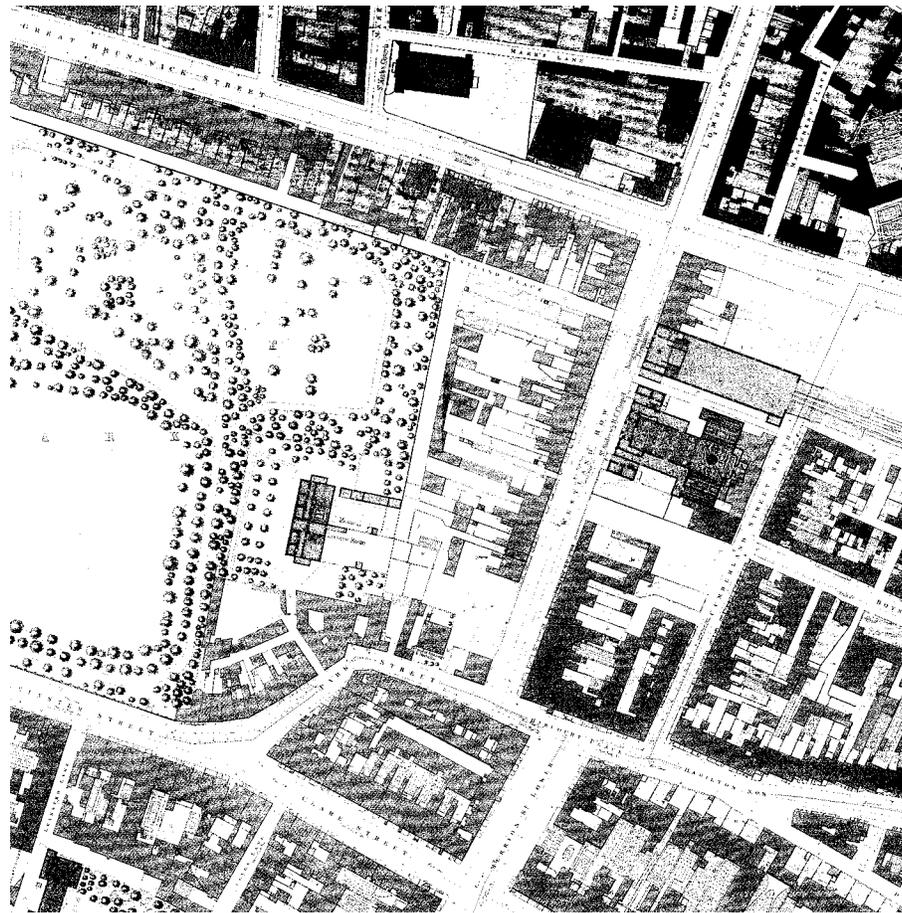


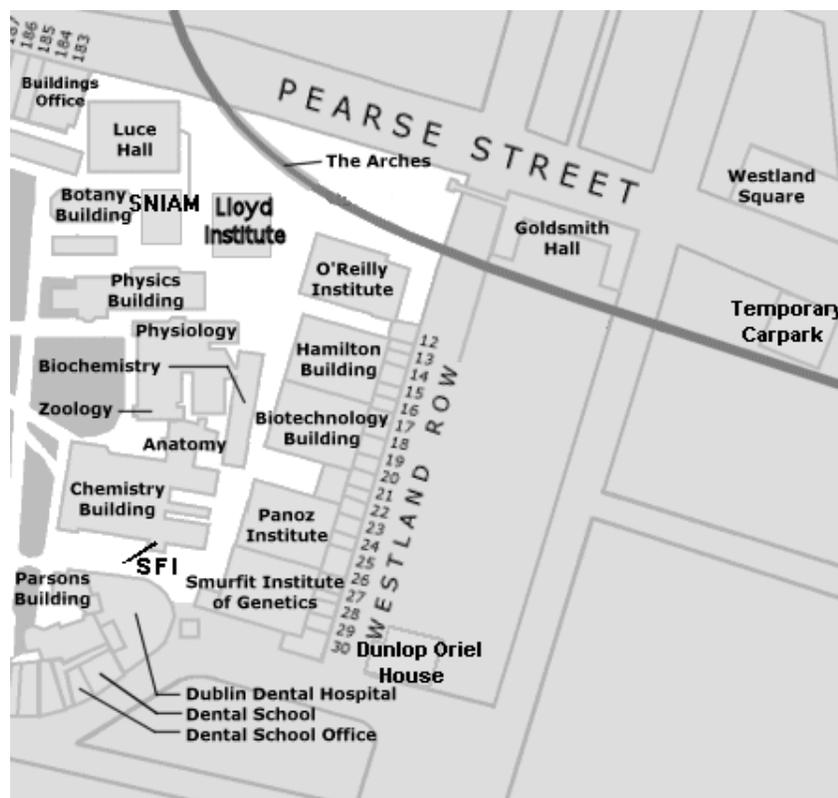
13 Westland Row, Dublin





1847 (above), detail from Ordnance Survey map. This image is taken from 'The 1851 Dublin City Census' CD-ROM and online publication at www.irishorigins.com. It is reproduced with the permission of Eneclann Ltd and Origins.net.

2006 (below). This image is taken from online publication at www.tcd.ie. It is reproduced with the permission of Trinity College Dublin and ERA-Maptec Ltd.



Introduction

Westland Row was laid out as a street in 1773¹; maps of 1780² and 1797³ show the Vice Provost's Garden of Trinity College extending to the very carriageway of Westland Row. The freehold of No 13 Westland Row can be shown to belong to Trinity College from at least 1909⁴; a history of the College suggests ownership by the College at an earlier date⁵. Possibly the property falls within the limits of the original grant of land to the College⁶.

The street was first known as Westland's Row, and was not recorded as Westland Row until 1792⁷. Building is thought to have started at the southern end, at Westland Row's junction with Lincoln Place (earlier Park Street, earlier Patricks Well Lane). Research into earlier years is complicated by a re-numbering of Westland Row in 1841, probably reflecting substantial reconstruction. This re-numbering appears to have remained unaltered in subsequent years: the western side of the street is numbered consecutively, odd and even, from 1 to 32, starting from the northern end (Pearse Street, earlier Great Brunswick Street, earlier Moll's Lane, before drastic widening and extension by the Wide Streets Commission).

No 13 is recorded as Vacant in 1842, which is often an indication that a building is under construction or reconstruction. So 1842 proves to be a convenient time at which to start a history of the occupancy of the building.

The 1847 Ordnance Survey map of this area of Dublin shows that the plot of No 13 was much bigger than appears on the ground today. Recent developments have shorn off the rear of the plot, so that only some 12 metres can now be distinguished; the 1847 map shows that the plot was about 60 metres deep, with a wide rear access running outside a perimeter wall enclosing what remained in the 1840s of the college park. In 2006, part of the eastern section of that perimeter wall could still be distinguished within the College, its alignment preserved by some portacabins north of the Biochemistry building.

¹ Casey, Christine, *The Buildings of Ireland – Dublin*, New Haven & London, 2005.

² Pool and Cash, in Lady Gilberd ed, *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin, Vol XIII*, Dublin, 1907.

³ William Faden, in *Malton's Dublin 1799*, Dublin, 1978, containing a reduced facsimile edition of Malton, James *A Picturesque and Descriptive View of the City of Dublin*, Dublin, 1799; on this map the street is erroneously named Westmoreland Row.

⁴ Cancelled books at the Valuation Office indicate that the earliest occupiers discussed in this article leased their premises from John Cameron (until 1877), James Ireland (1878-1885) and John Ireland (1886-1909). Probably these three were in turn leasing from the College.

⁵ Luce, JV, *Trinity College Dublin – The First 400 Years*, Dublin, 1992 p 87: "In 1841 the city terminus of Dublin's first railway line lay just outside the eastern boundary of the College ..." – the railway station (later named Pearse Station) lies on the eastern side of Westland Row. As this quotation shows, this station was originally the terminus of the Dublin & Kingstown Railway; the link line to the Great Northern station at Amiens Street (later named Connolly Station) was not opened until 1891.

⁶ The Priory of All Hallows was dissolved at the Reformation, and its assets seized by the Crown; the land was then given to the City of Dublin in 1538. The area was let as orchards and pasture for a couple of generations before the City formally granted it to the newly-founded College in 1592, see Murphy, Harold Lawson, *A History of Trinity College Dublin from its Foundation to 1702*, Dublin, 1951 pp 14-15.

⁷ *Wilson's Dublin Directory* for the years 1775 to 1792, published and bound together with *The Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*.

1842-1864: musical variations

After recording the property as Vacant in 1842 and 1843, street directories⁸ show the occupant⁹ from 1844 to 1847 to be William S Conran, Professor¹⁰ of Music. From other directories it appears that his full name was William Sarsfield Conran, and that he was something of a wandering minstrel – before moving to 13 Westland Row he had been at many different addresses¹¹; perhaps he would stay at or near the home of his current principal pupil. In 1850 after leaving Westland Row he is shown as an occupant of 110 Lower Baggot Street.

In 1848 the property is again recorded as Vacant; and in 1849 the only occupier recorded is William White, solicitor.

In 1850 the property enters a mainstream of Dublin history, when it is occupied by “Gunn, Michael, pianoforte tuner”, and his wife “Gunn, Ellen, Parisian corset maker”. They too had moved around Dublin: for three years before moving to Westland Row they had been at 16 Clare Street, before that at 72 Fleet Street (re-numbered 52 in 1845). This Michael Gunn is remembered mainly for his dramatic death: along with five other passengers, he was knocked unconscious and drowned when a horse-drawn omnibus reversed into a lock of the Grand Canal at Portobello Bridge, on the night of Saturday 6 April 1861¹².

His sons John and Michael were born at Fleet Street, and are also well remembered, for happier reasons: they opened the Gaiety Theatre on the night of 27 November 1871, having overseen its building in a mere 6 months. In 1876 Michael Gunn married Bessie Sudlow (real name Barbara Elizabeth Johnstone), who had recently performed a short season as a soprano with Richard D’Oyly Carte’s Opera Bouffe¹³. The Gunn family continued to be involved with the Gaiety Theatre until 1909.

The Gunns had severed their connection with Westland Row some time earlier; 1864 is the last year in which Thom records them as occupiers of No 13: “Gunn, M. & Sons, pianoforte and harmonium importers, music publishers and sellers, 16 Lombard street & 63 Upper Georges street, Kingstown; Gunn, M.R., professor of singing; Gunn, James, pianoforte tuner; Gunn, John E., prof of violincello [sic], res: 13 Haddington road”.

⁸ For years up to 1845 the main street-directory source for occupants of 13 Westland Row is the directories of Pettigrew & Oulton; for subsequent years those of Thom.

⁹ Street directories record only the main occupant(s) of any building, and there may at any stage have been any number of other occupants: lodgers, boarders, servants, etc. Sometimes such occupants can be found in directories sorted alphabetically and/or by trade – but it would be altogether too onerous a task to search all names in all directories to see whether anyone appears to be occupying a given address.

¹⁰ The term Professor did not at that time necessarily imply the holder of a University post.

¹¹ 24 Richmond Hill (Rathmines), Arbutus Lodge (Boosterstown), 17 Granby Row, 9 Grafton Street and 50 Sackville Street Lower.

¹² In its edition of Monday 8 April 1861 the *Freemans Journal* mistakenly reports the death of John Aspa in the accident, confusing another professional musician with our Professor; on the next day, Tuesday 9 April 1861, the paper correctly (and without apology) reports Michael Gunn’s name in its account of the inquest.

¹³ <http://math.boisestate.edu/GaS/whowaswho/S/SudlowBessie.htm>, accessed 25 Oct 2006.

1865-1908: religious tracts

In 1865 the new occupants are: “Sole, Mrs., millinery and dress showrooms” and her husband “Sole, Charles, flour merchant”; he appears to have been a miller as well, as for a number of years he occupies Ravensdale Mills, 40 Wellington Quay¹⁴.

In 1871 Mrs Sole is no longer recorded, and a new occupier is added: “Weston, T, tract depot”. This must have been a fairly successful business, as it continues for over 35 years, until 1908; its name becomes more impressive in 1892: “Harden Olympia Bible and Tract Depôt”. In 1883 the owner or manager of the tract depot changes to E J Armstrong, probably the same as Edmund Armstrong (1884-1890); his residence moves steadily southwards: 125 Tritonville Road, Sandymount (1884); 2 Montpelier Place, Blackrock (1886-1889); and finally 1 Brighton Terrace, Bray (1890). Other managers are named in later years: Robert Pye (1899), and Charlotte Dawes (1900-1908).

From 1878 to 1882 “George Synge, land agent” is recorded at this address, probably a half-uncle of John Synge, the playwright¹⁵. And various other names appear even more briefly:

Clifford, Herbert, surgeon dentist; Egar, William, dentist;
Eskell, A, surgeon dentist; Hogan, John, master plasterer;
Macnamara, Richard, solicitor res: 1 Eden Park, Kingstown;
Molloy, Thomas John, dentist;
Quill, Albert W, barrister res: Gresham Terrace, Kingstown.

Charles Sole died in 1885, and his family is replaced in No 13 by the Colman family: Benjamin in 1886 and 1887, who for 25 years had been a confectioner at 15 D’Olier Street; then Miss E Colman from 1888 to 1891, probably the same as Miss Elizabeth Charlotte from 1892 to 1908. In the 1901 Census Miss Colman describes herself as a keeper of “set lodgings”: the 1901 Census lists eight other occupants (4 lodgers, 3 boarders, 1 servant), none of whom appear in the street directory.

Westland Row must have been especially busy during much of this period, as a number of horse-drawn tram routes passed along it. When the Sandymount (via Ballsbridge) route was electrified in 1901, it was diverted away from Westland Row to an easier route round the front of Trinity College and along Nassau Street. Trams did however continue to run along Westland Row after electrification, on the interconnecting route from Kingsbridge Station (Heuston Station) via the south quays and D’Olier Street to Westland Row (Pearse Station); then via Merrion Street, Hume Street and Earlsfort Terrace to Hatch Street, near Harcourt Street Station¹⁶.

¹⁴ Research on this family has been carried out by a descendant, Patrick Lynch, see: www.sole.org.uk/solekent (accessed 25 Oct 2006) and other pages on the same site.

¹⁵ John Synge’s older brother Edward also became a land agent, and in 1890 John’s mother wrote to Edward: “... offer him a place in your office and a prospect of living as a gentleman.” (Carpenter, Andrew, ed. *My Uncle John – Edward Stephens’s Life of J. M. Synge*, London, 1974 p 55). We may be thankful that the offer was not taken up.

¹⁶ J Quaney, *A Penny to Nelson’s Pillar*, Waterford, 1971.



1909-1963: grand designs

It seems that No 13 must have been substantially altered in 1909-1910: in 1909 the building is recorded as Vacant, and in 1910 the Valuation Office make the following note: “Alters not completed. Noted for 1911” – in other words, their surveyors are to return in 1911 to revalue the property. But the valuers seem to get it wrong: they revalue the property from £52 to £100; at first appeal the valuation is reduced to £80; and at Quarter Sessions the valuation is further reduced to £75¹⁷.

Perhaps this is when the building gained its top floor, making it stick out as it does from its neighbours on either side. This would seem to account for both the dramatic increase first attempted by the valuers, and the more reasonable pro-rata increase eventually agreed.

Other changes were afoot at this period: 1910 is the first year in which the street-directory gives an Irish version of the streetname: Sreath na n'Iartharach, which differs in form but not meaning from the 2006 official Irish name: Rae an Iarthair; both versions are a literal translation of the streetname, and mean “strip of western land”. Possibly the translation is inappropriate, as Westland appears to have been the personal name of a property owner¹⁸. A more correct Irish name would therefore seem to be Rae Westland.

All the recorded occupiers from 1910 to 1931 go by the name of Nairn: the firm John C Nairn & Son, picture restorers, is recorded throughout this period. Others are Miss Nairn, Miss Sara M Nairn (definitely a different person – the Valuation Office shows “Cecilia & Sarah Nairn”¹⁹), and Wm J C Nairn, who is recorded as an artist from 1925 to 1931. Possibly the Nairns did not live on the premises; certainly the 1911 Census records the property as vacant.

In 1932 the occupier is briefly C S Reddy, auctioneer and estate agent, perhaps a temporary overspill from No 14, Charles J Reddy, solicitor. Then from 1933 to 1963 the building takes a step up from being a lodging house, becoming the Grand Hotel; during these years the valuation steadily increases, so presumably various extensions and improvements are built.

It must have been a fairly ideal site for a hotel, so close to a main railway station. Other houses along this side of the street were also hotels during this period: the long-established Grosvenor Hotel²⁰; the Cumberland Hotel²¹; and the short-lived Railway Hotel²².

¹⁷ Valuation Office, Dublin: Cancelled Book for Trinity Ward, 1901-1915.

¹⁸ Bennett, Douglas, *The Encyclopaedia of Dublin*, Dublin, 2005; and McCready, Rev CT, *Dublin Street Names Dated and Explained*, Dublin, 1892 (reprinted 1987).

¹⁹ Valuation Office, Dublin: Cancelled Book for Trinity Ward, 1901-1915.

²⁰ 5 Westland Row, 1879-1974; succeeding the Royal Hotel, 5 Westland Row, 1835-1878, which started its existence as the Royal Railroad Hotel.

²¹ 17 Westland Row, 1941-1967; with an annex in 15 Westland Row in its later years.

²² 29 Westland Row, 1933-1945.

1965-2006: back to College

In the mid 1960s Trinity College must have decided to take control of the building, with an eye to future development. No 13 is recorded as Vacant from 1965 to 1967; and is then occupied (presumably only one or two days each week) as the Catholic Boy Scouts Hall, 89th Dublin Troop, from 1969 to 1982. After another couple of years vacant the street-directories record the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland (St Joseph's Handicapped Troop) as occupants from 1985 to 1988.

By this time there would have been great construction works in the area: as indicated above in the Introduction, the backs of all the houses were demolished, and replaced by a long modern building (which can be seen at its most impressive after dark from Lincoln Place, see the illustration on page 9, below); at the northern end of this development appeared the O'Reilly Institute, a strange architectural contradiction, offering a welcoming street-facing front door which is never used. The same fate has befallen many of the formerly well-used front doors (including No 13) along the western side of the street: they remain tightly shut, and are only available for emergency exit.

By awkward insertions of narrow corridors and steep staircases the remaining street-fronts have been tied to each other and to the new development. Internally there seems to have been no serious attempt to allow each of the former houses to speak for itself. Perhaps it would have been more honest to demolish and reconstruct the inside of the houses completely, leaving only the facades and roofs to pay public lip-service to the tastes of past ages. After various reconstructions over the years, No 13 is in fact no architectural gem: the frontage is not symmetrical or evenly balanced (see the illustration on the first page, above); and the extra storey and lack of glazing-bars make it ungainly beside its immediate neighbours (see the wider illustration on page 6, above).

Except for Kennedys at the corner of Lincoln Place, all the houses along the western side of Westland Row are now occupied by Trinity College. Nearly all movement in to and out of the houses is hidden from the public eye, for perfectly good reasons of security and operational efficiency. This does not match the style of building along Westland Row, which was associated with individual families and businesses coming and going from their separate front doors, a constant and varied interaction with the streetscene.

This account has tried to draw together some records highlighting the past individuality of just one house; perhaps it will help to bring back to life the vanished variety of this western side of Westland Row.



Acknowledgements

The staff of the Dublin City Library and Archive deserve special thanks for their patience and assistance: their resources and resourcefulness ensure that even a non-Dub can begin to get an insight into the intricate history of the city. Thanks also to the archivists of Trinity College Library, Manuscripts Department, whose archive will undoubtedly reveal further details of the College's involvement in this property; and to the staff of the Valuation Office, whose records helped to suggest phases in the development of the property.

Sources

As can be seen from the text, the main sources have been street directories for Dublin, identified in footnotes. In addition, there can be few books on the history of Dublin whose indexes and/or contents have not been scoured for references to Westland Row. Published sources for specific items of information have been cited in footnotes and adjacent to illustrations.