fundamentalist Christian and later he felt extremely guilty that he had captained the scientific exploration that undermined his creationist views. His explosive anger got him the nickname 'Hot Coffee' and there are several stories about his cut-and-thrust arguments on the ship with Darwin over the issues of creation and evolution.

Robert FitzRoy was also a staunch Tory (indeed, he was elected to Parliament in 1841) and, like many of his time, a strong supporter of slavery on biblical grounds!

In his autobiography, Charles Darwin wrote of Robert FitzRoy:

"FitzRoy's character was a very singular one, with many noble features: he was devoted to his duty, generous to a fault, bold, determined, indomitably energetic, and an ardent friend to all under his sway."

Expedia webpages :

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_FitzRoy

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_FitzRoy,_2nd_Duke_of_Grafton

FitzRoy Family Genealogy webpage

<http://tree.familyhistory.uk.com/getperson.php?personID=13294&tree=05>

Robert FitzRoy's Family Tree

