



Carrickmacross Work House

Building Restoration and Site Regeneration



"On the stem of memory imaginations blossom"
 - Patrick Kavanagh



The Workhouse History

In the early 1840's, the population of Ireland was almost 9 million - 3 million of whom were destitute, primarily due to evictions by landlords. Carrickmacross Workhouse was one of 130 Workhouses built throughout Ireland between 1841 and 1843 to house the poor, hence the Irish name of Teach na mBocht - The Poorhouse.

The poor had to apply for admission to the Workhouse, and successful applicants had to surrender any land before entering as 'inmates'. Once admitted, they were subjected to a strict regime: families were segregated and forbidden from seeing each other without permission; their diet was meagre and unvarying; difficult, and often pointless, work had to be undertaken; there was little heat and no comfort. These deliberately harsh conditions meant that Workhouses quickly became known as the Poor Man's Jail, and the poor only applied for admission as their last resort.

In 1520, Catholics, both Irish and Anglo-Norman, owned 100% of the land. However, after 3 centuries of plantations, confiscations, evictions, Penal Laws and colonialism, approximately 90% of the land belonged to British Protestant landlords, with the Catholics as their tenants. As tenants, they produced massive quantities of agricultural produce and livestock, which they had to sell to pay their rent, or face eviction. This left the majority of the native population solely dependent on potatoes for food, as they were cheap to purchase; could be grown in small plots of poor soil; and were high in nutrition.

Then, for 4 consecutive years, 1845 to 1848, blight destroyed the potato harvest across Europe. The British Government sent approximately 20,000 additional troops to Ireland to ensure people did not eat the thousands of tonnes of other crops, vegetables and animals being exported by landlords for profit.

This resulted in The Great Hunger, An Gorta Mór, and the poor begged for admission to the Workhouses. Carrickmacross Workhouse was built to house 500, however by 1851, nearly 2,000 men, women and children were crammed into the building.

Due to the large numbers of children in Workhouses, many who were orphaned by The Great Hunger, the English Government's Secretary of State for the Colonies, Earl Grey, devised the Pauper's Emigration Scheme.

Under this scheme, between 1848 and 1850, 4,112 girls between the ages of 14 and 18 were emigrated from Irish Workhouses to Australia as wives and servants of the settlers and convicts there. We have discovered the names 19 of the 38 girls sent to Australia from Carrickmacross Workhouse - more information is available at www.irishfaminememorial.org

Death and emigration, whether voluntary or forced, gradually reduced numbers in the Workhouses until only the destitute, sick and elderly remained. At their first meeting on 21st January 1919, the newly formed Dáil Éireann 'abolished the odious, degrading and foreign Workhouse System'.

An Gorta Mór, The Great Hunger, proved a watershed in Irish history, permanently changing our island's demographic, political and cultural landscape. Within 20 years, 1841 to 1861, we lost half our population, with an estimated 1½ million people dead from starvation and disease, and a further 3 million emigrated, primarily to America, Australia, Canada and England. In 2008, an estimated 80 million people worldwide claimed Irish descent, and Ireland's bond with her diaspora has been acknowledged since our second Constitution in 1937. Article 2 of Bunreacht na hÉireann states that, 'the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.'

Over the last twenty years the front building of the Workhouse complex, which originally contained the children's orphanage and administration block has been lovingly restored.

The renovation and redevelopment of this building has been the result of many years of planning, fundraising and hard work carried out by the committee and many interested people from the area. Great care was taken in ensuring the restoration was sympathetic to the original architectural features, whilst making it a practical modern working environment with fully fitted community offices and meeting/training rooms.

The restored building now houses the History & Heritage department, a Crèche and Irish Language Pre-School (Naionra), The Citizens Information Office, a multi-media education suite and many offices and meeting rooms which are used on a daily basis.

It is our intention to carry out restoration works of a similarly high standard on the rear building which was originally the infirmary and idiot ward. This building is currently in a rapidly dilapidating state of disrepair. It's rescue and regeneration are foremost in our plans.



(ABOVE) THE REAR BUILDING'S WORRYING STATE OF DERELICTION

Restoration of this building and development of an adjoining new build theatre facility will form the central focus of an entire site refurbishment.

Landscaped gardens, a famine memorial, a future energies farm, sculpture park and band stand will form the core of the outdoor amenities. Practical facilities such as secure parking for motorists and cyclists, as well as ample lorry loading bays will complete our vision for the site's evolution.





Patronage Programme

As part of our Patronage Programme, we are seeking the generous support of philanthropic individuals at home and overseas who may wish to assist us monetarily in the realization of this exciting project.

This project presents a unique opportunity of fulfilment for businesses and individuals alike. Those who contribute will bequeath a remarkable lasting legacy that will be enjoyed by Ireland and her visitors for many generations to come. This once off formidable generosity will be a grand gesture to be proud of, especially for those with strong genealogical links to Ireland and the North East area of the island.

Patrons and benefactors can remain completely anonymous if they so wish, however in cases of prodigious generosity, we would like to when permitted, pay homage to our contributors by naming sections of the completed project in recognition of their fiscal support, eg. The John McKenna Garden, The Mary McMahon School of Music, The James Marron Gallery, etc.

In addition to the naming credits, we would like to offer benefactors the unique privileges outlined below. Our Patronage Programme has three distinct non-executive donation categories

- **The Kavanagh Club** (Gold Circle Contributors)
- **The Patrick Byrne Benefactors** (Silver Circle Contributors)
- **Farney Philanthropy** (Bronze Circle Contributors)



The Kavanagh Club is exclusively reserved for individuals who donate 10% or more of our total project cost (ie. donations in excess of 1 million euros). These Gold Circle Contributors can avail of our full range of non-executive privileges, ie. Reserved named parking, reserved theatre seating and Major naming honours (eg. Entrance Hall, Galleries and Gardens)

Our Silver Circle Contributors form **The Patrick Byrne Benefactors**, an exclusive society of individuals who have bestowed funds from €100000 up to but not including 1 million euros. The Patrick Byrne Benefactors are offered reserved parking and theatre seating, along with notable naming opportunities (eg. Staircases, Studios, Rooms & Suites)



Farney Philanthropy is our bronze circle club and is reserved for Individuals who wish to donate one off amounts from €10,000 up to but not including €100,000. These generous individuals will be afforded reserved parking and priority booking for all events, as well as naming rights of first year programs and initiatives eg. John Murphy Piano School, Sarah Reilly Guitar School, etc

Recognition of all Major Benefactors

All contributors who donate in excess of €1000 will have their name inscribed on the Workhouse Theatre Benefactors Plaque which will be displayed publically in the finished building. We will of course respect the privacy of any benefactors who wish to remain anonymous.

Patrons who wish to deflect their recognition are welcomed in naming their allocated building designations in honour of loved ones past or present.

Non-Fiscal Donations

In lieu of monetary donations, The Workhouse Theatre Project will gladly accept contributions in kind, such as building products and services, or suitable fit out equipment like sound and lighting rigs. These donations will be subject to suitability analysis per the design specification.

In Closing

In the restored front building of the Workhouse, The chimes of laughter and learning can be heard from the crèche on any given morning. It's a heartwarming sound that recalls echoes of a less privileged generation of children for whom these buildings were far from a place of contentment.

It's a wonderfully poetic juxtaposition that highlights how the Workhouse is evolving into its own victorious opposite. For those of us who inhabit the Workhouse on a daily basis it is a constant reminder that we must acknowledge our past and fashion a future from it.

In a project that represents reclamation as much as it does restoration or regeneration, it seems apt we should leave the last word with Monaghan poet Patrick Kavanagh. Born not a dozen miles from here, perhaps he embodied the spirit of our project most eloquently when he wrote:

"On the stem of memory imaginations blossom"