The Charitable Infirmary in Jervis Street: Chronology of a Voluntary Hospital

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The Charitable Infirmary, Jervis Street, Dublin 1.

The Charitable Infirmary is the oldest voluntary hospital in Ireland and England. Founded in 1718, it has now served the citizens of Dublin for 266 years. Not only will the growing city centre be deprived of a hospital when the Charitable Infirmary is removed to join with St. Laurence's Hospital in the new institute now nearing completion at Beaumont, but the community will be denied the beneficence that is the essence of a voluntary hospital. There must surely soon come a day when the traders, and residents, the shoppers and workers, the visitors and tourists, and probably lastly the politicians will realise it was folly of magnitude to move 'the Jerv' from its Liffeyside home in the heart of a city to which it has contributed not only dedicated service, but also no small measure of character and personality.

A scholarly history of the Charitable Infirmary must before long be written. Its story will not be merely that of a hospital and the development of medicine, fascinating though that facet of its past may be, but in its near three centuries of existence will be reflected also the social and cultural vicissitudes of a city that witnessed the splendour and poverty of the Georgian era, the depression following the Act of Union, the excitement of Catholic Emancipation, the industrial and scientific progress of the Victorian age, the misery of the Great Famine, the Easter Rebellion and the civil war, and lastly the dramatic social changes that characterise this century. This essay attempts only to identify the landmarks in this eventful history, and because material is abundant and space limited, I have allowed the hospital archives to speak, as it were, for themselves. This device has an additional advantage, I think, in that it brings to the reader something of the ambience of the period. It has only been possible to denote briefly events of social and medical importance outside of the hospital, and these are indicated by the use of italics.

Early Hospital Development

1123: Foundation of St. Bartholomew's in London by the Augustinian Canon Rahere.

1188: Ailred le Palmer founded The Hospital of St. John the Baptist in St. Thomas Street in Dublin "without the west or new gate of the City, for Sick." The Augustinian Friars took over the management of the hospital, probably on the death of Ailred le Palmer.

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1220: Foundation of The Steyne Hospital. "Henry de Loundres, Archbishop of Dublin, about the year 1220, founded an hospital in honour of God and St. James, in a place called the Steyne, near the City of Dublin."

1344: Foundation of a Lazar House "for the relief of poor and impotent Lazars in Stephen's Street on the site later occupied by Mercer's Hospital.

1446: Henry VI granted a charter to the Guild of the Art of Barbers or the art of chirugery, the first medical corporation to be established by Royal decree in Britain and Ireland.

1505: Foundation of John Alleyn's Hospital by John Alleyn, Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral for the care of the poor men who were required to be "good Catholics, of honest conversation without reproach, of the English nation ..."

1542: The Act of Henry VIII for the suppression of monasteries (1536) was applied to Ireland. The King in return for the peaceful surrender by all priors and abbots, offered "of his most excellent charity to provide to every chief head and governor of every such religious house during their lives, such yearly pension or benefice as to their degree and quality shall be reasonable and convenient". The 155 unfortunate inmates of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist in Dublin were turned out helpless and unprovided for on the streets of the city either to beg or starve. Henry VIII sold off the priory and the lands of the Augustinian Friars for £114. 13s. 4d. A similar fate befell the other hospitals in Dublin and the many lazar houses throughout the country which were for the greater part monastic institutions. The suppression also closed monastic hospitals in England but St. Bartholomew's (in 1544) and later St. Thomas's in London were regranted their buildings and endowments.

25, 1786, and the first entry is as follows:—
"Wednesday, 25th October, 1786. At a Meeting of the Governors of the Charitable Infirmary in Jervis Street, to take into consideration what further accommodation may be necessary for the reception of intern patients...ordered: that Mr. McEvoy be requested to procure the best plan of a water-closet, and when obtained to make a report to the Board". This is the first recorded directive from the board of management to the senior surgeon of the hospital. The first chairman of the Board was Denis Thomas O'Brien, who held office for nearly 30 years, and bequeathed much of his adjoining property to the hospital.

1792: The Governors of the hospital anxious for greater authority and sanction made application to Government for a charter. The basis of their submission was "that for many years past the institution had been of great and manifest advantage to the sick and wounded poor of the north parts of Dublin, by supplying them with medical and surgical assistance, medicine and all manner of necessaries. without fee or reward. That it was supported entirely by the charitable contributions of the public; and that several persons who are disposed to contribute liberally to its support, are deterred from so doing because the present governors are incompetent to receive and manage the same from the want of a charter of incorporation to insure the funds and enforce the necessary regulations.

The charter was granted under the style and title of "The Governors and Guardians of the Charitable Infirmary, Dublin", on June 7 1792 by George III.

1792: Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital opened.

The Charitable Infirmary in the Nineteenth Century

1800: Irish parliament abolished by Act of Union.

1802: The house of Lord Charlemont was dilapidated and the Governors at a meeting on October 22 resolved to purchase adjoining properties with a view to building a new hospital. A subscription list, was opened, to which the merchants of the city subscribed generously.

1803: Hardwicke Fever Hospital opened.

1804: Fever Hospital and House of Recovery, Cork Street, opened.

The new Charitable Infirmary was opened. (Fig 1)
Over the door was a large mural granite tablet. "The entrance was approached by a double flight of

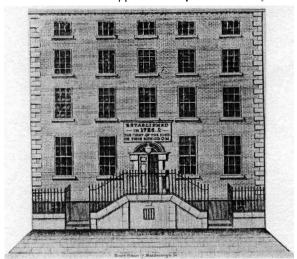


Fig. 1. The Charitable Infirmary, Jervis Street, 1804.

granite steps furnished with a high iron railing. The ground floor was occupied by the surgery, boardroom, and apothecary's apartments; while all the upper rooms, with the exception of two — one of which was for the residence of the matron, and the other for operations. The Hospital contained seventy five beds, but from the limited state of the funds, about one-half of them only, were supported".

1808: The Charitable Infirmary became a teaching

hospital. A portion of the Hospital was converted into a school for medical and surgical education, and a small library was commenced. Lectures were delivered on the theory and practice of physic and clinical surgery. This school lasted until 1833. Royal College of Surgeons Hall opened on Stephen's

1811: Richmond Surgical Hospital opened.

1813: A dissecting room was opened in an old building at the rear of the hospital. Lecture courses on anatomy, physiology and surgery were delivered by Samuel Wilmot and Richard Dease.

1814: Mrs. E. D'Arcy appointed as matron-housekeeper at a salary of £14. 13s. 111/2d. quarterly with board and

lodging. Two nurses appointed to assist her. Whitworth Medical Hospital opened. Robert Adams appointed surgeon. 1818: William Wallace appointed surgeon. Founded Dublin Infirmary of the Skin, 20 Moore Street (1818) - the first hospital in Europe of its kind.

Admissions-243; Outpatients- 49,956.

1820: The Governors applied for and were granted a new charter by George IV on 19th October under which the governors were constituted "The Governors and Guardians of the Charitable Infirmary in Jervis Street, Dublin" and were directed to electannually by ballot, a committee of fifteen persons to govern the

Infirmary for the then ensuing year.
In the General Rules, Bye-Laws and Regulations ratified on March 22, the duties of each member of

staff are stated:

"Every Person subscribing and paying, at an entire payment, any sum not less than £20 for the use of the Infirmary, becomes a Governor for life.'

(Sundays Attending Surgeons shall excepted) be at the Infirmary for the Relief of Extern Patients at eight o'clock a.m. from April 6 to October 5, inclusive, and at nine o'clock from October 6 to April 5 inclusive'

When patients are discharged, a Mark thus (+) shall be put in the Diet Book, instead of an Order for Diet; and in case of a Death a Mark thus (++).

The Apothecary shall not absent himself from the Infirmary when the House-keeper is from Home; and in his casual absences he shall leave directions with the Porter where he is to be found."

The Housekeeper shall carefully inspect the Infirmary every night, and see that the Fires, Lamps and Candles be safe, and the different doors secured.

The Nurses shall not, if married, be permitted to have their husbands sleep in the Infirmary; and if they have Children they shall not keep them in it."

The Porter shall every morning, sweep the Footpath before the Infirmary, a little beyond the Gutter.

'No Patient to play at Cards, Dice or any other Game, or to smoke in the Infirmary

'Any Patient who shall convict a Nurse, Porter, or any Servant of the Infirmary, before the Apothecary, of exacting or receiving any Money from any Patient or Visitor, shall have Ten-pence Reward."

1823: Coombe Hospital opened.

1825: Dominic Corrigan and William Stokes graduated

from Edinburgh University. Dublin first lighted by gas.

A minute of Thursday 20th July reads -An application having been laid before the Board from Daniel Loughlin the Porter soliciting a pair of shoes and stockings, as the ones handed over to him by the late porter on his dismissal were not new. Ordered. That the foregoing application be complied with.

1827: Robert Adams published "Cases of diseases of the heart, accompanied with pathological observations' in Dublin Hospital Reports 1827: 4: pp 353-453, in which he described apoplexy caused by a slow heart,

later to be known as "Stokes-Adams Disease".

1828: Catherine McAuley, heiress to a large fortune, opened the House of Mercy at Baggot Street.

The surgeons made a recommendation to the Managing Committee for an operation room, and dead room to be built with contributions from the surgeons.

1829: Catholic Emancipation Bill carried through both Houses and given Royal Assent.

1830: The Managing Committee resolved on Thursday, January 28th "that not fewer than four beds be allotted to Medical Patients, who are to be under the care of the Senior Physician". The total bed complement at this time was 38.

Two pupils appointed "to assist the Apothecary in bleeding the extern patients". It was also resolved that "Patients labouring under Venereal complaints be not in future admitted, being contrary to the Regulations of the Hospital'

1831: January 13th. "Gentlemen, I resign the situation to Jervis Street Hospital, and avail myself of this

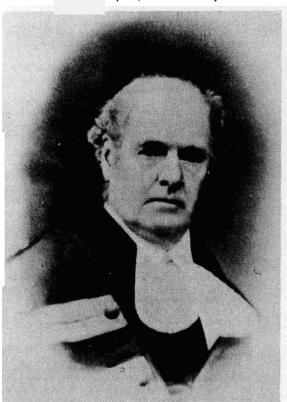


Fig. 2. Dominic Corrigan (1802-1880). A portrait on enamel (by kind permission of Dr. P. Horne).

opportunity to assure you of my increasing good wishes for the prosperity of that valuable institute. I remain Gentlemen, your obliged servant, Thomas Lee". At a meeting of the Governors on February 8th on "casting up the Ballot, the entire of the votes was in favour of Dominick (sic) John Corrigan" who was unanimously elected one of the Physicians of the Hospital. (Fig 2)

1831: First Convent of the Sisters of Mercy opened in Baggot Street.

1832: City of Dublin Hospital, Baggot Street, opened. Dominic Corrigan published his famous paper on Permanent Patency of the Aortic Valve, later to be

known as "Corrigan's Disease".

A new operating theatre was erected at the rear of the Hospital, the cost of which was defrayed by a legacy from one named Richard Cave, in gratitude for which the governors erected a plaque.

1835: St. Vincent's Hospital opened.

1836: William Wallace introduced potassium iodide in the treatment of syphilis. Accession of Queen Victoria to the throne

1838: Robert Adams resigned and was appointed to the Richmond Hospital.

1839: Adelaide Hospital opened.

1840: Dominic Corrigan appointed Physician to the House

of Industry Hospitals.

1841: Death of Mother Catherine McAuley who had founded eight new convents in Ireland and two in England. Within ten years of her death the Sisters of Mercy had established convents in Newfoundland, North America, Australia, and New Zealand.

1844: Ordered by the Committee of Management that the "Matron-Housekeeper be fined £1 for neglecting to give a chop to a patient that was ordered by the medical gentleman".

1845-50: The Great Famine

1846: Management Committee Minutes: "On reading a complaint made by the Housekeeper against Mr. Farmer, the late Resident Pupil, containing charges in substance that Mr. Farmer had on two evenings noisy parties in the hospital" it was resolved "that a communication be made to the present and all future Resident Pupils cautioning them against the repetition of such parties.

1847: John MacDonnell administered the first anaesthetic in Ireland in the Richmond Hospital.

1848: First reference to payment for a night nurse (£2.6s.8d. for one guarter). Patients were at this time tended to by their relatives.

Sisters of Mercy invited to supervise nursing of the hospital by the Committee of Management on June 20th. "The introduction of the Sisters to the Hospital made no change in the original constitution of its rules, which provided free access for patients of every denomination, and empowered every patient to send at once, and without question for any clergyman whom the patient might 'desire to see'. The Sisters, however, are not trained nurses, though necessarily they have acquired an experience which renders them very efficient.'

10 Aug: Minutes resolved that "the members of the Committee and the physicians and surgeons be appraised that the Sisters of Mercy are to enter the Institution on the 15th instant and that they be requested to be in attendance in order "to receive

15 Aug: Address of welcome read by Mr. Stapleton — "Whilst we thus pay homage to the dispositions you bring with you, to the duties you this day enter upon, we are delighted also to recognise in these dispositions an unfailing guarantee of

Journal of the Irish Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons

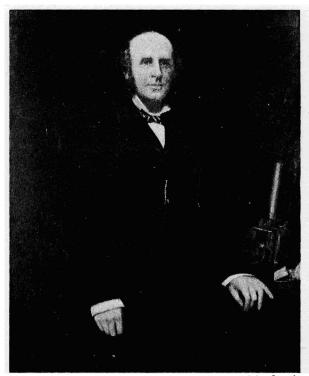


Fig. 3. Robert MacDonnell (1828-1889). A portrait by Sarah Purser in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

advantages we have hoped for the Institution from your connection with it. From this day it will hold a different position before the public - a position ensuring increased confidence and sympathy, and by that means more bountiful support from all true friends of Charity. Nor is the mixed character of the Institution to be in any degree disturbed by your becoming connected with it. Your Institute is well known; Jew and Samaritan are the same to you when there is a question of doing a service of charity to one or the other. On this account the public institutions of the country are everywhere open to your sisterhoods, notwithstanding the religious distinctions of their inmates and the mixed administrations under which they are governed. We have therefore no reserve in giving to the public the most distinct engagement that nothing will be said or done by you to interfere with the religon of our patients'

1855: Catholic University Medical School, Cecilia Street, founded.

1861: Mater Hospital opened.

1863: Hall of Royal College of Physicians opened in Kildare Street

1865: First recorded transfusion of human blood in Ireland carried out by Robert MacDonnell (Fig 3) (Son of John MacDonnell) on Mary Ann Dooly, aged 14 years, who had tetanus from which she later died. **1872:** Children's Hospital, Temple Street opened.

1875: National Children's Hospital opened.

1877: Managing Committee resolved to build a new hospital to meet the demands of the sick poor of the densely populated area of the city. The large and extensive premises of the "Dublin Carriage Company" were acquired as well as five houses in Jervis Street, and extensive foundations were laid at a cost of £1,235. A fund raising programme was embarked upon.

1879: Contract signed for building a new hospital at an estimated cost of £29,000.

The Presbyterian Mission Church and Schools in Jervis Street (built in 1864) were purchased for £2,250 for the care of patients during the building of the new hospital. Work was commenced to plans by Mr.

Charles Geoghegan.

1883: On November 27th, Mr. Irving Bishop conducted a 'Seance' in the Round Room of the Rotunda to a packed audience in aid of the new hospital. £230 was raised at the event, in recognition for which it was agreed a ward in the hospital was to be named "The Bishop Ward". Not all the maestro's tricks met with success — the 'thought-reader' agreed to inform the audience of the number of the cab that had brought Dr. Robert MacDonnell to the event "and the number of the cab having been communicated by Dr. McDonnell to Dr. Kidd, Mr. Bishop caught hold of the latter by the hand, tried it, and failed. The numbers he wrote on the blackboard were 437. Dr. MacDonnell informed him and the audience that the number of the cab was 810"

1885: On October 29th, the Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, presided over the opening ceremony of the new hospital. Among many speakers were Dr. Francis Cruise, President of the Royal College of Physicians, and Dr. Robert MacDonnell.

National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street opened. 1886: In January a week of fund raising events was announced, to include a Full Dress Ball, a Musical Promenade and Undress Ball, an Exhibition of Water Colours, Theatricals, and a Military concert all to take place in the new hospital "magnificently Decorated and lit up with Electric and Sunlight". One newspaper reported the Ball in glowing terms — "The Castle and the city, the garrison and the guarded, animated by a common object, appeared to have met on a field of cloth of gold, so brilliant was the effect, so highly coloured the surroundings, and so harmonious the accessories. In the Metaphorical language popular in the last century, followers of Mars and Aesculapius joined in homage at the shrine of Venus and Terpischore . . . In the reception room Liddell's band played a programme of twenty dances, and in the dance room the King's Own Borderers, under Mr. Douglas, played a similiar list. Attached to both these rooms were corridors supplied with chairs and sofas decorated with mirrors and tropical plants, and perfumed with all the scents of Araby, so as to form a most agreeable substitute for the traditional 'conservatory' and there a great many couples discussed the present political crisis".

The new hospital was completed "at a cost of about £55,160. 16s. 1d. (including the purchase of site, laying of foundations etc.) of which sum a balance of £16,284 remained due. In order to get full possession of the Hospital from the contractor, the governors applied for, and obtained, a supplemental charter, dated 9th November, 1888, by which they were empowered to raise money by mortgage on the property of charity. The new hospital had a number of notable architectural features which included:-

wards measuring 132 feet in length, by 30 feet in width and 20 feet in height, affording 2,640 cubic feet of space for each of 36 patients. (Fig 4).

windows measuring 18 × 5 feet, the sashes being double glazed

glazed corridors which serve as a means of communication and conservatories and recreation areas for patients when convalescent, at the ends of which are hydraulic lifts and staircases

- fresh air vents eight feet above the floors which

can be opened and closed at pleasure.

— foul air exits under each ceiling leading into foul air flues which discharge above roof level.

wards heated by hot water

fireproof floors.

— a flat fireproof roof surrounded by a handsome balustrade, containing 5,100 superficial feet and forming a splendid exercise ground for the patients and being 100 feet above the level of the pavement, a magnificent view is obtained of the Dublin Mountains, the Bay and the surrounding country.

— at the rear, the operating theatre, so arranged as to allow every student a full view of the operation table. (Fig 5).



Fig. 4. St. Joseph's Ward in the early 20th century.

1891: Training school for nurses established by Sister Mary Scholastica, superioress of the hospital community. Ten trainees accepted and accommodated in dormitories in the hospital. Training was for three years, after which suitable girls were appointed as probationers, and were called nurse at the end of one year. Applicants to the school had to be single or widowed and aged between 22 and 35 years. (Fig 6). Miss Bridget Kelly was appointed Matron.

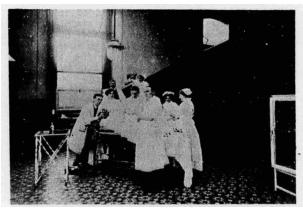


Fig. 5. The Operating Theatre in the early 20th century.

1892: Dr. Pratt reported to the Committee of Management that he and Dr. Colemen together with other members of staff would lecture and instruct the nurses and probationers of the hospital, and prepare a syllabus of lectures. A trained nurse was paid £35 annually at this time.

1894: Directed by the Management Committee "that the

house No. 21 Mary Street, recently occupied by the Jubilee Nurses be now used for the accommodation of the Nurses in connection with the hospital".

1896: Income —£3,681 10s.9d. Expenditure£3,563 16s.6d. "The hospital receives no Government grant, with the



Fig. 6. The Nursing staff at the turn of the century.

exception of £47 12s. 5d. grant from the treasury under a Statute of George III, and is solely dependent on the voluntary subscriptions of the charitable citizens of Dublin, and on the generosity of all benevolent friends of the Institution. Admissions — 875; Outpatients 28,935. The hospital can accommodate 250 beds, but only 78 are fitted up for want of funds, and the average number occupied in 1896 was 58".

1896 was 58".

1896: The Presbyterian Mission Church adjoining the hospital was fitted up as sleeping apartments for the use of the resident medical officers; its two school rooms were used, one, as a board-room and secretary's office, the other as a reception-room.

1897: Nurses to be paid 5s. extra per week for "nursing mental and infectious cases and that the said sum be charged to the patient".

1899: Miss Mary Alice Kelly appointed Matron at the age of 21 years.

The Charitable Infirmary in the Twentieth Century

1908: Admissions: 1,328. Outpatients: 25,709.

1910: New Dispensary and Wing opened.

1911: National Health Insurance introduced by Lloyd George.

1915: Red Čross Emergency Hospital established in Dublin Castle for wounded soldiers. Miss Mary E. Kelly, Superintendant of Nurses of The Charitable Infirmary organises nursing.

1916: Easter Rebellion.

House surgeons Doctors Frank Power, Tim Murphy, and Corny McGill converted a grocer's van into an ambulance and wearing short white coats, with a red cross, administered first aid in O'Connell Street, and brought casualties to the hospital. "Amid all the tragedy and horrors of 'Black Week' in Dublin one strong and glorious feature stands out in bold relief viz. the splendid way in which the Hospitals, their Surgeons and Nursing Staffs rose to the occasion. By reason of its central position The Charitable Infirmary of Jervis Street was called upon to play a big part, possibly the biggest of all in meeting the numerous demands that were made upon it. No praise is too high for the way in which Miss Kelly, Matron, Miss Gavigan, Assistant Matron and their

Staff of devoted Nurses rose to the occasion". (Press extract).

1917: Miss Mary Kelly, Superintendent of Nurses, awarded the Royal Red Cross.

1921: General Nursing Council of Ireland established.

1922: Outbreak of Civil War.

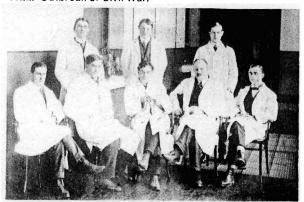


Fig. 7. The Medical Staff at the turn of the century.

1923: Nurse Training School at the Charitable Infirmary approved.

1925: Ireland's first hospital sweepstake known as the "lodine Sweepstake" held in Board Room realised £60,000 for the hospital funds.

1929: New convent for the Sisters of Mercy opened. St. Laurences and St. Patrick's wards opened in area vacated by the Sisters.

1930: Arthur Chance appointed surgeon with interest in orthopaedic surgery. Beginning of orthopaedic department.

1934: New building for the School of Nursing opened with accommodation for 72. Salaries of student nurses between 1930 and 1946 were £11 p.a. first year; £15 p.a. second year, £21 p.a. third year; £30 p.a. fourth

year; staff nurse £50 p.a.; Matron £70 p.a.

1935: John Charles Flood appointed Assistant Visiting Surgeon. Miss Ann Young appointed matron.

1936: Admissions — 1,984. Outpatients — 79,097.

J.C. Flood resigned from the surgical staff to join the Benedictine order.

The Charitable Infirmary won the Hospital's Rugby Miss Mary C. Prunty appointed Matron.

1951: Dom Peter Flood ordained a Benedictine monk.

1957: Sister Mary Adrain appointed first religious matron. 1958: Miss Mary Gallagher appointed first Sister Tutor to cope with increase in numbers of nurses in training. In 1955 there were 90 student nurses and 10 trained nurses: by 1967 there were 130 student nurses and 35

trained nurses. 1958: First artificial kidney in Ireland installed.

1960: Average bed stay-15.4 days.

1963: Sister Therese appointed Matron.

1965: Inpatients-5,294; Outpatients-105,149.

1966: Average bed stay-11.4 days. New Lecture Théatre opened.

Opening of new suite of operating theatres by the Minister for Health. Blessed by the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid.

1968: 250th Anniversary Celebrations.

1976: Admissions-13,441; Outpatients-195,510.

Average bed stay-7 days.

1976: Annual Report stated: "In 1976 the planning apart from the actual construction of a new Hospital at Beaumont seemed merely a hope on the horizon.'

1977: Annual Report stated: "On July 20, 1977 representatives of Jervis Street Hospital, St. Laurence's Hospital and the Eastern Health Board attended an historic meeting in the Custom House at the invitation of Mr. Charles Haughey the Minister for Health and Social Welfare. All representatives supported in principle the Minister's decision to build a similar type of modern Hospital in four years at Beaumont to that which had recently been completed at Wilton in Cork, the bed capacity there being 600 but with room for expansion to 750. Both the Board of St. Laurence's Hospital and your Managing Committee understood that the new Hospital at Beaumont might replace both Jervis Street and St. Laurence's Hospital and although pleased and excited at the prospect of improved facilities for patients and staff nevertheless had some reservations regarding the entire suitability of the size and layout of the Cork Regional Hospital at Wilton to cater for the projected staffing requirement at Beaumont.

1978: Annual Report stated: "As you know the Minister turned the first sod on the site in February 1978 and the New Hospital building should be completed in four years. The Committee would like to congratulate the Minister on the manner in which he has approached the whole matter'

1980: Admissions — 17,685; Outpatients — 205,608.

Average bed stay 6 days.

1980: February 1st. Wreath Laying Ceremony at St. Andrew's Church Westland Row to commemorate the centenary of the death of Sir Dominic Corrigan.

August 15. Sisters of Mercy departed from The Charitable Infirmary thus ending 129 years

association with the institute.
Completion of building of the new hospital at
Beaumont to incorporate The Charitable Infirmary and St. Laurence's Hospital. Opening scheduled for July 1985.

Deputation met Minister for Health, Mr. Barry Desmond, to urge that the new hospital be named "The Corrigan Hospital at Beaumont" as had been recommended by the Medical Boards and Managing Committees of the Charitable Infirmary and St. Laurence's Hospital, and the Beaumont Hospital Board.

Silver Jubilee celebration of renal dialysis in Ireland.

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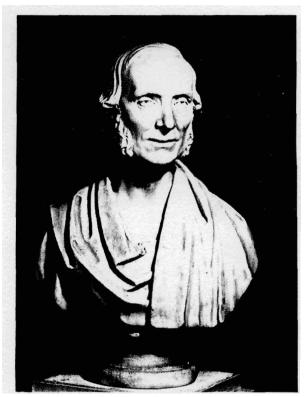
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