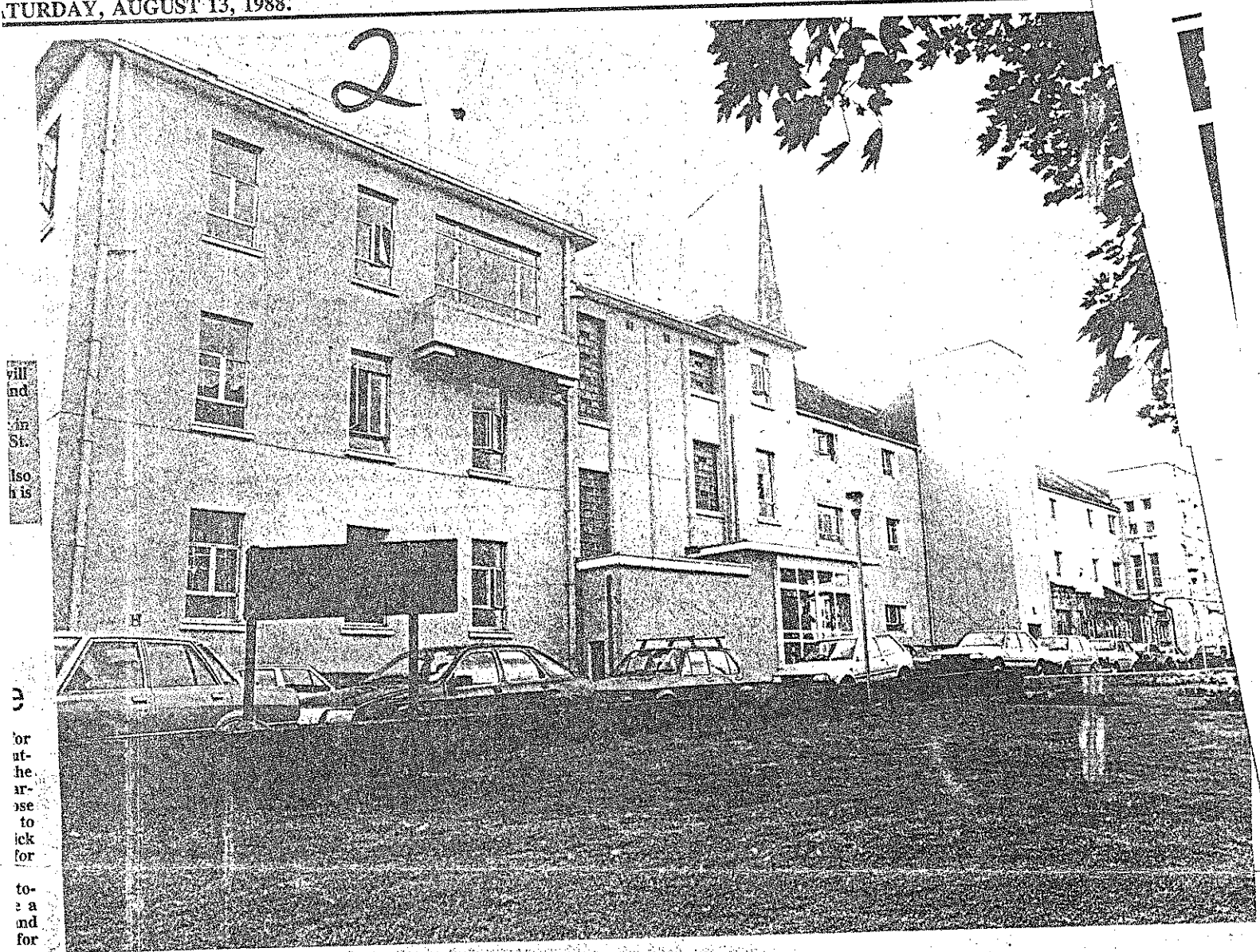


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TURDAY, AUGUST 13, 1988.



## ERA OF SPECIALISATION COMES TO ST. JOHN'S

BY 1950 a new extension was added to the hospital increasing the bed complement to 100. This included new operating theatres, pathological and bio-chemical laboratory and administrative area. The Limerick Blood Transfusion Service now moved to the old block near the gate and had its own medical director and staff. The era of specialisation had begun. The hospital had a full range of specialists and it must be recorded that they gave their services to patients at Out-Patients' Clinics long before the Department of Health recognised them. Many newborn babies were saved by exchange blood transfusions. A central sterile supply unit was set up.

From 1925 to 1938 St. John's was affiliated to the Mercy Hospital in Cork and students spent some time there. By 1939 St. John's was in a position to satisfy the Irish Nursing Board of that time. Mother Berchmans was matron during this period. In 1947 Sister Mildred O'Sullivan received the Sister Tutors Diploma at

London University. She took over the training school and was principal tutor until her retirement over a year ago. Some Sisters specialised in other areas: theatre, physiotherapy, radiography, laboratory, administration, etc.

The rapidly expanding health services in Ireland put a severe strain on Local and Central Government Finances. Where formerly the Voluntary Hospitals' finances were supplemented by the Hospital Sweepstake Funds, gradually the Department of Health took control and allocated funds to meet the hospital deficit from central funds. The hospital needed funds badly for new diagnostic equipment. A group of people, including some staff, set up a fund raising committee which included the existing volunteers, and became known as The Friends of St. John's. Their sustained efforts over the years generated finance for new equipment for existing departments and enabled new units to get started.

In the early 1980's the long sought permission and finance was allocated by the D. of H. to modernise the kitchen and catering area. To comply with D. of H. regulations and Fire Prevention Regulations, the Management Committee set about the task of having a feasibility study carried out exploring the possibilities and alternatives necessary to modernise the whole building. After long negotiations with frequent changing of health ministers, the D. of H. finally approved the plans. The work was to be completed in three stages. The third one, a new building to accommodate outpatients, extension to X-Ray department and clinics was postponed. The Department of Health at that time sanctioned the remainder and allocated the finance.

Part of the old convent was converted into a new 20 bed ward unit with ancillary services but the D. of H. refused finance for equipment and staffing. It now accommodates the gastro-enterology unit and cardiac assessment unit.

## A school for the training of nurses begins

In 1897 the Board of Governors decided to accept probationer nurses, the first three were: Mabel Wray from England, Dora Frost from Limerick and Lily Green from Co. Clare. The photographs are in the hospital records. Lay nurses continued to be trained at St. John's until 1934. From that time onwards a large number of Little Company of Mary Sisters were trained and many of these went to South Africa and Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) to new foundations there. The training school was again re-opened to lay students in 1968.

A Building Fund was set up in 1896 when a bazaar called 'Thomond' was organised. Again in 1903 a second one called 'The Colleen Bawn' was very successful. A copy of the programme still exists. A hand painted poster now hangs in the admission area of the hospital. Bishop O'Dwyer laid the foundation stone for a convent for the Sisters in 1904. This building faces the Cathedral. Extensions were added for the School of Nursing. In the 1960's when Department of Health finances were slow to be sanctioned the Sisters advanced some of their own finances in order to provide a further extension which included a large lecture hall.