

## The Cover

# The Carmichael School of Medicine

A tinted engraving from *The Dublin Builder*, 1864; 6: 209

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Richard Carmichael was born in Dublin in 1779. After two years apprenticeship to Peile and study at the Royal College of Surgeons, Carmichael was appointed assistant surgeon and ensign to the Wexford Militia when only sixteen. In 1800 he became a member of Royal College of Surgeons and commenced practice in Dublin. He was soon appointed surgeon to St. George's Hospital and Dispensary and to the Lock Hospital, and in 1816 he was appointed surgeon to the Richmond, Whitworth and Hardwicke Hospitals. He was elected president of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1813 (when he was only thirty-four) and again in 1826 and 1846. He was the first Irishman to receive the honour of being elected a corresponding member of the Royal Academy of Medicine in France. The satirical writer *Erinensis* wrote of him: 'He is a man of very plain manners, unpretending address, unostentatious habits, and on every subject of liberal opinions. .... By self-exertion solely, he has worked his way to eminence and independence — the highest praise that can be bestowed on a professional man in Ireland, where so many efforts are made to deprive merit of its rewards'. Always interested in reform he was a founder of the Medical Association of Ireland and first president from its foundation until his death. He donated £500 to promote the aims of the Association but when the fund was not used, he redirected the money to the Medical Benevolent Fund Society which he further endowed with £4,500 in his will. In 1826 Carmichael, Ephraim McDowell and Robert Adams founded, at their own expense, the Richmond School of Medicine and Carmichael further endowed the project by establishing a number of prizes to encourage competitiveness among medical students. Carmichael's life ended tragically in 1849. Riding across the strand at Sutton from the Richmond to reach his country home, he was overtaken by the strongly-running tide and his horse stumbled throwing Carmichael into deep water in which he drowned.

In his will Carmichael bequeathed the sum of £10,000 to be spent after his wife's demise in rebuilding the Richmond Hospital School of Medicine but Mrs. Carmichael ordered the building to commence with as little delay as possible and the first stone was laid in 1864 by the Lord Lieutenant:

*His Excellency was then formally arrayed in a handsome apron, and presented with a silver trowel, manufactured by Messrs. West and Son. of College-green, which bore the following inscription: — "With this trowel the foundation-stone of the Carmichael School of Medicine was laid by George William Frederick Earl of Carlisle, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, on 29th March, 1864."*

The school opened in 1865, and though it may have flourished for a time, the competition of the centre city schools soon had an effect on the numbers attending and in 1879 the school was rebuilt in Aungier Street at the corner of Whitefriar Street, where it remained until 1889, when it amalgamated with the Royal College of Surgeons. The Carmichael School was purchased by the North Dublin Union, and later became a convent before becoming hospital property again in the 1930s. Since then it has served as the doctors' and students' residence and latterly with the decline of the hospital mess it has been used more for administrative purposes.

(The following sources have been consulted in preparing this historical note: *The Dublin Builder* 1864; 6: 61-2, 208. *The Compact Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press 1975; 317. Widdess JDH, *The Richmond, Whitworth and Hardwicke Hospital, St. Laurence's, Dublin 1772-1972*. Dublin 1972. 109-20.)



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