

## Dublin Fire Brigade Training Centre

The Dublin Fire Brigade Training Centre, originally known as 'The School of the Twin Sisters', O'Brien Institute' was designed by the architect John Joseph O'Callaghan in a French Gothic style and built by Messrs Hammond and Co. between 1880 and 1883. The building was financed from the trust of Mary and Bridget O'Brien, twin daughters of Mr. Michael O'Brien, a wholesale woollen draper of Ushers Quay. Mary died in 1876 leaving an estate valued at £80,000.

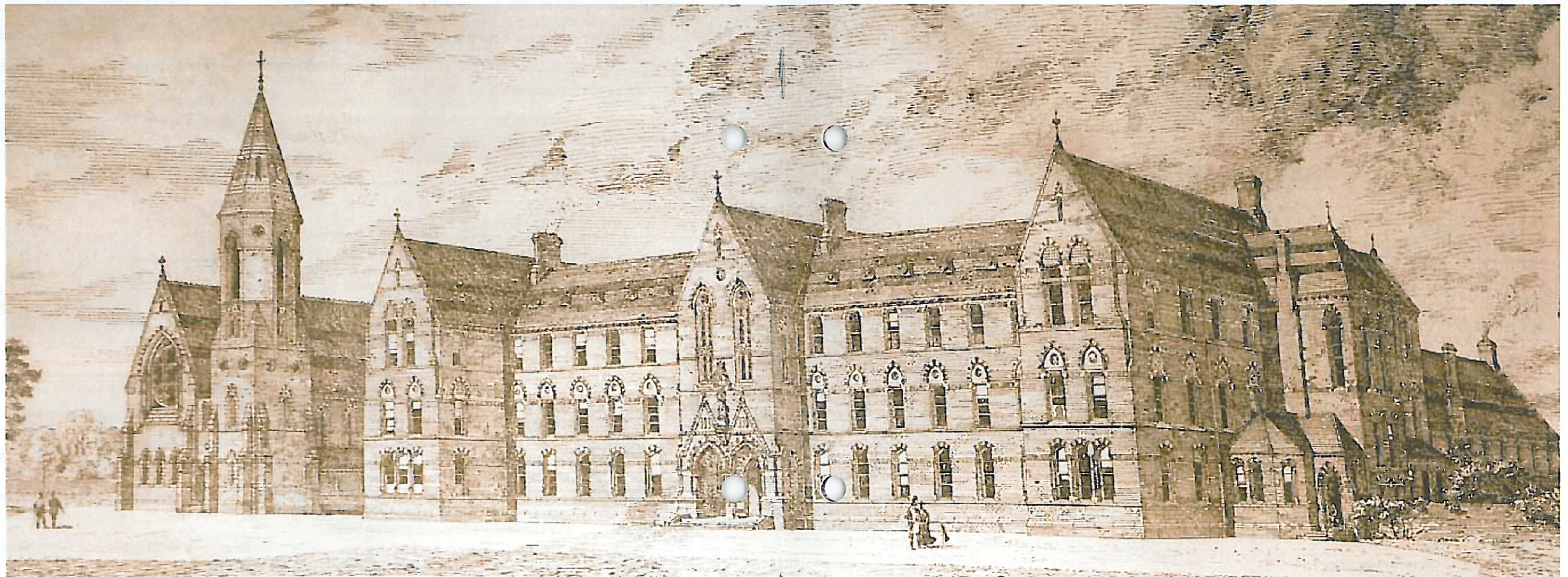
She bequeathed most of this money to the Most Rev. Daniel Murray, the then Archbishop of Dublin to build an educational establishment with a chapel in the environs of the City of Dublin. The terms of the will stipulated that orphans should have preference of admission and that all children should be "lodged, dieted and clothed in a respectable and comfortable manner".

The school opened in 1888 at a cost of £25,000 under the care of the Christian Brothers, with the

admission of 49 boys. The school was largely self sufficient in its early years having a 30 acre working farm on site, and depended on the O'Brien Bequest for its main source of income.

Records show that in 1916, artillery shells landed in the school grounds, and there was a severe threat to life to anyone leaving the school grounds because of 'sporadic shooting in Fairview'.

Prominent pupils in the early years of the school included W.T. Cosgrave, first Taoiseach of the Irish Free State, who attended between 1891 and 1895. His school report identifies him as 'a good steady boy'. The school continued in existence until 1969 when it was eventually replaced by the building of Ard Scoil Ris on an adjacent site on Griffith Ave. The vacant O'Brien Institute school building was acquired by Dublin Corporation in 1982 for use as a training centre for the Dublin Fire Brigade, and the first class of recruits entered its doors in 1985.



## Brief History of Dublin Fire Brigade

Dublin Fire Brigade came into existence following the passing of the Dublin Corporation Fire Brigade Act of 1862. The founding Brigade consisted of 24 men housed in a station off Winetavern St., near Christchurch. The organisation of the brigade, under its first Chief Fire Officer Mr. Ingram, was broadly based on a naval model. Proficiency with handling pumps, exceptional climbing skills and excellent practical knotsmanship would all have been desired traits of early recruits to the service, and indeed, the current operational structure of the brigade with its 'watch' system, follows in this naval tradition.

Prior to the setting up of the brigade, fire fighting in the city was mainly voluntary, with police and parishes having their own fire engines and manually operated fire pumps, which were crewed by volunteers. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century saw advancements in fire fighting with the introduction of Insurance Company fire fighting teams. In the absence of a municipal brigade, insurance companies sought to protect their investments with the provision of their own small brigades. It was their job to attend fires at premises that bore plaques, called 'Fire Marks', of the company. Needless to say, in the early years, these fire fighting teams often stood and watched as rival brigades fought fires, and only rendered assistance when suitable financial recompense was agreed.

Later though, compromise was reached following a number of large fires in the city, and liaisons with teams from different companies became commonplace, with the first

responding crew in attendance receiving the highest payment. The establishment of the Dublin Fire Brigade, saw dependency on the insurance company teams gradually wane.

The Dublin Fire Brigade Ambulance Service was formed in 1898 and answered 537 calls in its first year. Today the Dublin Fire Brigade Ambulance Service responds to well over 100,000 emergency call per annum, achieved I.S.O. accreditation in 2001, and is still the only ambulance service in Europe to be crewed by Firefighter/ Paramedics. The brigade's headquarters was opened at Tara St. in 1907, housing firemen and their families for many years within its distinctive red bricked walls. The headquarters at Tara St. was finally closed in 1998 with the development of a new station at nearby Townsend St.

Through its early years the brigade relied on teams of horses to pull engines through the city streets, and even after the first motorised fire engine was delivered in 1909, a British Leyland vehicle, capable of 30 m.p.h., it would be 1925 before the last horse left the service of the brigade. As the population of the city continued to increase, and the municipal boundaries expanded over the years, more modern stations were built to replace the older ones. Landmark stations in Thomas St., Dorset St., Buckingham St and Rathmines gave way to up to date developments in Dolphins Barn, North Strand, Donnybrook and Phibsboro. Stations were also built to serve the ever expanding populations of suburbia, in Kilbarrack, Finglas, Blanchardstown, Rathfarnham, Tallaght and Dun Laoighre. The Brigade now has 12 full time and 2 retained stations and employs nearly 800 personnel.

