



In the course of creating this booklet,
a variety of resources have been consulted
to ensure accuracy and depth of information.

Dublin Fire Brigade Museum Archives.

Sean Redmond
Belfast is Burning 1941.
Published: 2002

Tom Geraghty & Trevor Whitehead
The Dublin Fire Brigade:
The History of the Brigade,
the Fires, the Emergencies.
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Las Fallon
The Dublin Fire Brigade
and the Irish Revolution.
Published: 2015



PROUDLY SERVING THE PEOPLE OF DUBLIN FOR 125 YEARS



1898 - 2023

DUBLIN FIRE BRIGADE EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

From DFB's foundation in 1862 until 1898, injured parties at a fire ground were brought to hospital on either a fireman's horse-drawn appliance, the brigade's tool cart or hose wagon, or any other transport available at the scene. As a result of this unhygienic practice as a form of medical transport, the Dublin Corporation commissioned a horse-drawn ambulance. A delegation made up of the Lord Mayor, Councillors Little, McCabe, Smyth and Meagher, City engineer, City Architect and Chief Fire Officer Purcell was tasked with looking at other brigades. The delegation was instructed to visit Belfast, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, London and any other cities deemed relevant in order to view the best and newest systems. The delegation visited these cities from the 20th to the 27th October 1897, reporting on the 2nd November 1897. During a visit to Belfast Fire Brigade in 1897, Purcell witnessed their brigade's horse drawn ambulance in use. On his return, he designed a similar but improved vehicle, for use in the Dublin Fire Brigade.

In 1898, the new ambulance was designed entirely by Chief Purcell and built in Dublin by Jessop Brown at the City Wheel Works at a cost of £97. It was a four-wheeled enclosed vehicle with solid rubber tyres, drawn by two horses and crewed by three firemen. The space beneath the driver's seat held a battery to supply electric light, as well as bandages, splints etc. The interior was 6ft 3in long, 4ft 6in wide and 5ft 10in high, with louvres on both sides and at the rear. There were two folding stretchers, one suspended above the other, the upper one supported by folding stays hanging from the roof, the lower one resting on upright supports fitted with joints enabling them to fold down level with the floor so that there was no obstruction when stretchers were being inserted into the wagon.

Training for ambulance work had already commenced in 1898, ten firemen from the central station were selected to be instructed by a Dr J. H McAuley with the assistance of a sergeant-major from the army medical corps. By the time the new ambulance arrived at the end of the year, the firemen had become very proficient in first aid and the use of splints and bandages. In December 1898 the arrival of the brigade's new vehicle was given wide publicity in the newspapers and much favourable comment, with the skill of Purcell in designing such an excellent ambulance was noted and acknowledged. The introduction of an ambulance service operated by the fire brigade was a tremendous boost for the people of the city. This ambulance proved to be a great success and was of such excellent workmanship that a second ambulance was ordered from Brownes in 1901 at a cost of £108.

One of the services most valued by the citizens of Dublin City & County is that of the Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB), fire based emergency medical service (EMS). DFB's fire based EMS service's foundation is reliant on a dedicated, highly educated and skilled brigade of first responders. A brigade that has been ready to respond in the times of need of the citizens of Dublin for 125 years. Spanning through three centuries, changes have occurred in our means of transport, skill level and uniform, but the one element that has not changed is our ethos of public service and pride in the service we provide.

1899

THE FIRST EMERGENCY THE CURLEW



On the 4th of January the steam-trawler, The Curlew, was engaged in fishing approximately twenty-five miles north-east of the Rockabill Lighthouse when a serious accident occurred around 1 am. The vessel's fishing net became entangled with an underwater obstruction, resulting in the snapping of one of the steel lines. This unfortunate incident caused severe leg injuries to crewman Thomas Smyth and another crewman. In response, the ship's captain changed course, heading for Dublin's South Quay.

When the emergency call was promptly placed to the Central Fire Station, firemen Tom Dunphy, Joe Kiernan, and William O'Brien slid down the pole into the engine room from the dormitory over head. The horses at the rear of the engine room automatically freed themselves from their stalls, and rushed up to their places in front of the carriages. In a matter of seconds the harness hanging overhead where dropped onto their backs and patent couplings adjusted. On arrival the firemen immediately provided essential first aid to the injured men. Smyth's injured legs were carefully bandaged and splinted, and he was safely placed on a stretcher before being transferred to the ambulance. He was then transported to Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital. Tragically, Thomas Smyth succumbed to his severe injuries and passed away two days later.

1899

ACCIDENT AMBULANCE SERVICE



On January 10, 1899, the Dublin Corporation made an official announcement through newspaper advertisements, heralding the introduction of an accident ambulance service on the streets of Dublin. This service, in line with Chief Purcell's recommendation, set a fee of £1 for private individuals utilizing the ambulance, while it extended its assistance free of charge for street accidents.

This marked the commencement of a much-needed and highly valued service by the Dublin Fire Brigade. The presence of a properly equipped ambulance crewed by skilled first aiders had now become a reality. In its inaugural year of operation, this service promptly responded to 537 calls. Recognising the demand and success, a second ambulance was commissioned in 1901, with Jessop Browns undertaking its construction at a cost of £108.

1913

DUBLIN'S FIRST MOTOR DRIVEN AMBULANCE



In 1913, Chief Purcell obtained approval to acquire a motor-driven ambulance and immediately embarked on designing the vehicle while issuing advertisements in newspapers for the contract. His recommendation favoured Leyland to secure the contract and produce a chassis according to his precise specifications, featuring elongated, flexible springs and a compact wheelbase.

Initially, the design included a fourteen-horsepower engine with 1,000 revolutions per minute, but after consultations with seasoned motorists, Purcell opted for a more potent engine. The choice of an eighteen to twenty-horsepower engine reduced wear and tear, eliminating the need to strain the machine during hill climbs. Leyland accepted the request to provide the more robust engine for an additional £20, making their tender the preferred choice. Consequently, the motor ambulance was procured for £540.

Dublin Fire Brigade distinguished itself from other brigades by consistently financing its vehicle acquisitions from its own revenue, as opposed to seeking loans. This practice played a pivotal role in securing the support of the majority of councillors for the purchase of the new ambulance.

1913

DUBLIN'S TURBULENT YEAR- THE LOCKOUT



In 1913, Dublin witnessed a significant event known as "The Lockout." This period left a profound impact on the Dublin Fire Brigade and its dedicated members. Firefighters, whose responsibilities often led them into people's homes, were exposed to the severe poverty prevailing among the working class in the city. While the fire brigade did not directly participate in the industrial action of 1913, their sympathies were firmly aligned with those at the forefront of the labour dispute.

The first week of September that year proved to be exceptionally turbulent, resulting in the tragic deaths of two striking workers, numerous injuries, and an immense strain on the ambulance services provided by the fire brigade. The most distressing incident unfolded when two tenement houses collapsed, trapping over fifty residents. In the midst of this chaotic scene, a fire erupted, further complicating the rescue efforts. Undeterred, the firefighters worked tirelessly to free those trapped, all while contending with the flames. This harrowing experience left an enduring mark on the firefighters.

1914

RED CROSS CORPORATION



The striking crimson exterior, adorned on each side with a design featuring a red cross enclosed by a scroll bearing the inscription "Corporation Ambulance, Dublin" and the city's coat of arms, garnered widespread praise for the newly introduced ambulance when it entered general service in January 1914. This ambulance incorporated numerous innovative features endorsed by Chief Purcell and offered ample room to accommodate a driver, two assistants, and as many as four patients.

By 1916, the Dublin Fire Brigade had expanded its fleet to include three motor-driven ambulances, further enhancing its capacity to provide efficient emergency medical services.

1915

CINEMA AMBULANCE



On October 15th, all three ambulances played a crucial role in the transportation of 643 wounded soldiers from the SS Oxfordshire to various hospitals. This arduous task spanned nearly four hours, and the Dublin Fire Brigade received valuable assistance from the Irish Automobile Club, which provided cars and drivers to handle non-stretcher cases. Since the outbreak of the First World War, the brigade's ambulance service had been consistently summoned to facilitate the transfer of injured servicemen from ships to hospitals and from hospitals to convalescent homes.

Recognizing the growing need, the Cinematograph Association, proprietors of the city's cinemas, initiated a fund-raising effort to acquire an additional motor ambulance. In November 1915, the sponsors of the Cinematograph Trade Ambulance Fund presented a fully equipped ambulance to Dublin Corporation. This new vehicle was designated for Red Cross purposes throughout the war, with ownership to revert to the corporation after the conflict's conclusion. The addition of this ambulance was a highly welcomed enhancement to the Dublin Fire Brigade's capabilities and saw continuous duty during the Easter Rising of 1916. The Cinema ambulance continued in service until November 1930.

1916

THE EASTER RISING & DUBLIN FIRE BRIGADE



During the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, Dublin Fire Brigade played a crucial role in responding to fires, providing ambulance services, and rescuing injured civilians. Their firefighters and ambulance crews worked tirelessly for six days, often in dangerous conditions, including being fired upon by military forces. Ambulances made around 50 daily trips to transport the wounded and the dead, frequently encountering gunfire. Some ambulances were even hit by bullets, and a horse was shot in the leg during these missions. Despite limited resources, the brigade saved numerous lives by extracting injured individuals from dangerous areas.

However, due to the limited number of ambulances, they couldn't attend to hundreds of cases during this tumultuous period. The city's coroner, Mr. Louis Byrne, commended the brave efforts of the fire brigade members and recommended recognition for their service. A proposal was made to grant a weekly chevron carrying one shilling to the station officers and firemen who were on duty during the Rebellion. Additional bonuses were recommended for the Chief and Lieutenant Myers. The Dublin Trades Union Council expressed their appreciation for the brigade's services during the insurrection and hoped for some permanent recognition, both financial and decorative, as a tribute to their courage and humanity during that period.

1917

FIREMEN AWARDED K.P.M MEDAL



In 1917, an incident at the North Wall in Dublin involved the Dublin Fire Brigade ambulance. The SS War Cypress, a grain ship from New Orleans on its maiden voyage, failed to disperse gas or fumes before unloading. Workers on the ship and the deck were overcome by gas. DFB firefighters Joseph Lynch and Edward (Ned) Doyle arrived with the ambulance. Lynch was overcome by gas when they tried to enter the hold, but Doyle managed to save several lives by tying lines to the affected workers. Four men died, and more could have perished without Doyle's actions.

Although the firefighters' heroism would typically merit a chevron for lifesaving, it was not granted due to concerns about additional costs for DFB members receiving wartime bonuses. They did receive £10 in recognition from the Carnegie Heroes Fund, £10 from the Admiralty Fund, and a Royal Humane Society bronze medal. Additionally, they were awarded the prestigious King's Police and Fire Medal, an honour on par with the Victoria Cross, with the ceremony scheduled for July 2, 1919. In a surprising twist, Fireman Joseph Lynch refused the King's Police and Fire Medal in April 1919, while accepting other awards.

1920

BLOODY SUNDAY



On the morning of Sunday 21st November, 12 members of the British Secret Service were shot by the IRA, the bodies of those killed were removed to King George V hospital (now known as St Bricin's Military Hospital) by DFB ambulance. Later that afternoon Crown forces, including a large contingent of Auxiliaries, entered Croke Park, where a challenge football game was taking place between Tipperary and Dublin.

They opened fire on the crowd and inflicted heavy casualties including fourteen dead. Again, the Dublin Fire Brigade ambulances were dispatched and among the crews who attended were Michael Rogers and Ned Doyle on the reserve ambulance alongside Joe Connolly and Michael Buckley on the motor ambulance.

1921

BURNING OF THE CUSTOM HOUSE



On 25th of May 1921, just after 1pm a section of the IRA entered the central fire station, closed all the doors and set about removing vital parts from the fire engines. Simultaneously the three sub-stations were raided and similar action was taken. At Thomas Street station a party of IRA took the Leyland pump to Crumlin where it was held for over an hour.

By 1.45 pm telephone calls were being received at brigade headquarters reporting a fire in the Custom House, but the brigade was prevented from turning out. Five minutes later, just as a party of auxiliaries arrived to find out why the brigade was not responding, the ambulance drove out from the engine room with the IRA men concealed on board.

1922

DUBLIN FIRE BRIGADE & ST. JOHN AMBULANCE



The huge workload on the fire brigade in that awful year revealed a problem relating to the ambulance service. Although the horse-drawn ambulances had been reduced to two-man crews, there was a shortage of trained ambulance personnel and the result was that some of the qualified ambulance men had to work continuously.

To solve this, an important decision was made that in future all recruits would be trained in first-aid, as would the rest of the current staff. This led to an arrangement with the St John Ambulance Association to provide the necessary training courses. Thus began a fruitful agreement which was to last for over fifty years.

During the year 1924 twenty firemen attended a St John's Ambulance training course in order to qualify as ambulance personnel. After nineteen successfully passed the exam, all firemen, with the exception of drivers, were put on rotation for ambulance duties.

1925

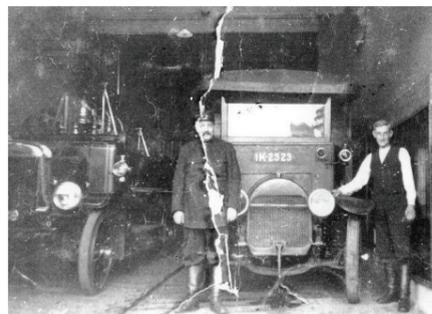
TWO MORE MOTORISED AMBULANCES



The purchase of two motor ambulances was approved in 1925, with the chief officer and the acting city engineer proposing either the de Dion Bouton or the Arrol Johnston as being suitable. However, the commissioners rejected the proposal saying that "since the Public Health Section is to defray the cost of providing the new ambulances, the Dodge built by Callow and Sons of Kevin Street, Dublin, shall be procured as the price only amounted to the sum of £293". One new motorised ambulance added to the fleet in 1925 followed by the arrival of a second in 1926.

1929

RIVER RESCUE

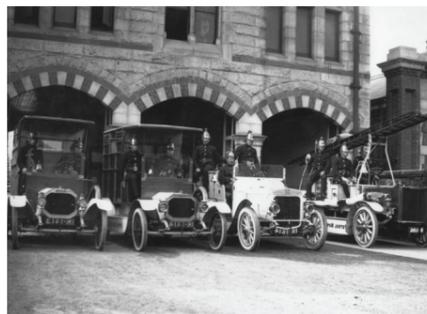


On the cold and stormy night of December 5, 1929, Dublin Fire Brigade faced a dangerous rescue operation on the River Liffey. Members of a Dublin University rowing team had their boat smashed on Island Bridge Weir due to the fast-flowing water, throwing them into the freezing river. Two individuals clung to the weir while the other six were washed over a ten-foot drop into a dangerous whirlpool. The fire brigade responded after 6:00 pm.

Under the light from the Chief Officer's car headlights, they used drop lines to rescue the two men on the weir, pulling them to safety. A small boat was brought to the scene on the roof of an ambulance, and it was lowered into the river. With a fireman and two rowers on board, they reached the nearest island where two more victims were clinging to a tree. They secured the victims and then returned to the wall. A third drop line with a buoy was established to rescue those on the other island, and all four victims made their way across in a relay fashion. The entire rescue operation took over four hours and was conducted under challenging conditions with strong currents. Fireman Curran, one of the rescuers, compared the river's currents to Scapa Flow. The rescue was even more remarkable given the severe weather conditions, with winds up to 65 mph and heavy rain causing damage and fatalities along the east coast on the same night.

1929

AMBULANCE CHARGES

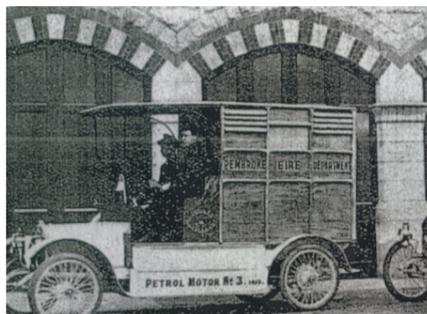


Ambulance charges, which had again become an issue of discussion, were still calculated on the basis of £1 for "private cases" (non-accident) within the city boundary and two shillings per mile outside. Poor persons within the city were removed free of charge but this led to regular questioning of charges, refusal by some to pay and claims of impoverishment by many when billed.

In all these cases a doctor's certificate had to be supplied to the ambulance crew stating that the patient was not suffering from any infectious/contagious disease. Maternity cases were treated as accidents and removed free of charge. Captain Connolly sought a change to this system because it tended to reflect badly on the brigade when bills were reduced following representation to the legal or finance sections of the corporation.

1933

PEMBROKE AMBULANCES



In 1933 the old Pembroke ambulances were replaced, "being worn out and beyond repair, the makers now no longer in business". The two BSA/Knight ambulances had first come into service in 1913.

The Pembroke Fire Department had been set up to cover the areas of Donnybrook, Ballsbridge, Sandymount and Ringsend, formerly part of the estate of the earl of Pembroke. Like Rathmines it later became part of Dublin Fire Brigade in October 1930.

1936

MALONE, NUGENT & MCARDLE TRAGEDY



On October 5, 1936, Dublin Fire Brigade responded to a fire incident at 164 Pearse Street. Despite reports of everyone being evacuated, a search of the buildings was conducted, and fire fighting efforts commenced. Unfortunately, water supply issues soon became evident, and a series of explosions occurred. In the chaos, three firemen, Tom Nugent, Robert Malone, and Peter McArdle, went missing, and their absence wasn't immediately realised by those in authority.

The fire rapidly engulfed the buildings, with massive flames and collapsing roofs. Despite the fire burning until the early hours of the morning, the brigade couldn't extinguish it. After the fire had cooled, firefighters embarked on a hazardous search for their missing comrades. They eventually discovered their charred remains and removed them from the scene. With the help of off-duty firefighters and the public, the search continued until the third victim was found, buried beneath the rubble. It was a tragic and harrowing incident that unfolded over the course of the night and into the morning.

1938

BRIGADE FATALITY



Fireman John Darmon, a motor mechanic who helped to service the brigade engines, died in the engine room pit in Tara Street. He was electrocuted and died on 23 August 1938, while repairing an ambulance engine. He was thirty-nine years of age and left a widow and four young children. The alarm was raised by the son of one of the firemen who lived in the station, having witnessed the unfortunate accident. The widow was paid £600 under workman's compensation.

1941

BELFAST BLITZ & THE BOMBING OF NORTH STRAND



In April and May 1941, Belfast was bombed by the German Luftwaffe, resulting in heavy loss of life, many injuries and large scale damage to property, especially working class housing. In response to a request for help, firefighters and ambulances were sent from Dublin Fire Brigade and other brigades to assist. The Chief Major Comerford assembled Dublin firefighters from all stations in Tara Street, telling them Belfast had been heavily bombed, and that De Valera had instructed him to give as much assistance as they possibly could to their unfortunate fellow countrymen.

Between 01.30 and 02.10am on Saturday 31st May 1941 four bombs were dropped on Dublin, resulting in thirty-four people being killed and ninety injured. Dublin Fire Brigade pumps and ambulances attended to extinguish large fires and then began the rescue work. The injured and maimed were removed from beside the dead as the stillness of the summer morning was shattered by the clanging of ambulance bells, the roars of fire engines and pumps, the thudding sounds of collapsing buildings and, strangely above all, the plaintive cries of the injured and the shouted orders of the rescuers. The oncoming watch in the fire stations joined those already at the scene and those on leave were called in from their homes to cover the fire stations. Throughout the day ambulances made their way to hospitals.

1948

AMBULANCES TO ATTEND CHIMNEY FIRES



In March 1948 Major Comerford resigned from the brigade to take up the new appointment of fire advisor to the Minister for Local Government. One of his last brigade orders highlighted the shortage of staff in the Dublin Fire Brigade: He stated that "Number 2 District Ambulance (Rathmines) will be put out of commission while the first turn-out (fire engines) is engaged on a fire call". He had introduced a system of having a leading fireman on each ambulance and a bucket of chimney rods and a stirrup-pump also on board to deal with chimney fires.

His impact on the brigade, particularly during his early years, had been monumental, and much of the needed re-organisation that he carried through was still in evidence up to forty years later.

1961

STARWAYS AIR CRASH



In September 1961 a huge tragedy was averted as the brigade responded to a call from Dublin Airport where a DC aircraft with sixty-nine passengers and a crew of four overshot the runway to crash onto the main Dublin-Belfast Road, narrowly missing passing cars. Twenty passengers received minor injuries while three sustained serious injuries and were removed for treatment by brigade ambulances.

Also this year, a bell was trialled on one of the ambulances. The Corporation announced to that Press, that it would "put bells on the others if the experiment was successful".

Before then ambulance drivers depended on the car horn to warn pedestrian and other road users of the oncoming ambulance.

1962

GIVE WAY TO THE MEN IN THE BLUE VAN



Did you know DFB Ambulances were once blue in colour. The speedy Dodge ambulance, was inconspicuous to other road traffic due to its blue colour and the drivers would use the horn to alert other motorists of the oncoming ambulance. It was decided to fit these ambulances with a bell to make them more noticeable to traffic. In a newspaper article published on the 26th January 1962 it was stated: Nowadays the city has five speedy ambulances, two at the Central Fire Station and one in each of the three district stations. This ambulance service is backed up by a rescue service van capable of coping with almost any emergency.

Down through the troubled years of the past half-century of fire, floods, baton charges and bloody street fighting this almost unknown unit has served Dublin well. Easter week of 1916 could well be marked as the point in time when the ambulance service came of age and passed from being a transport service to being the first stage of organised treatment of injured persons. The men who staffed the service have long ceased to be just drivers and stretcher bearers. They are Firemen, highly trained rescue workers, and first-aid men, as well as being masters of ingenuity and improvisation.

1962

THOMAS O'BRIEN BECOMES CHIEF



In April 1962 Thomas O'Brien became Chief, taking over a service with 146 personnel in four fire stations that was expected to provide all emergency and ambulance cover for a population of 535,488 in Dublin city and 132,865 in Dublin County. At this time two ambulances were based in Tara Street and one each in the three district stations. The brigade took delivery of three new ambulances in 1963. These vehicles were built on special chassis with twin stretchers one of which was fitted onto Lomas gear which allowed the stretcher to roll out on an extended frame for easy removal or loading. Cream in colour with red flashings the ambulances were provided by McCairns Motors Ltd. With chimney fire-fighting equipment removed and extra locker space they carried instead resuscitation equipment and a wider range of blankets and first-aid items.

In 1963, all the blue ambulances were replaced by white ones with red lettering, they would remain white until 2005 when the European Committee for Standardisation compliant yellow colour was introduced. The worsening traffic situations prompted trials of two-tone horns and amplified bells and now all ambulances are fitted with two-tone horns.

1967

FIRST AMBULANCE COURSE IN IRELAND



In May 1967, twenty-four men assembled at Ratra House, in Dublin's Phoenix Park for the first ever ambulance training course in Ireland. Dublin Fire Brigade had five firemen attend. Joseph Brennan, Tommy Doyle, Paddy Malone, Paul Clancy and Mick McCormack. The course was four weeks in duration, one of which was in the 'Casualty' department of one of Dublin's Hospitals.

1970

THE STEPHENSON MINUTEMAN



"An artificial respiration apparatus recently acquired by Dublin Fire Brigade saved the life of a man who was taken, unconscious from the river Liffey. Artificial respiration failed to revive him, but with the new apparatus, consisting of a small cylinder of compressed oxygen, a rubber tube and face piece, restored him in two minutes".

Minuteman: An automatic resuscitator with a distinguished record for saving lives in all types of respiratory emergency. The Minuteman is portable, simple to operate, reliable and extremely versatile.

It is particularly valuable in situations where difficulty of access or confined space rule out other resuscitative techniques.

1972

NOYEKS TIMBER FIRE SEVEN GIRLS AMONG THE EIGHT VICTIMS



Eight people, seven of them young girls, died in Dublin yesterday when fire destroyed the offices and showroom of Noyek's timber merchants in Parnell Street.

The fire started just before 3pm and the building was enveloped in flames within minutes. Such was the severity of the blaze, and the chaos that resulted from it, that it was difficult to identify all the victims, some of whom had been working at the firm for less than a week and were known to colleagues only by their first names.

A number of employees were injured when they jumped from the upper floors of the three-storey building; others escaped by climbing down ladders brought by workers in a radio and television firm across the street.

1974

DUBLIN BOMBINGS



In May 1974, Dublin experienced a horrific act of terror when car bombs struck Parnell Street, Talbot Street and South Leinster Street during rush hour, killing 26 innocent people. Joe Broughan, a firefighter with DFB HQ, vividly recalls the chaos and fear of that day, with the second bomb detonating as they rushed to the scene. The devastation was heart-wrenching, as they witnessed shattered bodies and indescribable horrors. These bombings followed earlier attacks, and Dublin Fire Brigade had no training for such incidents, experiencing a baptism of fire.

Tommy Ellis, another responder, described a scene of pure chaos, with the living, barely alive, and the dead intertwined. The scale of the attack overwhelmed the emergency response, with limited training and equipment. Ambulances transferred the dead to the morgue while fearing another bomb. Eyewitness accounts painted a grim picture of streets littered with personal belongings, the dead, and the dying. The bombings in 1974 were one of the deadliest days in the Troubles, leaving a lasting impact on the city and its first responders.

1974

AMBULANCE TRAGEDY



The brigade was faced with its own internal tragedy on 11 September 1974 when a serious accident involving one of its ambulances took place in slippery conditions on Clontarf Road. A car and the ambulance collided, causing the death of Fireman Michael Mulligan and serious injuries to his driver. An eye witness reported that on impact the two ambulance men were pitched through the windscreen. Mick Mulligan was dead on admission to hospital and Kevin Kavanagh received serious injuries from which in time he recovered fully.

1977

ALONE



In early 1977, Fireman Willie Bermingham was tasked with entering an old people's chalet in Charlemont Street where the resident had not been seen for days. Firefighters, because of the nature of their job, have a unique insight into the social issues prevalent in the areas they serve. What he discovered in that chalet was a heartbreaking scene – a frail, elderly man, alone, blind in one eye, lying dead on a wet bed in the bitter cold, with no fuel for the fire, no food, and only an old blanket to comfort him.

This poignant encounter moved Willie Bermingham and three other firefighters to establish the organisation ALONE, dedicated to raising awareness about the plight of Dublin's forgotten elderly citizens. Their efforts had a profound impact, pushing the government, corporation, and health board to address the issues faced by these vulnerable individuals. Willie's dedication earned him an honorary doctorate from Trinity College and the recognition of being named Man of the Year. His funeral in 1990, held at St. Patrick's Cathedral and attended by dignitaries and the city's impoverished residents, showcased the lasting legacy of ALONE in combating poverty and isolation among Dublin's elderly population.

1979

**DALKEY
TRAIN CRASH**



On Friday 16th November 1979, at 8:40am a city bound train from Bray crashed into a stationary train just outside Dalkey tunnel injuring over forty passengers and the train driver.

The emergency disaster plan was speedily put into operation as the brigade's fire engines and ambulances rushed to a scene of the derailed carriages where mangled wreckage of the engine blocked the railway line on a steep banked section. The injured and shocked patients were removed to hospital by the fire and ambulance crews, assisted by local residents.

It took over three hours and required the assistance of a helicopter before the seriously-injured driver was rescued from his crushed cab. Many of the injured were children on their way to school, but fortunately none sustained serious injury. Eight fire engines and twelve ambulances took part in this rescue at what was known locally as the "Khyber Pass".

1981

STARDUST



On the early morning of Saturday, February 14th, a devastating fire erupted at The Stardust during a St. Valentine's disco. The incident began at 1.43 am, and the fire brigade promptly dispatched multiple units, including fire engines, ambulances, and a turntable ladder, as they observed smoke rising upon arrival. Tragically, the fire spread rapidly, and the majority of the ballroom was engulfed in flames before the fire engines arrived at 1.51 am. The situation was compounded by locked emergency exits and the lack of familiarity with the venue, leaving the fire crews struggling to contain the disaster. Despite their efforts, in just over an hour, the interior of the building was completely destroyed.

Over 800 people were present at The Stardust when the fire occurred, and the first ambulance to arrive swiftly began transporting casualties to hospitals. Firefighters with breathing apparatus entered the premises as soon as it was safe to do so, rescuing trapped victims. The investigation revealed that the fire reached its most destructive point before the fire engines' arrival and gradually subsided until fully extinguished by 2.54 am. In the aftermath, 48 young lives were lost and 214 sustained injuries.

1985

**NEW TRAINING
CENTRE**



Dublin Fire Brigade's new training centre opened in the former O'Brien Institute on the Malahide Road. This was a major step forward in raising the standards of professionalism in the brigade, as it was probably the single most significant development since the opening of Tara Street in 1907. Over the years this excellent facility was refurbished to provide for the full range of breathing apparatus training, including a purpose-built "ship". Classrooms were upgraded, a canteen was provided and eventually living-in accommodation for students was made available. There is a large drill yard with drill towers, an oil-fire training facility and a crash-rescue area. The recent Covid-19 pandemic saw the Training Centre's Command & Control Training Facility provide resilience to the Eastern Regional Control Centre.

All of this has created an establishment where the integrated emergency service of Dublin Fire Brigade can cater for all aspects of its training needs. With a developed cadre of qualified instructors and access to graduate engineers or architects all practical and technical training in fire prevention, fire fighting, ambulance and emergency procedures and techniques can be provided on site. It has been a success story for the brigade, with selected courses accredited by the Health and Safety Authority, the National Safety Council, Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the Department of the Marine.

1986

**FIRE IN LORETTO
CONVENT**



Six elderly nuns were killed when flames swept through the Loreto College for girls on one of the capital's best-known landmarks, St Stephen's Green, in the early hours of June 2, 1986.

The outbreak was first reported by a garda on patrol duty in the city centre at around 3.30am. Eight fire tenders were later needed to bring the blaze under control. Three nuns who were taken to hospital by Dublin Fire Brigade Ambulance Service afterwards told how they had looked back to witness what one of them called "a blazing inferno".

The blaze, which was thought to have been sparked accidentally, possibly in the science laboratory, was subsequently found to have also destroyed a number of school facilities including the science lab, concert hall and dormitory.

1987

**PAMELA
SCOTT FIRE**

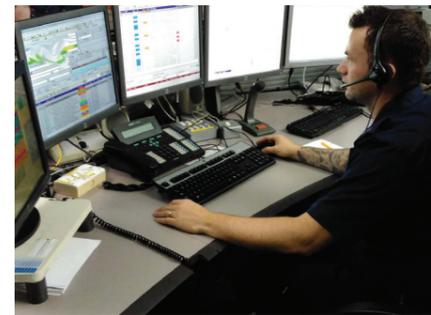


On 27th of August 1987, firemen rescue five office workers from a smoke filled room on the third floor of a building in Dublin city centre.

The fire broke out above Clarks Shoes and Pamela Scotts and spread throughout the buildings causing extensive damage. Five staff members of Firststaff Employment Agency were rushed to hospital by Dublin Fire Brigade ambulance services suffering from shock and smoke inhalation.

1989

**COMPUTER AIDED
MOBILISATION PROJECT**



In 1989 Dublin Fire Brigade became one of the three centres selected by the Department of the Environment and Local Government when it was decided to initiate what was known as the Computer Aided Mobilisation Project (camp). The object of this project was to rationalize emergency 999 call-taking for the fire service nationally in three control centres.

A new building, designed for the purpose, was constructed as part of the Dublin Fire Brigade headquarters complex and was called Eastern Regional Control Centre. Camp East comprises the fire authorities of the twelve counties of Leinster alongside Cavan and Monaghan. The Dublin centre also provides emergency ambulance service for the city and county of Dublin. The system went live in 1993.

Pocket alerters were also used on Dublin Fire Brigade ambulances to ensure rapid communications with crews who were away from the radio installed in their ambulances. The senior firefighter was responsible for the pocket alerter.

1994

**STEPHEN
HORGAN**



Tragedy again struck the brigade on 26 August 1994 when Stephen (Timmy) Horgan, a fine sportsman and very popular firefighter with a young family, was killed when the ambulance he was driving to an emergency call overturned when it struck a loose manhole cover on the Dublin-Belfast Road. Timmy represented the best traditions of the fire brigade, a great family man who loved working in the service. His ambulance assistant, young firefighter Gary Burke, sustained serious injury in the same accident. Tragedies like this are a constant reminder of the day-to-day dangers faced by firefighters every time they respond to an emergency call.

1995

**NORTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY**



In the late 1980s and early 1990s DFB were faced with a severe reduction in the amount of "Ambulance Aid Course" training places being provided for its recruit firefighters. Then Chief Fire Officer commandant Tony Gillick sought a solution to the provision of ambulance training for DFB firefighters. After an extensive negotiations commandant Gillick came to an agreement with Mr David Rayne, Director of EMS Training at Northeastern University, Massachusetts to provide Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and Cardiac Course training to new entrant and existing to DFB Firefighters.

In 1995 the National Ambulance Advisory Council (NAAC) recognised Northeastern University as a training provider. Also that year the NAAC recognised the EMT course as the new standard for emergency ambulance personnel in Ireland replacing the old "Ambulance Aid Course". Five officers from DFB were initially trained as tutors by Northeastern University to provide the training courses on site at the O'Brien Institute. They were then Stations Officers; Barney Mulhall, David Bell, David Sherwin, Michael Garry, and acting Station Officer Shay Power.

1999

ADVANCED PARAMEDIC PROGRAMME



In 1999 six pioneers of DFB's advanced paramedic programme, travelled to the United States to complete a 12-month paramedic course. Martin O'Reilly, Derek McGuinness, Ricky Ellis, Gerry Woods, Paul Lambert and Colm Murphy took part in the course. The didactic part of the programme was delivered at the Northeastern University campus in Burlington, Massachusetts with clinical placements in Massachusetts's General Hospital Trauma Centre, St Elizabeth Hospital, Beth Israel Medical Centre, Boston Medical Centre and a field internship with New York City Fire Department.

What they learned over the course of those 12 months was hugely significant for the development of DFB's paramedic capabilities, having been exposed to a wide variety of situations they would never have encountered back home. On the 10th April 2000, some weeks before their return home, the Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC), the independent statutory agency for education and training for pre-hospital care in Ireland was established. On their return, they were seconded to the DFB Training Centre for several months at a time to train other firefighters, a far cry from the ambulance aid course that some of them had completed as recruits on the St Mary's Hospital site in the Phoenix Park. Today, DFB's dual role Firefighter-Paramedic system is serving the city well – with stations strategically located north and south of the Liffey, throughout Dublin City & County.

2002

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS



Under the auspices of Chief Fire Officer Michael Walsh, then Assistant Chief Fire Officer EMS Brian Power initiated contact with the Professor of General Practice Professor Bill Shannon and Dr Kilian McGrogan of RCSI, to establish the DFB-RCSI Partnership. Since then Professor Arthur Tanner and Professor Hanna McGee have demonstrated great commitment and leadership. The Partnership recently celebrated the 20 year milestone. Throughout that time there have been over 650 graduates of the DFB-RCSI Training Institute.

"Dublin Fire Brigade paramedic students are hugely appreciative of the opportunity to experience assessing and treating responsive patients in a realistic and safe environment at RCSI." said Niall O'Reilly, course director, Dublin Fire Brigade paramedic programme.

It allows them to put what they have learned into perspective and to experience how their interventions may improve the health of patients, thereby helping them appreciate the importance of their role"

2004

WELLINGTON QUAY BUS CRASH



The benefits of fire-based EMS were captured by this witness report from the Wellington Quay bus crash on 21st of February 2004, in which five people lost their lives and many more were injured, when a bus mounted the pavement.

"From inside the Clarence (hotel) I saw the fire and ambulance crew eventually free one middle aged man from under the bus on the footpath. They strapped him to a stretcher just outside the front door and attached a breathing apparatus as a waiting ambulance waited to bring him to hospital. Outside the front door the main rescue operation was going on as specialist equipment was used to free those pinned under the bus. But for some it was obviously too late – while others had suffered very severe head and internal injuries".

The DFB crews enabled the simultaneous rescue, assessment and emergency medical treatment of the injured on Wellington Quay that afternoon. More dual trained firefighter-paramedics were rapidly deployed in large numbers to manage this scene, treat the walking wounded and transport the injured to hospital.

2006

ADVANCED PARAMEDICS



Dublin Fire Brigade introduced advanced paramedics to enhance its emergency medical services. These specially trained paramedics have a broader scope of practice, allowing them to administer a wider range of medications and perform advanced medical interventions. This integration improves response times, enhances patient outcomes, and ensures a coordinated response to various emergencies, benefiting the community by delivering a higher level of care. The initiative reflects the DFB's commitment to providing a seamless approach to fire fighting, rescue and medical incidents.

There have been over 100 DFB graduates of the advanced paramedic training programme since its inception. The majority of these having been educated and trained at University College Dublin, under the direction of Professor Gerard Bury and his team at the Centre for Emergency Medical Sciences. In more recent times DFB Advanced Paramedic students have also graduated from University College Cork. 2007 saw PHECC significantly increases in the scope of practice for the new entrants and the existing EMT cohort and a change of practitioner name from EMT to Paramedic. The new Paramedic level included advanced airway insertion, intramuscular injection and an increase in the range of medications in their armoury.

2015

CARRICKMINES TRAGEDY



The first 999 call was received at 4.21am on October 10th 2015. Three water tenders, three ambulances, a helicopter, one rescue tender and a district officer were despatched from the Dún Laoghaire, Rathfarnham and Donnybrook stations.

The first crew reached the site at 4.34am. They were told en route that there could be "up to seven children" trapped in the fire. The incident was rapidly "scaled up" and, in all, 35 paramedic firefighters, an assistant chief fire officer and a third officer also attended the fire. On arrival, the crews discovered a fire which was already well developed, so intense it would not permit survival of any occupants. Crews immediately set about extinguishing the fire, rendering pre-hospital care to the injured.

The report says a "young man" approached the crew "carrying a small boy" who was "limp and listless but still breathing". They were also directed to a second cabin on fire, and told "there was a baby inside". CPR was performed on them by advanced paramedics and they were removed to Tallaght hospital by ambulance. Sadly, 10 people lost their lives.

2020

RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES



The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the Dublin Fire Brigade's ambulance services. They faced an increased call volume, implemented strict infection control measures, encountered staffing challenges due to illness and quarantines, adjusted response protocols to minimize transmission risk, collaborated closely with healthcare facilities and offered mental health support for their personnel.

Dublin Fire Brigade's ambulance services faced these challenges head-on with dedication and professionalism. They have consistently risen to the occasion, adapting and responding effectively to various emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure the safety and well-being of the community they serve.





1898 - 2023

DUBLIN FIRE BRIGADE EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

Dublin Fire Brigade is committed to providing an efficient fire, emergency ambulance and rescue service which meets in full all statutory duties and public expectations.

We look forward to the next chapter of our fire based EMS service where we will continue to provide safe and effective patient centred care and support, with equity of access for all patients. A service with strong clinical and corporate governance and a well-educated and responsive brigade of practitioners, responders and emergency call operators. Practitioners, responders and call operators that continue to display their professionalism, compassion and empathy, who advocate for and respect the rights of their patients.

We look forward to the finalisation of a funding model from government which will effectively fund our EMS service and will enable DFB to develop in line with a growing population. To enable us to meet the challenges and opportunities that present in relation to Sláintecare and the HSE clinical programmes. We hope to expand our fire based EMS service as our fulltime brigade expands by placing an emergency ambulance in each of these stations.

We will continue to maintain our fire based EMS service by educating our firefighter-paramedics to the standards set down by the Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council in partnership with our colleagues in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. We will continue to support the well-being, health and safety of our practitioners and responders.

We will continue to do well what we do best i.e. emergency medical response, extrication and simultaneous treatment and transport of the seriously ill and injured patient to hospital. We look forward to the challenges that will present themselves when patients will be transported to the centres of excellence relevant to the patient's condition. i.e. primary percutaneous coronary intervention centre, stroke and trauma centres.

We look forward to continuing the excellent working relationships we share with our adult and paediatric emergency medicine, emergency nursing and obstetric colleagues as well as our colleagues in the National Ambulance Service, Dublin Airport Fire Service, auxiliary and voluntary practitioners and responders.