

# Room outside as good

**Tommy Barker** parks up at a sort of millionaire's row to get the inside



**Y**ou know those gardening programmes that rapidly transform someone's 'room outside', almost overnight, into something exotic?

Well, this is the complete opposite approach: welcome to Hilltown Bridge, a slow-cooked, regularly tended version of garden generosity and, yes, extravagance.

And, just as impressive is the house that goes to the back of this most private, manicured 1.7 acre site: it, too, has grown and blossomed over the years.

Location of this large, 3,000 sq ft split-level bungalow on its private and stream-bounded immaculate gardens is Hilltown, Ballyroban, in that hinterland between Maryborough/Douglas, Carrigaline and Monkstown just south of Cork city.

Head back along country roads towards the city/Rochestown, and you come across one big home after another built in the last three

decades, almost all on large grounds, behind stone entrance pillars — it's a sort of Millionaire's Row, even if some resident now might be caught to lay their hands on that amount of cash.

It's still a posh address, though,

and the Property Price Register shows a clatter of sales of one-offs in the €500,000/€600,000-plus price category, which includes the house next door, sold a couple of years ago on four acres by agent Cohalan Downing, and since ex-

tensively reworked, with significant ground works and landscaping tackled there.

Now launched to market is Hilltown Bridge, guided at €820,000 with Malcolm Tyrrell of Cohalan Downing. He says it's "a truly magnificent detached residence in a prestigious residential location" and, the truth of that assertion dawns more full on a visit than on a superficial glance at the house's 'give little away' exterior. Neighbouring homes may show off or shout their wares and wealth with mighty facades and electric gates... not so here, a more subtle approach is in train.

Built on a slightly sloping site back in 1981, it changed hands later that decade, and was extended by the current owners in 1995, and has been pretty much kept up to speed ever since. It's quite the walk-in job, but to protect its acres of pale carpets, you might take your shoes off if you've been out around the

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# as the rooms inside

story on a fantastic family spread in a rural nexus near Cork city

South Cork
€820,000
Sq m 284 (3,000 sq ft)
Bedrooms: 5
Bathrooms: 4
BER: C3
Best Feature: Pristine home and grounds



Pictures: Denis Scannell



gardens, or mucking about the lily-planted streams and beds.

Entered mid-section, it's set into its slope, with five double bedrooms (one en suite), on the upper level and living away to the far, left end up a short flight of steps. It has the best of garden views from all the main rooms, and simply is quite immaculate, and extremely well laid out for day time (four reception rooms,) and for night time uses, and will work well with the most active families, of all sizes.

It mightn't have superficial or shouty architectural pizzazz, but it does have a great and accommodating floor plan, added to utter tranquillity, and even that's rare bonus.

There's a high ceilinged entry core, with guest WC and cloakroom, and immediately to the right is a semi-formal drawing room with white marble chimneypiece, and the wall separating it from the corridor has lots of glass in it, so

there's an airy feel straight off. The room's next to a dining room with arch divide and access to the kitchen through double doors and to a patio with westerly aspect. Across the way to the back of the house is a library/den, again with fireplace.

The kitchen is large, at 21' by 12, very much the heart of the home, with integrated appliances and marble worktops. Added on to it is a fairly recent family room, with 12' ceilings, and triple aspect, east, west and south. The access to the patio by the entrance drive has distinctive timber screening.

Yet another access point is around the back, to what is effectively a utility wing, home to a 11' by 11' workroom, storage and to a downstairs wet room with WC and shower, much used by the family after matches, sports, sailing and more.

Grouped around the back here is a large shed, a tall glass house/pot-

ting shed, and under eaves storage for keeping fired logs dry and close to hand for the open fireplaces. Central heating is via oil, there are solar panels on a section of the concrete tiled roof (natural slate would lift the exterior look to new

heights, in fact) and windows are a mix of wood-grain pvc double glazing, and older, hardwood double glazing.

Malcolm Tyrrell says the house is designed and finished inside with great style and character, and

the clincher for many will be the quality of the gardens, an equal match for the interiors.

Garden design and layout was done at the outset by horticulturalist Patrick Cross, and has all matured to that initial sense of vision, with a diverted and channelled stream with tinkling falls, woodland sections, pristine lawns, a clustered stand of birch trees, fir, ash, conifers, eucalyptus and laurels forming a canopy on the approach drive.

Then, on the more ornamental front, there are colourful and flowering azaleas, various rhododendrons, berberis, camellias, other assorted shrubs and water lilies at the stream.

**VERDICT:** In a rural nexus within a short drive of Douglas, Carrigaline and Monkstown, this is a fantastic family spread, and not just for garden aficionados.

