

Restless Pencil: Noel Moffett Exhibition at the Irish Architectural Archive

An exhibition of architectural drawings, photographs and works on paper marking the centenary of the birth of architect Noel Moffett.



Open Air Theatre, Achill, by Noel Moffett, 1940-41.

Noel Moffett (1912-1994) was born in Cork on Christmas Day, 1912. He trained as an architect at Liverpool University and joined Dublin Corporation in 1941 before setting up his own practice in 1944. In 1949 he left Dublin for London. He taught for most of the 1950s while building his private practice, working in partnership from 1956 with his Polish born third wife, the architect Alina Zofia Bolesławicz-Moffett. He came to specialise in social housing for the elderly, mainly for the Greater London Council and charitable trusts. His award-winning Priory Road development in West Hampstead was opened by HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in 1966 and won a Civic Trust award in 1970. (It was demolished in 2010.) He was the first Head of the Department of Town Planning at Kingston School of Art (now Kingston University), was elected President of the Architectural Association in the 1970s, and spent six years in the mid 1980s in the USA teaching architecture at Iowa State University, the University of Idaho and at Washington State University. He wrote the first in-depth, post-war surveys of architectural recovery across the length and breadth of continental Europe, and in later decades turned his attention successively to developments in the US, Japan, West Africa and Central and Eastern Europe. His last book was *The Best of British Architecture, 1980-2000*, which appeared in 1993, the year before he died.

This exhibition concentrates on Moffett's time in Dublin in the mid-to-late 1940s, a period during

which he emerged as a leading Irish pioneer of modern architecture. His near contemporary Kevin Roche remembers him at the time as 'an extraordinary person' who was 'a very exciting presence on what was then a very dull architectural scene'. Schemes such as the Open-Air Theatre, Achill, Co. Mayo, or the proposed factory for Miami Squashes, Dublin, show the diversity of his interests but housing featured strongly from the start. His East and West Houses, Portmarnock, have been described as 'very daring', reflecting distinctly 'the works of the great housing masters, Gropius and Maxwell Fry', while his scheme of local authority housing for Dundalk Urban District Council was exceptional for the variety of house types, the open-plan ground floors and the bold use of colour throughout. This scheme prefigures Moffett's architectural career in London, where low cost, high-density, public housing became a mainstay of his practice, including many schemes developed using a hexagonal modular plan inspired, according to Moffett, by the Giant's Causeway.

Moffett's unambiguously Modernist buildings were clearly influential but his presence was also felt in other ways. He designed several exhibitions, promoted an interest in prefabrication and innovative building solutions through the Tomorrow Club, was involved (with his first wife Margot) in the White Stag group of artists and ran a private architecture school, an early expression of his lifelong commitment to teaching and to students. The landmark July 1947 issue of the British journal *Architectural Design* was guest-edited by Moffett and gave a seal of international approval for the first time to contemporary Irish architecture. Several of those who worked with Moffett, for him or encountered him in Dublin in the mid-to-late 1940s went on to enjoy spectacular careers at home and abroad, including Liam Carlin, Paddy Delany, Patrick Hamilton, Reginald Malcomson (a close collaborator who joined Mies van der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1947 and was invited to work in his office), Herbert Unger, Robin Walker and the aforementioned Kevin Roche.

A favourite piece of introductory advice offered by Lionel Budden, Roscoe Professor in Architecture at Liverpool University to his students,

including Moffett, was 'This is your restless pencil. Take it with you everywhere you go'.

It was advice Moffett took fully to heart. He had travelled widely as a young man, making a seminal cycling trip through Germany, Czechoslovakia and Austria in 1935, and even visiting Jamaica in 1936, and sketched constantly throughout his life, using the drawings for teaching, exhibitions and publications. It was his restlessness which took him from Dublin to London and beyond. Short as his Dublin career was – relatively few of his buildings were actually constructed and none exist in their original state – Moffett remained a figure of interest to Irish architects. In 1967 a call was issued by the *Irish Builder and Engineer* to have him recalled to Ireland and made Dublin City Architect. This fell on deaf ears and it was not until 1990 that Moffett's legacy was fittingly acknowledged when he was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland.



East and West Houses, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin, Noel Moffett, 1949.

The Irish Architectural Archive would like to thank Shane O'Toole for his curation of this exhibition. The Archive also acknowledges the support provided for the exhibition by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht under the Government Policy on Architecture.

The exhibition is on in the Irish Architectural Archive Architecture Gallery, 45 Merrion Square and runs until Friday 26 April 2013. The Architecture Gallery is open to the public from 10 am to 5 pm, Tuesdays to Fridays.

Colm Riordan, Irish Architectural Archive

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Irish Missionary Films 1930-1997
A Study Search

While working on a Local History Project in Drogheda County Louth, I first came across a feature film called 'Visitation. The Story of the Medical Missionaries of Mary' (1947) and its companion film 'Bridge of the Ford. The Story of Drogheda' commissioned by Mother Mary Martin, founder of the Medical Missionaries of Mary, the first missionary society committed

exclusively to health care. The film illustrates their work as medical missionaries in Africa and their beginnings as a congregation in Drogheda.

Later under the auspices of the Irish Missionary Union I worked on a Millennium Missionary Film Project sponsored by the National Millennium Committee. The idea was that missionary societies would deposit their important film collections in the Irish Film Archive for safekeeping and preservation. There are eighty-four societies with registered membership in the Irish Missionary Union. To date thirteen societies have participated in this Research Project providing over a hundred films. Eight of these are societies of religious women. It is planned to extend the remit of this film research project to other denominations.

Since 2009 I have continued as an independent researcher to document films made by Irish missionary societies housed in the Irish Film Archive. I have appealed to religious to participate in this Film Research Project. The purpose of this work is to form the basis of a careful study and analysis of films both made by and commissioned by religious in Ireland for publication. There is a very small bibliography on Mission History and little or no published research on Missionary Films and Film Production. Many of these films are forgotten and neglected. The aim of this project is to find them and to document them.

History

Missionary films make up a cohesive body of film and film practice in Ireland spanning a period from between 1930-1997. There are over a hundred films with titles like- 'African Pictorial' (1950's), 'Thanks To Mother Kevin' (1952-1960), 'Till The Cross is Over All' (?), 'China in the 1930's' (1938), covering mostly the two continents of Africa and Asia.

There is a sense of excitement and discovery when watching Irish missionary films that is key to how resourceful these films really are, not only as a history of religious but as a film form. Technologically most are 16mm format; some are 35mm, and from the late 1980's onwards, the format changes to video. 35mm is the 'standard gauge' of the popular commercial film industry, while 16mm is the gauge of the independent and amateur. More than any other element of the cinematic apparatus this distinguishes the commercial cinema from the semi-commercial and the non-commercial forms.

Missionary films were non-commercial yet they travelled on a national and international circuit with screenings in public venues such as churches, schools, hospitals and parish halls. Two notable exceptions to bridge the traditional boundary between the two kinds of filmmaking

were 'Visitation' commissioned by the Medical Missionaries of Mary (1947), and 'Out of the Darkness' commissioned by the Holy Rosary Sisters (1949). The films document the early history, foundation and missionary enterprise of their respective society. What is remarkable about these two films is how they were independently distributed. It is their production and distribution as non-commercial documentaries that make them unique not only among missionary films and filmmaking practice but also in the wider context of film production in Ireland. Their approach to distribution was highly organised and pioneering. Religious took on the task of distribution themselves. They hired out cinemas and cinema chains and successfully managed to by pass the problem of mass audiences. While their audience was modest in comparison to the dominant commercial cinema they more than returned their production costs. They retained complete control over their films.

Despite such innovation it is important to realise the control exercised by the Catholic Hierarchy. While the censor passed 'Visitation', John Charles McQuaid, then Archbishop of Dublin and patron of the National Film Institute (now the Irish Film Institute) objected until three cuts were made: one being of a caesarean section in a mission hospital before showing it in his diocese.



Handling of a 16mm in the Irish Film Archive

What do Irish Missionary Films look like?

The films are generally short, between 20-30 minutes long. However, some are feature length. They are visually very rich, characterised by long slow shots with a voice-over commentary. The content particularly of films made by religious women follow the religious formation and life of a missionary nun from postulant, novice, professed sister to work on the missions in the field of education and medicine, then evangelisation of indigenous people through education and healthcare. A life of self-sacrifice on one hand, and adventure on the other.

The original purpose of missionary film was to promote vocations and volunteers and to boost fundraising. They have strong links with visual

anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking. However it is not clear what kind of preparation missionaries had before departure to countries in Africa and Asia. The films most often describe their own core missionary activities and indigenous people are rarely seen outside of this context.

How were missionary films made? They were either commissioned or photographed by religious while on 'visitation.' Except where there are film credits it is not clear where Irish missionary films were processed and edited. Religious wrote and recorded commentaries that were added later in the final stages of editing. Also religious travelled with their films, and often gave live running commentaries to accompany silent film.

Silent film with a voice-over leaves a space between the two elements of picture and sound, and very long shots focus attention. In an Irish context films made and commissioned by religious present a unique model and genre of film practise that successfully crossed the boundary between 'amateur' and 'professional.' We see the recorded moving image of the phenomenal life and work of religious as distinct from received information i.e. recorded commentaries. Cinematically, Irish missionary films are very beautiful to look at. They are simple and direct, innocent yet severe.

Edel Robinson, artist-filmmaker currently researching in the IFI Irish Film Archive

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**Mount Street Club collection at
 Dublin City Archives**

The Mount Street Club was established in 1934 by Philip Townsend Somerville-Large and Major James Hardress de Warrenne Waller to provide assistance to unemployed men in Dublin. The archive was donated to Dublin City Archives in 2006 and represents an important record in the social history of Dublin over eight decades. Its uniqueness is highlighted in the fact that it documents groups of people, namely the unemployed and disadvantaged, who were traditionally ignored from official records. The collection includes a wide range of records including minutes, correspondence, financial and legal records, reports, plans and photographs which paint a comprehensive picture of how the Club functioned.

The Club, based at 81/82 Mount Street, Dublin 2, worked on the principle that instead of handing out payments such as 'the dole' or charitable donations it was much better for men to work in providing for their own livelihood and that of their families. In 1939, the Club purchased a farm, 'Larkfield' in Clondalkin, Co. Dublin which gave the men employment and provided food and other materials for use in producing other goods.

The Club did not pay money to the men who worked in the Club or on the farm but had their own currency in operation, the 'tally'. This was a system whereby the men worked on an activity in return for a certain number of tallies which could then be exchanged within the Club for food or other goods. After World War II, an increase in unemployment benefit and emigration led to falling membership and during this time the tally system ended.

The farm was bought by Dublin Corporation in the early 1970s for a housing scheme. The lease ended in Mount Street in 1974 and the Club moved premises to 62/63 Fenian Street. The men who had lived at the Mount Street Club Farm were then housed in hostels, paid for by the Club. From this time onwards, the men applied to join the Club and employers contacted the management for workers. In this way, the men were assigned to various jobs and paid in cash by employers. In 1979, the ground floor of the building was given rent free to the Mount Street Club Day Activity Centre for the disabled, which was run by the Eastern Health Board. In 1984, the arrangement of all casual work for men ended and the building at Fenian Street was no longer used to house the Club.

In the late eighties, feasibility studies were commissioned in order to pursue new lines of activity which was the impetus for the Club involvement in the community schemes of Grand Canal Docks Trust and the education and skills training of the Irish Nautical Trust. Eventually, it was decided that the Mount Street Club was no longer true to its original principles laid down in 1934 as a club for unemployed workers, and thus it was dissolved in 2006.

This collection is an important record of the efforts of a charitable organisation to alleviate the problem of unemployment in Dublin from 1930s-2000s, and as such is an invaluable source to social historians of this time period. It provides rich historical information about the needs of the working-class especially in the 1930s and 1940s when there were fewer sources of State-sponsored aid. It gives an account of a pioneering movement that was established to provide the unemployed with a means of earning their livelihood and shows how this effort was mirrored in other clubs in Limerick and Waterford. Lastly, it documents the changes in economic and social conditions of the less fortunate in the second half of the 20th century, especially those of inner city Dublin.

Deirdre O'Connell, Archivist

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Dublin's Theatre Royal Remembered

Around 120 people made their way to the Mansion House on a cold and wet afternoon at the end of January 2013 for a talk about Dublin's legendary 'Royal'. The speaker was Conor

Doyle, nephew of the late Jimmy O'Dea and his wife Ursula Doyle, who has been steeped in theatrical tradition since childhood. Conor skilfully blended oral history with documents and photographs from Dublin City Archives and film from the Irish Film Archive to re-create the magic of the long-ago Theatre Royal, which finally closed its doors fifty years ago, on 30 June 1962.



The glory days of the 1950s was a particular focus, as Hollywood came to Dublin, in the persons of Judy Garland, Bob Hope, Danny Kaye – and Roy Rogers with Trigger. The audience responded with their own recollections, adding their stories to the rich seam of memories collected by Conor. Community singing and shouts of 'Oh no, you won't!' rang from the floor and when all was over the demand was 'when will the talk be on again?' We are scheduling four more appearances by Conor in various locations during 2013 – two during Bealtaine and two during Heritage Week. These talks form an important part of the outreach programme at Dublin City Archives, as invariably they result in additional donations of documents and memories to our collections. They also are beneficial in terms of creating social cohesion – and are really good fun into the bargain!

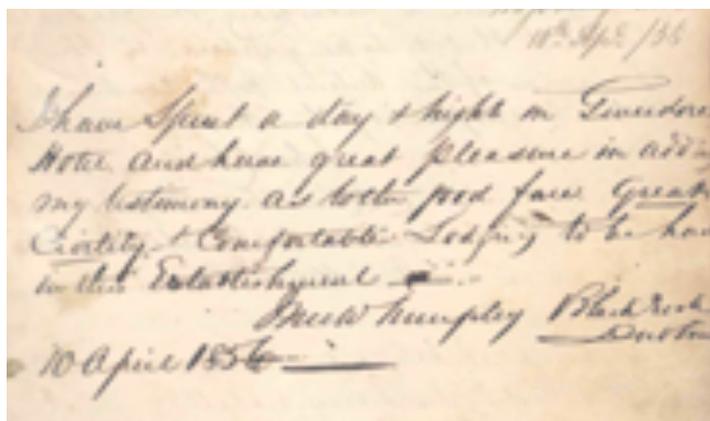
Mary Clark, Dublin City Archives

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Historic 19th century Gweedore Hotel Visitor's Book donated to Donegal County Archives

Donegal County Archives and County Donegal itself have been the fortunate recipients of another original Gweedore Hotel Visitor's Book. This is the second visitors' book for the famous Gweedore Hotel to be received by the County Archives. Both volumes contain fascinating, varied and often lengthy social and political comments by visitors to the area. The first volume dates as far back as 1842 and covers the years of The Great Famine. This second visitors' book dates from 1857 to 1874.

The 19th century Gweedore Hotel was hugely popular with wealthy tourists from Ireland and

abroad. The hotel was owned by Lord George Hill, brother of the Marquess of Downshire. Hill acquired much land in the north west of Donegal in the early and middle years of the 19th century. By some, Hill was regarded as a 'good' reforming landlord though there was plenty of local opposition to his reforms, particularly when he brought in tenants from Scotland for the purpose of large scale sheep grazing. This escalated into the famous 'sheep war' of Gweedore.



Gweedore Hotel Visitors Book (10 April 1856)

While comments in this book generally focus on the beauty and untamed nature of the landscape and the comforts of the hotel itself, there is also much unusual, fanciful, witty and literary commentary. Use of the forms of both prose and poetry is common particularly for remarking on the tense political climate of the time, including the ongoing bitter Sheep War. Reading some of the observations one is reminded at times of the social media critiques online today, some of it anonymous and often quite vindictive.

Among the more benign comments are:

'Gweedore Hotel and the views from the top of Errigal are, each in its way, perfect' (1859).

My eleventh visit to Gweedore. I find each year the place more enchanting. " (from London, 1857).

'I have been delighted with the scenery of Gweedore and its improvements Long life to Lord George Hill!' (Andrew Crawford, Belfast. 1857).

'We desire to add our testimony ...to the comfort of the accommodation, the excellence of the fare, and the marked attention in civility of the domestics, at the Gweedore hotel (1864, Stewarts of Ramelton; C W Boyton.)

Other comments are more controversial and often long winded, many of opposing views. For example one man penned an unstructured rhyme to describe his view of the local situation:

'For sheep destruction, landlord rule and comfort 'rich and rare', Gweedore is famed through Erin's isle, this note book doth declare, but tenant slaves are crouching here, beneath their tyrant's sway, and grimly curse the hour their moors became the Scotchman's prey. And though the traveller must confess, Lord George Hill has striven well to make his stay right pleasant here at this his own hotel, yet truth will urge the candid man to speak his feelings free and cry against the power he wields against his tenantry. ('Shaun', December 1857).

An opposing point of view lambasted tenants for not being grateful to their reforming landlord:

'I visited the district with a large party, spending the day in a ... sublime scenery and afterward enjoying the comforts provided for travellers in a wild desert by the indefatigable exertions of a true patriot, and [] hoping that his humane exertions to ameliorate the condition of a people sunk in the lowest grade of ignorance and poverty would before this time have raised them to the rank in civilized life which their intellect and natural talents, if fairly directed, could not under a merciful providence have failed to effect. Alas how have benevolent intentions been contradicted... how have the streams of charity been poisoned, how has their last friend, who has spent his all to benefit this unhappy tenantry been held up in execration; and for the assassins' victim may God protect him. May he not be discouraged from continuing to go on in his good work, hoping even beyond hope that this misled people may at last be brought to open their eyes to see who are their true benefactors' (John ...Barnhill, 15 May 1858).

One anonymous poet offered a more cheerful account of his experiences in the west of Donegal:

*'Should you wish to find a hotel
Far from turmoil, noise and bustle,
Far from noise and busy turmoil,
In a wild and lonely valley
Seek it near the 'Silver Arrow'!*

*Near Dunlewey's marble mountain
Where the silent River Clady
Rolling onward joins the sea
There the son of noble Downshire!
Has a house for you and me.*

*Would you wish to know more clearly
The locate [sic] of this hotel
Then just mark, and I will tell you
Once t'was known as Cloughaneely
Cloughaneely, Tulloghobegley
In the land of 'The O'Donnell'
Where the sharpened 'Silver arrow'
Heavenward pointing lonely stands.*

*In the land of Kilmacrenan
In the valley of Gweedore
Near the rustling wild Gweebarra
Near the famed Loved Aran more.
There you'll find the cheering welcome
There you'll get Céad millet Fáilte'.*

The County Archives would like to thank Mr Theo McMahon for his kind donation to Donegal County Archives.

Website: <http://www.donegalcoco.ie/archives>
www.facebook.com/donegalcountyarchives

Niamh Brennan, Donegal County Archives

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Professor Kevin B. Nowlan (1921-2013)



Professor Kevin B. Nowlan.
Image courtesy of Dr. Bill Vaughan

Professor Kevin B. Nowlan, who died recently at the age of 91, was a noted historian and tireless conservationist, who served as the second Chairman of the Irish Society for Archives (1981-84). Meetings were then held in Newman House, where Kevin created a warm and welcoming atmosphere, enlivening many a discussion with the twinkling asides for which he was well-known. Naturally gregarious, he combined his real and serious concern for the survival of Ireland's archival heritage with his love for social gatherings and instituted a successful series of summer outings, which brought the ISA to Birr Castle, Tullynally Castle and Clonalis House in successive years – the weather responding to Kevin's sunny nature by being unfailingly fine on each occasion. His knowledge of the historic settings for the family papers shown to the ISA helped to give context and depth to these outings and enhanced our enjoyment. I have a vivid recollection of Kevin at the green baize

door in Tullynally warning us that we were now going through to the secret domain of the staff – which was private to them – turning received concepts of privileged access around to great effect. His own published work was based soundly on original source materials and his championship of Irish archives was informed by his many visits to Germany, where in his youth he had studied at the University of Marburg – later home to a training course in archives. Kevin was also a trained barrister, and brought his forensic skills to bear on the somewhat convoluted constitution of the ISA, refining and streamlining it into a more efficient model. Active right to the end of his life, and always hugely interested in everybody, he will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Mary Clark, Dublin City Archives

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Remembering Seamus de Burca (1912-2002)

Seamus de Burca (Jimmy to his friends) came from a family steeped in theatrical and nationalist tradition. His father P.J. Bourke had a long association with the Queen's Theatre and was also a noted playwright, while his mother Margaret was sister to Peadar Kearney, author of Ireland's national anthem, A Soldier's Song. Brendan Behan was Jimmy's first cousin, while Jimmy's beautiful niece Grainne was married to the sportsman and television personality Eamonn Andrews. Moving to the next generation, Jimmy was also related to the late Gerry Ryan.

Most of all, Jimmy was a Dubliner. He grew up on the northside, firstly in Dominick Street and then in Nelson Street, near Berkeley Road Church. One of his earliest memories was of Easter Week 1916, when his elder brother Lorcan, 10 years old, appeared in the kitchen in his Fianna Eireann uniform, startling his mother, who then gathered the family to say the Rosary. Jimmy developed his love of theatre at St. Peter's school and went to the Queen's Theatre every chance he got. As an adult, he was a prolific playwright, his works included historical drama, comedy, pageantry and musicals. His *Memoir of Brendan Behan* was a great success, running to several editions and selling particularly well in the United States. Jimmy was also a theatre historian, and his great book on the history of the Queen's Theatre was most beautifully produced and illustrated, presented in a fine binding with slip-cover, all workmanship executed in Ireland. His livelihood and family business was Bourke's Theatrical Costumiers in Dame Street, known to generations of Dubliners, as it provided outfits for professional and amateur productions, as well as fancy dress if required. Jimmy was also a most active member of the Old Dublin Society, serving on its council for many years, and delivering many papers to its meetings, several of which were published in its journal, *Dublin Historical Record*. In retirement, he generously donated his

theatrical collections to a range of institutions, including Trinity College Dublin, the National Archives and Dublin City Library & Archive. He lived to celebrate his 80th birthday with a party in the Mansion House and his 90th with an At Home in the family residence in Drimnagh.

It is strange to think that if Seamus de Burca were still with us today, he would be a centenarian. In his outlook on life and his endless enthusiasm, he would be 100 years young. May his memory remain forever green.

Mary Clark, Dublin City Archives

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**Henry Ottiwell and the
Wide Streets Commissioners**



**Wide Street Commission Ottiwell Leases,
WSC/Ott/73 Sackville Street, 1811**

The Commissioners for Making Wide and Convenient Streets, more commonly known as the Wide Streets Commission, were the earliest town planning authority in Europe and are widely celebrated as a model civic authority. The Commissioners were responsible for the redevelopment of Dublin in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, transforming the medieval town into the modern city we know today.

The Commissioners bought land to be re-developed and subsequently used building leases to secure funding for the continued purchase of land and the building of streets. These leases ensured that developers would build in accordance with the designs and dimensions set out by the commissioners, resulting in uniform elevations and frontage on the new streets of Dublin.

In 1791 a developer named Henry Ottiwell agreed to take building leases for an extensive parcel of land including properties on Sackville Street, Bachelor's Walk, Lower Abbey Street, Eden Quay, Beresford Place and Store Street. The

scale of this agreement was unprecedented with Ottiwell taking more land from the commissioners than any other individual developer. However it was an agreement which was to cause major difficulties for both parties, in particular leading to the downfall of Ottiwell who was briefly imprisoned and subsequently declared bankrupt in 1802.

Reading through the minutes of the Board of the Wide Streets Commissioners it appears that Ottiwell was something of a cowboy developer. As early as 1794 serious issues emerged with a dispute between Ottiwell and the Commissioners over the legal ownership of certain building materials and by 1795 Ottiwell was in substantial arrears on his rent. In a letter from Ottiwell addressed to the board in April 1794 he speaks of his 'ruin' and pleads that the board will 'consider the very great losses I have already sustained by the injurious treatment I have met with'. (WSC/Mins/12, p178.)

From 1794 to 1797 there are numerous letters of this nature recorded in the minutes with Ottiwell pleading for leniency and more time to fulfil certain agreements with the Commissioners. While he cited law suits taken against him by his tenants, various illnesses and general ruin as the reason for his difficulties, he placed the blame on the board itself. However, the board refused to concede to his requests or to grant him further leases.

By 1798 Ottiwell owed the Commissioners over five thousand pounds and legal proceedings to retrieve this money were taken against him. These appear to have had little or no impact with Ottiwell recorded as owing over ten thousand pounds to the Commissioners in 1802. In 1806 however, arbitration between the two parties over this sum was concluded with Ottiwell discharged from all his arrears and the Commissioners ordered to demise all the land due to him. The result of the arbitration suggests that perhaps there was some truth to Ottiwell's complaints of 'injurious treatment' and the Commissioners may in fact have been responsible for his inability to pay.

Unfortunately for Ottiwell this may not have been a great comfort as it appears to have come too late to save his business. Over the following five years the bankrupt Ottiwell was forced to sell much of his property to pay further arrears to the Commissioners and he died in 1811 or 1812 with his financial situation unresolved.

The records of the Wide Streets Commissioners paint Ottiwell as a rogue. However closer examination reveals that the Wide Streets Commissioners acted illegally themselves. Glossed over in the minutes of the board is the fact that the initial contract between the Commissioners and Ottiwell was the subject of a

parliamentary inquiry. This inquiry resulted in the passing on an Act stating that the Commissioners had exceeded their powers by contracting leases with Ottiwell on properties they had yet to purchase. In effect Ottiwell was guilty of the same actions. He agreed leases with his tenants before he had leased those properties from the Commissioners. Delays by the Commissioners in granting land to Ottiwell resulted in Ottiwell's tenants being unable to take possession of their properties. The tenants refused to pay rent to Ottiwell and therefore he could not pay the Commissioners.

So why did the Commissioners grant land to Ottiwell that they did not own? Part of the initial contract with Ottiwell stated that the first 15 months of each lease would be rent free, to allow time for building works to be completed. The Commissioners abused this clause by granting the leases before Ottiwell could take possession so that the 15 months would be expired by the time he took the land.

In a letter written in 1795 Ottiwell himself stated that 'everything of improvement' in the city was 'at a stand' referring to the works to develop Sackville Street. (WSC/Mins/13, p41). It appears that in the 1790s the Commissioners were beginning to face financial difficulties and using building leases as a short term solution. However their problems only increased following the collapse of the property market after the 1798 Rebellion and the recession which took place following the Act of Union in 1801. In the context of the Commissions own debts, which amounted to £228,000 by March 1802, it is easier to understand why they were so desperate to retrieve the money owed by Ottiwell.

Extensive records relating to the Wide Street Commissioners are held by Dublin City Archives. For further information: www.dublincityarchives.ie
Hanne Sheeran, project archivist
Dublin City Archives

ISA MATTERS

ISA NEWSLETTER

Items for inclusion in the Autumn Newsletter are welcome and must be received by 14 Sept 2013. Please send items to Ellen Murphy, ellen.murphy@dublincity.ie or Dublin City Library and Archive, 138-144 Pearse Street, Dublin 2.

ISA JOURNAL



We hope all members have now received the 2012 edition of *Irish Archives* (volume 19), devoted to defence and security history. Unfortunately due to unforeseen matters beyond our control we were unable to officially launch it

Work has now commenced on this year's edition of *Irish Archives* which will focus on a relatively neglected area, but one that is topical following passage of the Children's Referendum at the end of 2012. Volume 20 will explore records documenting children and childhood experiences with articles examining a wide range of source material such as childhood experience in the 18th century; the records of national schools; the courts; borstals and the collections of both the National Library of Ireland and the National Folklore Archive. The publication date for some will be late autumn 2013. Whilst we have already solicited six definite submissions, we would be glad to hear from anyone working in the field of children's archives who might be interested in submitting an article.

Dr Susan Hood susan.hood@rcbdub.org
Elizabeth McEvoy emcevoy@nationalarchives.ie

ISA LECTURE SERIES 2012/2013

The ISA Lecture Series for 2012/2013 concluded with an excellent lecture by Brian Donnelly, National Archives of Ireland, relating to the history and archives of St. Brendan's Mental Hospital, Grangegorman 1814-2013. Details of the 2013/2014 Lecture Series will be published in the Autumn 2013 ISA Newsletter.

ISA MEMBERSHIP

Membership Subscription renewals have now been sent to all members. Please contact: Ms Antoinette Doran, Hon. Membership Secretary, Irish Society for Archives, c/o Redemptorist Library, Marianella, 75 Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6 or download an application form at: www.ucd.ie/archives/isa/isa-membershipform.html and email to isasubscription@gmail.com

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