

Planning and Property Development Department
Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation Section

To the Chairperson and Members of the
South East Area Committee

Addition of 9-12 Dawson Street & Dawson Lane, Dublin 2 to the Record of Protected Structures in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

Address	Description
9-12 Dawson Street & Dawson Lane, Dublin 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building A, onto Dawson Lane: Building Envelope and Main Office Spaces• Building B, 10-12 Dawson Street: Elevations to Dawson Street & Dawson Lane and Main Staircase• Building C, 9 Dawson Street: Front Elevation only

Photo of Structure:



Introduction:

It is proposed to initiate procedures under Section 55 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) to add 9-12 Dawson Street & Dawson Lane, Dublin 2 to Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures.

Request for Addition:

The request to assess the site came from the following:

- Niall Mc Cullough, McCullough Mulvin Architects, 16 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2
- Alexander Kearney, DoCoMoMo Ireland, 8 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.
- Councillor Ciaran Cuffe, Green Party, North Inner City Ward, Green Party Offices, 16/17 Suffolk Street, Dublin 2.
- Dr Barry O'Reilly National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht
- Dublin City Council Conservation Section

Summary of Applicants Reasons for Seeking Addition:

- *Niall Mc Cullough, McCullough Mulvin Architects, 16 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2:* The three conjoined structures at the corner of Dawson Street and Dawson Lane, Dublin 2 form the core office space of the New Ireland Assurance Company. The company has been in this location for nearly 100 years. The three buildings form a unique part of the evolution of Irish modern architecture from the 1920's to the 1970's. Each of the three has individual architectural merit; each represents a valuable expression of the architecture of its era, the combination of the three of them on the one site is unique. The plan of the complex is unique as it demonstrates the evolutionary re-use of a terrace of significant Dublin Georgian buildings; the contemporary site plan is based on the plan form of the original Georgian terrace plots with houses and gardens.
- *Alexander Kearney, DoCoMoMo Ireland, 8 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.* In sum, all three structures should be considered as a collective statement in the evolution of Irish Modernism. Taken as a whole, and individually, they are irreplaceable. Their most recent neighbour (One Molesworth Street) uses a bronze metal trim throughout its ground floor on homage to the New Ireland Assurance and INI buildings. No's 9-12 have clearly embedded themselves in the architectural history of Dawson Street.
- *Councillor Ciaran Cuffe, Green Party, North Inner City Ward, Green Party, 16/17 Suffolk Street, Dublin 2.* It is a seminal mid-twentieth century building....it would be a shame if ironic buildings such as this were to be demolished as it is an excellent example of high quality modern architecture that deserves protection.
- *Conservation Office, Dublin City Council* due to the potential significance of the buildings.

Site Location & Zoning Map:

9-12 Dawson St & Dawson Lane, Dublin 2 forms the corner of Dawson Street and Dawson Lane as a complex of three interconnected twentieth century office buildings.



2016-2022 Development Plan Zoning Map:

- Z5: To consolidate and facilitate the development of the central area and to identify, reinforce, strengthen and protect its civic design quality and dignity.
- The Dawson Street façade is located within the South City Retail Quarter Architectural Conservation Area adopted 05/03/07.
- The front half of the buildings are located in the Zone of Archaeological Interest.
- Dawson Street is located in a Conservation Area.

Recent Planning History:

Ref No.	Description	Decision
3172/04	for the formation of a new ground floor exit onto Dawson Lane	GRANT PERMISSION 21-Jul-2004

Summary Description



Building key and summary description taken from Niall McCullough, McCullough Mulvin Architects application for assessment of the buildings for addition to the RPS

Exterior

Building A (on Dawson Lane, to the rear of 10-12 Dawson Street)

The first building (A) was constructed between 1929-30 by New Ireland. It was one of the very first modern buildings constructed in the city, the architect being Vincent Kelly who had studied in UCD under Professor William A Scott. The elevation combines a beautifully crafted granite base incorporating a central doorway and an uncompromising modernist elevation; the windows have been changed from the original steel units but the elevation is otherwise remarkably intact and is a key Modernist reference project in the city and country; (Paul Larmour *Free State Architecture* (2009)).

Building B (10-12 Dawson Street)

The second building (B) was constructed in 1964 facing Dawson Street by O'Brien Morris and McCullough Architects in front of building A. This building's "*Modernism tempered by a classical sensibility*", in the words of Christine Casey, Professor of History of Art at Trinity College Dublin, in her seminal book *Buildings of Ireland: Dublin*. It is also possibly unique in the world as being the only surviving 20th century building combining modernism with Gaelic revival epigraphy and Celtic design, an exact expression of the intent of the company and the State. It contains beautiful materials and a well-composed façade.

Building C (9 Dawson Street)

The third building (C) built in 1971 to the design of Campbell Conroy Hickey, it is a very fine and beautifully proportioned glazed façade with Corbusian overtones incorporating stone bands and tinted glazing over a recessed ground floor. Very few 1970's buildings of merit remain in the city. Most of the office structures built in the city during that period are masonry buildings finished in brickwork or precast concrete using a repetitive egg-box elevational pattern, building (C) is quite different in character.

Interiors:

Limited access to the interior of the buildings and rear facades was permitted by the new owner. Photography was not permitted in the office spaces as these were fully occupied by New Ireland Assurance at the time of inspection.

Building A (on Dawson Lane, to the rear of 10-12 Dawson Street)

The original historic floor plan of Building A is still largely intact and unaltered although in the office spaces at the upper floors, some original glazed internal screens have been lost and replaced with solid partition walls. (See Fig. 1).

Further investigation is required to confirm if the doors throughout this building are original to the 1930's or if they are later additions, when the three buildings were amalgamated as one.

There are attractive features evident throughout this building such as the original stair handrails, extending the length of the building; door push plates that have push / pull written in both English and Irish and a quirky internal post system evident at each level – the letterboxes are incorporated inside the glass block walls in the link element between Building A and Building B. An external chute takes the letters to another floor. The original chute no longer remains.

The original window openings and the arrangement of windows along all external facades are still intact. While the original steel windows have been lost (one original steel window is evident at the rear of the building) and all windows have now been replaced with later aluminium frames, historic photographs provide evidence of the original fenestration and style of steel window. As it is most likely that the architect of Building A originally specified Irish suppliers and manufacturers, exact replicas of the steel windows will be possible.



Figure 1, Interior of Building A, circa 1933. Note the steel window on the RHS and internal glazed screen to the LHS.

Building B (10-12 Dawson Street)

The external façade has been discussed in detail previously and is by far the most important architectural feature of this building and should be retained in its entirety and afforded Protected Status. The internal decorative fixtures and fittings have largely been lost with some exceptions that are highlighted below.

What was originally the grand entrance to Building B has now been converted to open plan office space. The main entrance has been closed off to accommodate desk space. The original and highly decorative ground floor entrance area has been fully lost, but there may be opportunity to investigate if remnants of the original plan form are evident above the existing suspended ceilings or below the raised access floor. It would be important to ensure that any future development on the ground floor of Building B, respects the original design intention, where the entrance was located along the centreline of the building and the interior walls and features were designed symmetrically along this axis.

Good floor to ceilings heights exist throughout this building.

All original windows along the front elevation are fully intact. Any upgrades to the original windows should respect the original window frames.

Building B contains its original white terrazzo feature staircase with original stained glass windows intact at each level from top floor to basement. The stained glass window provides an interesting antidote to an otherwise bland façade at the rear of Building B.

It is recommended that this staircase and its stained glass windows are retained. These were commissioned and designed specifically for No. 10-12 Dawson Street and one particular stained glass element dates to 1918 when New Ireland Assurance first came into being. It was commissioned for the previous building at 10-12 Dawson Street. An inscription reads that the stained glass window specifically belongs to the building at 10-12 Dawson Street.

Building C (9 Dawson Street)

The external façade is the most important architectural feature of this building. Internally, Building C is somewhat utilitarian in appearance. It contains the main public entrance to the building. Some original features such as the original staircase are still extant, but this is a functional access staircase only and is not of any particular note. However the original floor plan is almost fully intact and in the main office spaces, the original circular exposed concrete columns are extant and are a quality feature.

The change in finished floor levels between each of the three buildings is nominal and any differences can be accommodated with the introduction of a raised access floor; therefore the existing floor structure can be retained in each of the three buildings to provide level floors for any new proposal.

Historic Background:

Dawson Street gets its name from Joshua Dawson who purchased a site in 1705 and erected a mansion here in 1710. Shortly afterwards, it was purchased in 1715 by the Corporation and is now better known as the Mansion House, residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin City (McCready, 1987). By Rocque's 1756 map of Dublin Dawson Street was fully developed into a street lined with fashionable early Georgian terraced houses of varying scales.

The New Ireland Assurance Company, established in January 1918, was strongly connected to the nationalist movement of the day. The current site of the New Ireland Assurance Company evolved with the first building 1929-30 fronting onto Dawson Lane. The lane wrapped around the site at a right angle. The architect was Vincent Kelly who had studied in UCD under Professor William A Scott.

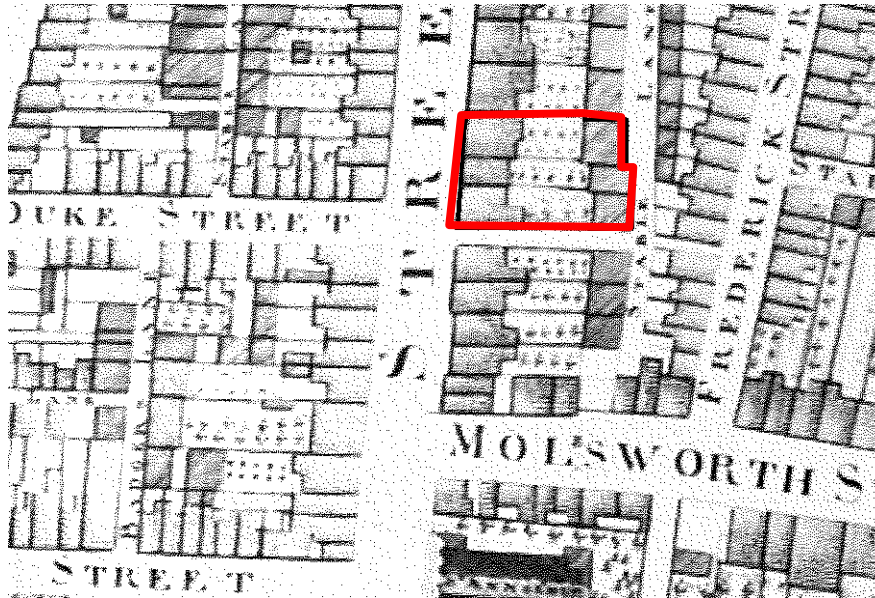
The second building phase in 1964 by O'Brien Morris and McCullough Architects created a more imposing statement headquarters on Dawson Street, while simultaneously respecting the historic streetscape. The amalgamation of these two buildings is described by Christine Casey as encompassing "*Modernism tempered by a classical sensibility*".

This second building is a more confident and bolder development; "*With its strong modern lines, gold coloured window frames, and Celtic-inspired decoration, New Ireland Assurance was attempting to demonstrate a new Ireland, looking forward, the results of Taoiseach Seán Lemmas's push for modernity in the country*". (Archiseek, accessed 26/03/18).

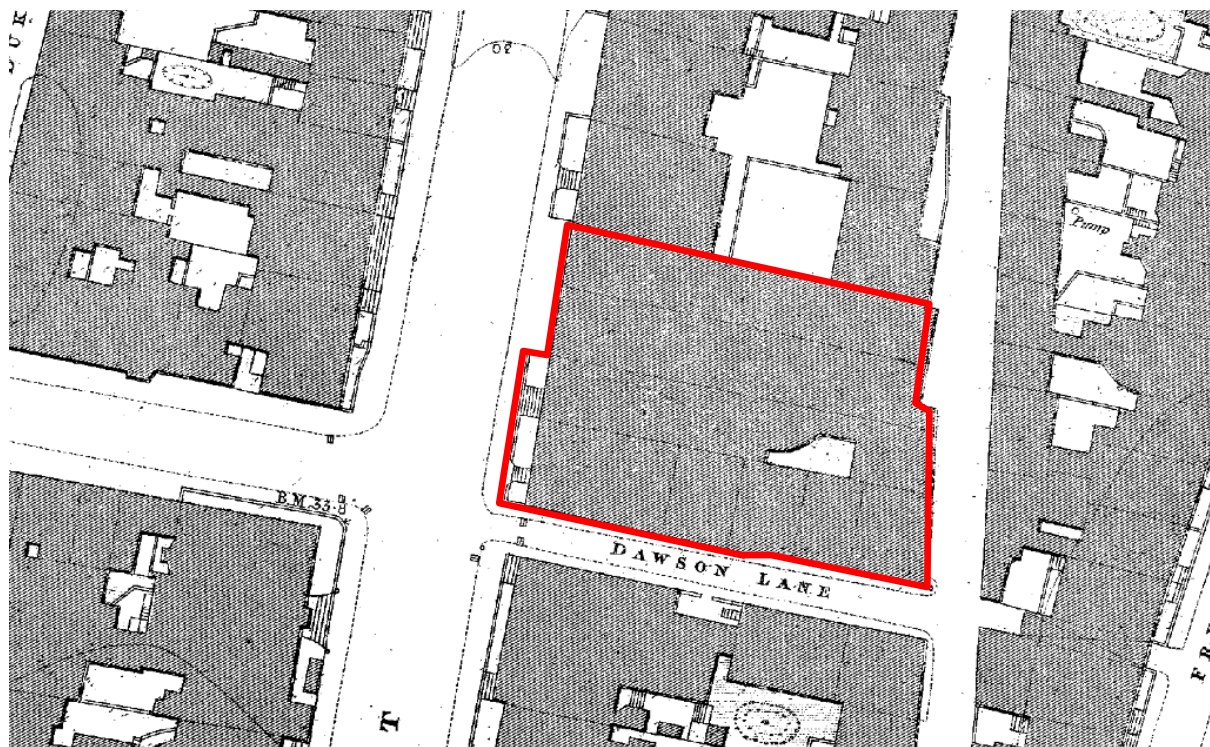
The further growth of the company facilitated the commissioning of Campbell Conroy Hickey Architects to design a building which again reflects modern internationally influenced contemporary design of the 1970's

In recent years, these three buildings have been further linked via a glazed bridge at first floor level from Building A to another offices complex across Dawson Lane.

Historic Maps



Rocque's Map 1756



1847 Ordnance Survey Map of Dublin

References:

- *The Buildings of Ireland: Dublin*, Christine Casey, Pevsner Architectural Guides, Yale University Press, 2005
- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Phase 10 Building Record. Reg. No. 50100075
- Archiseek website (<http://archiseek.com/2016/new-ireland-assurance-dawson-street-dublin/>) Accessed 26/03/18
- Come Here to Me website (<https://comeheretome.com/2017/06/18/modern-yet-very-gaelic-the-new-ireland-assurance-building-dawson-street/>). Accessed 26/03/18
- *Free State Architecture: Modern Movement Architecture in Ireland, 1922-1949*, Paul Larmour 2009
- *Dublin Street Names, Dated and Explained*, CT McCeady reprinted 1987

Significance / NIAH Rating:

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) has not yet been carried out for this area. However the NIAH has identified these buildings for survey and assessment under the forthcoming phase 10 survey of this area in the city. Their current registration number is 50100075. As such there are no Ministerial Recommendations as yet for this area issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs.

The NIAH uses eight categories of special interest (architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical & social) and identifies five categories of rating in seeking to rank buildings. The NIAH rating values are International, National, Regional, Local and Record Only (I, N, R, L, O). Structures which are considered of International, National, and Regional significance are deemed worthy of inclusion on the RPS.

Therefore using the NIAH rating system Buildings A & B would be considered to have a National rating. These are defined as *Structures or sites that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage of Ireland. These are structures and sites that are considered to be of great architectural heritage significance in an Irish context.*

Building C would be considered to be of Regional significance. *These are structures or sites that make a significant contribution to the architectural heritage within their region or area.*

Assessment of Special Interest Under the Planning & Development Act 2000:

The Conservation Section concurs with assigned special interest categories as outlined by the main applicant which is substantiated by the site visit and internal inspection on the 14/06/18.

ARCHITECTURAL:

The grouping of structures has architectural value in each of its elements and as a group; there is a guiding principle of investment in contemporary architecture over three generations. The first building (A) is one of the first recognisably modern buildings constructed in the country; the second (B) is a unique combination of modernism and Celtic-Revival motifs – a singular monument in an Irish context. It has a very strong composed elevation using very high quality materials. The third building (C) acts as a foil for (B) and is itself an unusual and strongly proportioned glazed façade; a unique survival of high quality 1970's architecture in the city.

1. **A generally agreed exemplar of good quality architectural design.** The three buildings form a unique combination of architectural works, one from the 1920's, one from the 1960's and one from the 1970's. Each are high quality designs of their time and display better than any other site in Ireland the evolution of contemporary design over an extended period in one place. The first (Building A) is recognised as one of

the signature works of early modernism in Ireland and also one of the earliest. It is critical to an understanding of the impact of the 20th century on the culture of the new State. The second (Building B) is the unique masterwork of a small mid-century Dublin practice blending a strongly composed Classical modernism with beautiful detailing and Celtic-Revival motifs. The third (Building C) a very accomplished curtain wall office project – perhaps the best office street elevation of its kind remaining in the city from that period.

2. **The work of a known and distinguished architect, engineer, designer or craftsman.** The three buildings are by three separate practices. Building A is by Vincent Kelly who was a distinguished practitioner in early 20th century Ireland; he was a pioneer in this work during those years. Building B is by a less well known Dublin practice active between approx 1950-80- O'Brien, Morris and McCullough Architects; the project is clearly their masterwork. The third is the work of Campbell Conroy Hickey Architects, a distinguished Dublin architectural practice founded in 1950 by Pat Campbell.
3. **An Exemplar of a building type, plan-form, style or styles of any period but also the harmonious inter-relationship of differing styles within one structure.** Each of the three buildings offers a distinct type and style of office accommodation dating from the 1920's to the 70's. They are characteristic of their era and offer clear evidence of changing concerns about function and expression. The three buildings form a unique and harmonious grouping in an urban setting.
4. **A structure that makes a positive contribution to its setting, such as a streetscape or a group of structures in an urban area or the landscape in a rural area.** The three buildings make a very significant contribution to the inner Dublin streetscape of Dawson Street,. The contribution is made up of the inter-relationship of the three buildings, which are closely aligned in terms of height and proportion but offer distinct architectural styles, materials and relationships of solid to void within the ensemble. Building B forms the corner of Dawson Street and Dawson Lane, offering a beautifully detailed limestone wall to the exposed corner.
5. **A Structure with an interior that is well designed rich in decoration, complex or spatially pleasing.** The internal decoration and technical construction details of the building are retained to varying degrees within the three buildings. The original historic floor plan of Building A is still largely intact and unaltered, although, some original glazed internal screens have been lost and replaced with solid partition walls, in the office spaces at the upper floors. It retains original office fittings and features specially designed for the building. In Building B, the original grand entrance has been converted to open plan office space, with the main entrance now closed off to accommodate desk space. The original and highly decorative ground floor entrance area has been lost; though there may be opportunity to investigate if remnants of the original plan form are evident above the existing suspended ceilings or below the raised access floor. However, the original white terrazzo feature staircase, with original stained glass windows is intact at each level from top floor to basement. The bespoke stained glass windows provide an interesting antidote to an otherwise bland façade at the rear of the building. Building C is rather utilitarian in appearance. It contains the main public entrance to the building. Some original features such as the original staircase are still extant, but this is a functional access staircase only and is not of any particular note.

HISTORICAL:

The building at 10-12 Dawson Street captures a particular moment in time, when the State was strongly attached to a vision of Gaelic Ireland, while the economy of the State was

shifting and evolving. They are a reminder of the great efforts made in establishing an independent, national identity, as expounded the then Taoiseach, Seán Lemass. The dedication plaque for the opening ceremony of the building is in Irish (only) and company's emblem on the middle panels of the main doors includes the motto '*Mo Dhia, Do Dhia, Mo Thír, Do Thír*'.

At the unveiling in 1964, the company chairman Dennis McCullough (himself a veteran of the revolutionary period), noted that New Ireland Assurance's first meeting was attended by men that included Michael J. Staines, Éamon de Valera, Liam Tobin and Frank Thornton, all 1916 men. To him, "all its major decisions in the years since its foundation have been influenced by the spirit of 1916, which inspired its founders." (*comeheretome.com* website; accessed 26/03/18).

SOCIAL:

The architecture of the buildings and the significance of the site are closely related to the New Ireland Assurance Company. New Ireland was founded in the 1920's as a company dedicated to supporting the new Irish State by developing a home-grown insurance industry and moving insurance away from its London base. This quiet patriotism was also expressed through a dedication to new architecture and quality materials in its buildings. These three buildings form a unique cultural monument where an entity with significant investment in the 'image' of the early Irish State developed a series of buildings over a forty year period which reflected the modern and forward-looking ambition of the State.

TECHINAL:

All three buildings present different technical solutions to the provision of office space over a 50 year period between 1930 and 1970 illustrating a progression to a more open office environment. The extant internal decoration and technical construction details of the buildings are presently unknown and would reward further investigation.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that 9-12 Dawson Street & Dawson Lane, Dublin 2 be added to the Record of Protected Structures, in accordance with Section 54 and 55 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

Address	Description
9-12 Dawson Street & Dawson Lane, Dublin 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="667 1375 1388 1440">• Building A, onto Dawson Lane: Building Envelope and Main Office Spaces<li data-bbox="667 1447 1388 1512">• Building B, 10-12 Dawson Street: Elevations to Dawson Street & Dawson Lane and Main Staircase<li data-bbox="667 1518 1388 1550">• Building C, 9 Dawson Street: Front Elevation only

Paraic Fallon
Senior Planner

Extent of Protected Structure Status & Curtilage

The proposed protected structure and its curtilage is outlined below in red. The curtilage extends to the boundaries as shown on the map below.



Aerial view of 9-12 Dawson Street & Dawson Lane, encircled in red

External Photographic Record:

Building A on Dawson Lane



Building A: entrance on Dawson Lane



Detail of entrance porch and distinctive logo



Splayed reveals and chamfered granite cill with Ashlar granite plinth



Splayed reveals to portrait window openings bookend the south elevation. Note connecting bridge



Granite framed, secondary entrance door onto Dawson Lane east elevation

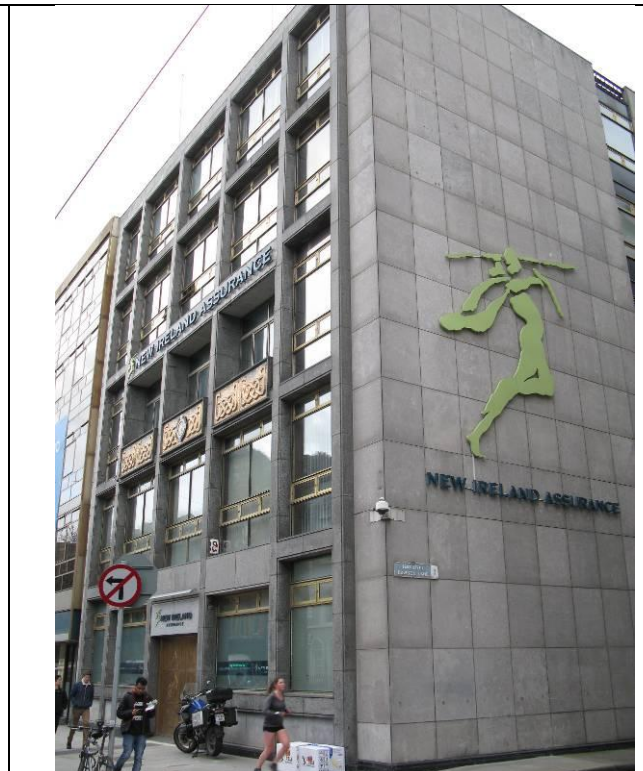


Access to underground area of Building C from Dawson Lane

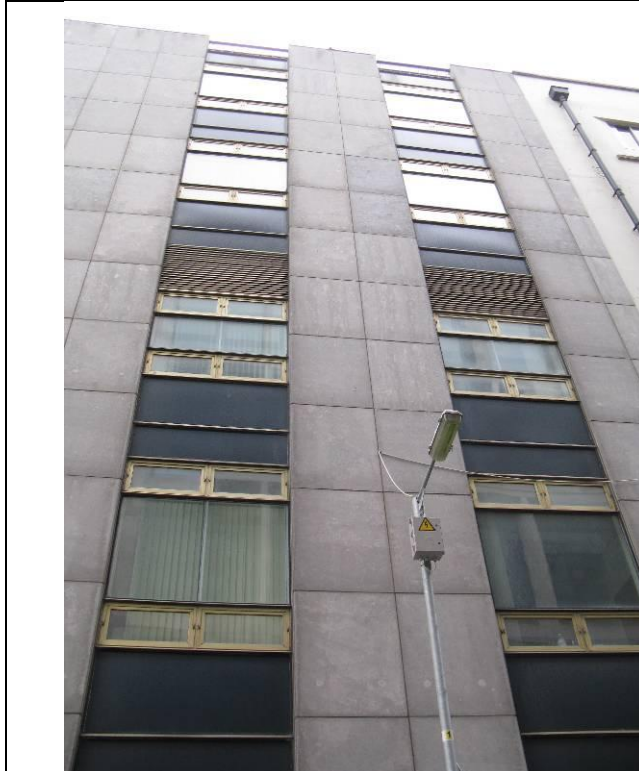
Building B, 10-12 Dawson Street



Front elevation of 10-12 Dawson Street



Side elevation onto Dawson Lane



Fenestration onto Dawson Lane, Note junction to rendered Building A



Second floor detail of one of the three Celtic knot motif balconies with original doors and ironmongery



Central balcony with four provinces shield



Central pivot bronze casement windows in use



Mosaic tiled soffit to balcony



Ground floor bronze casement, granite framed with limestone apron



Mosaic tiled apron to Dawson Lane elevation



Main entrance door with emblems of four provinces



My God



Your God



Your Country



My Country



Polished plinth at corner of Dawson Street & Dawson Lane



Dedication plaque

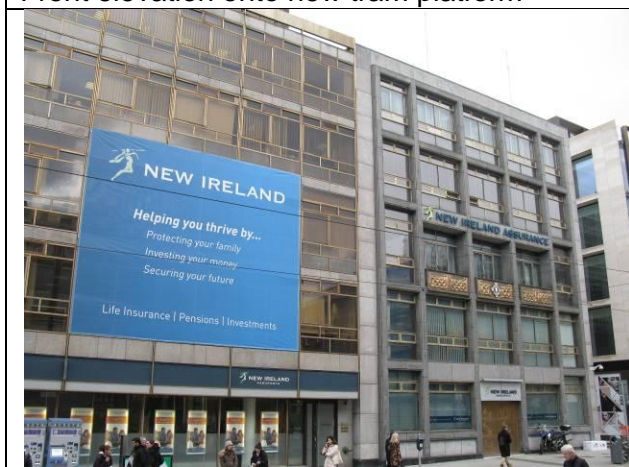
Building C, 9 Dawson Street



Front elevation onto new tram platform



Horizontal pivot bronze casement window



Front elevations of 9-12 Dawson Street



General view of Dawson Street looking north

Rear elevations and Internal Photographic Record:

Building A onto Dawson Lane



Rear of Building A onto Dawson Lane. Original Openings still intact along the rear elevation



Rear of Building A onto Dawson Lane. Original Openings still intact along the rear elevation



Rear of Building A onto Dawson Lane. Original Openings still intact along the rear elevation



Original internal handrail along the original stair-core of Building A



All joinery throughout Building A is identical. Doors with glazed panels have Georgian Fire glazing



Original safe door in the basement of Building A

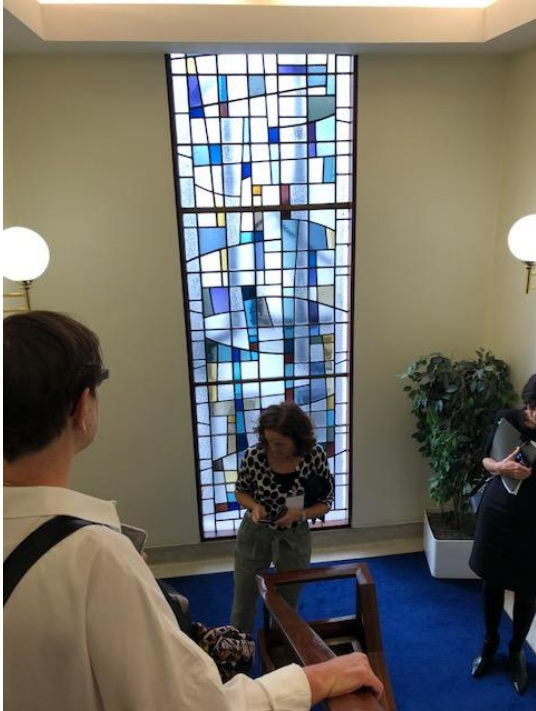
Building B, 10-12 Dawson Street



Detail of the original fenestration of the original windows (5th floor).



Letter box chute (non-original) that extends the length of the building between Building A and Building B. Link is clad in glass block. The original chute may have been clad in timber.



All original stained glass to Building B still exists in the main stairwell extending throughout the building



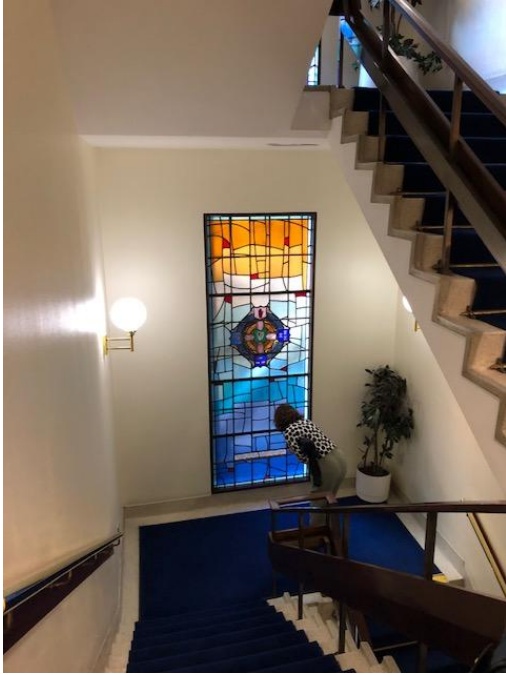
At each level, a letter box exists in the glazed link element between Buildings A and B



Push plates in English and Irish



All original stained glass to Building B still exists in situ. Terrazzo staircase is fully intact from basement to top floor.



All original stained glass to Building B still exists in situ. This stained glass insert dates from 1918, when the New Ireland Assurance building at 10-12 Dawson Street was originally conceived. The inscription states that the stained glass window belongs to the building rather than the use.



The rear of Building B showing the original stained glass windows and the glass block link element. (where the chute to the post room is located)



Fully intact terrazzo staircase of Building B that extends from fifth floor to basement