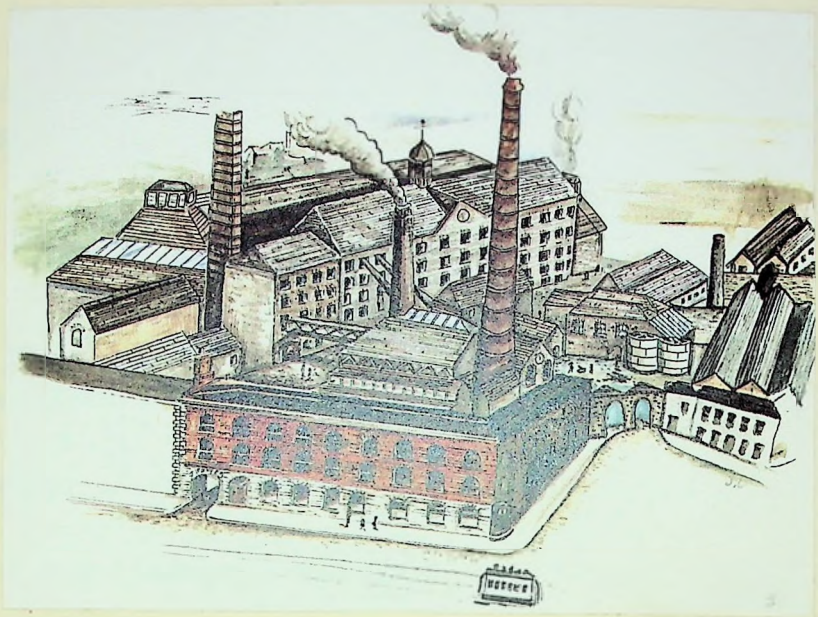
M0055771NC

T642

NC 0034809 0



A History of John Power & Son, Distillery, and it's Subsequent Conversion into the National College of Art & Design.

Joanne Connolly

Department of Visual Communication

1990

CONTENTS

CONTENTS CONT'D

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

33. Iron Stairway.
34. Number two engine house.
35. Number two engine.
36. Detail of Number Two Engine.
37. Number Two Engine House.
38. Number Two Engine Room showing enamelled bricks.
39. Detail of Pitch Pine ceiling.
40. Fire Engine Department.
41. Irish Times report on Distillery Fire.
42. Canpit Room.
43. Cooper at work.
44. Tram Line.
45. Gate Lodge.
46. Lodging Houses.
47. Entrance to laboratory.
48. Spangle.
49. Stairway leading to labortory.
50. Pay Office.
51. Metal Box Containing water pumps.
52. Water Pumps.
53. Detail of enamalled brickwork.
54. The Styx.
55. The Concourse.
56. The Counting House, circa 1878.
57. Cover of Powers World fair brochure.
58. Front entrane.
59. Front entrance and time office.
60. Brass lettering originally over front entrance.
61. Doorway facing Thomas Street.
62. Detail of Brass fittings.
63. Detail of Brass fittings.
64. Right corner Bay Doorway.
65. Detail of right corner bay.
66. Right corner bays.
67. Doorway into Main Office.

68. Detail of fan light.
69. Detail of leaded counter.
70. Timber framed screen in main offices.
71. Detail of date and logo.
72. Fire place in boardroom.
73. Panelled seat.
74. Detail of stairway.
75. Circular leaded window.
76. Food elevator.
77. View of Distillery rooves.
78. View of Distillery Rooves.
79. Detail of Granary windows.
80. Old Beside the new.
81. Former lodging houses.
82. Entrance to lodging house.
83. Section of Courtyard.
84. Detail of carved wooden banister.
85. Detail of door with brass knob.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give thanks to all the people who so kindly assisted me in writing this paper: Mr. David Lavin, Prop. Orchard Inn. Mr. John Young, Irish Distillers, The Whiskey Corner Pub. Mr. John Irvine, Architect. Mrs. Joan Walsh. Mr. Peter Keogh, former employee of Powers. Mr. Peter Walsh curator of Guinness Hop Store. Mr. Reggie O'Reilly Irish Distillers. Mr. John Ryan, Irish Distillers. With special thanks to Mr. John Blake and Mr. Frank Ryan, two former employees of Powers Distillery.

INTRODUCTION

Far too many of us go about our daily business in the College without any sense of history for the building or for the generations of people who worked there almost three hundred years before we were even born.

When the National College of Art & Design took over the former distillery, we also inherited part of a great tradition of Irish Whiskey-making. Sadly, however, most students have come and gone without having any knowledge of this tradition. I realised that writing this paper would give me an opportunity to research the background and history of the buildings we now call the National College of Art & Design. I hope to graduate with a greater knowledge of these historical buildings in which I have spent five years of study.

In my first chapter my aim is to give a brief history of distilling in Ireland. I shall then introduce the four main distilleries situated in and around Thomas Street, concentrating on the background history of John Power & Son, Johns Lane.

The object of my second chapter is to give a familiar description and history of Powers beginning with a brief introduction into industrial architecture in Ireland. This will provide a background context into which I shall introduce further Powers distillery. Acknowledging my limited experience of architecture I will not attempt to write a detailed architectural survey of the buildings, rather I shall create an overall picture of the distillery, pointing out architectural

features which are of interest to me. In doing this I shall describe in detail the function of each building and its stage in the process of whiskey making. In the beginning I found the descriptive task quite difficult since, of course, I am not a distiller; but, after a few weeks of reading and talking to people connected to the industry I began to get acquainted with nature of the distillery, and learned the names of various machines and buildings. To understand or explain the whole technical process would be quite impossible but with a good understanding of the basic process I have described it in simple terms. I also spoke to two retired gentlemen, former employees of Powers and they gave the personal side of working for Powers that I was looking for.

In my final chapter, I shall be taking a look at what has become of the distillery today and how it has been adapted to become the National College of Art & Design.

CHAPTER I

A HISTORY OF DISTILLING IN IRELAND

> There was a mighty throng in Thomas Street during the great days of the fair with any amount of sport, jostling shouting, and horseplay and unfortunately a great deal of drinking. The shops were all brilliantly lit and kept open till late hours. There were many booths in the street lit up with kerosene lamps.
>
> Christmas in Old Dublin. A. Smithson

1. The Origins of an Old Tradition

Whiskey has been distilled in Ireland for over a thousand years. The exact origins of whiskey making will never be known because information on the early distillers is vague and rare.

Nobody can say for certain where it all began but it is almost certain that whiskey was first produced in Ireland. However, it was neither invented or discovered, but perhaps a little of both. When the much travelled missionary monks brought christianity to Ireland in the sixth century they also brought with them from the Middle East the secret of the Alembic. This was a small still used by the Arabs to distill alcohol for perfumes. The Irish soon found a better use for it than making perfumes. They learned how to distil an elixir from a fermented mash of barley and water which they called "Uisce Beatha" or "Water of life". As to the origins of the word "Whiskey" when the soldiers of King Henry VII of England paid the first of their many uninvited visits to Ireland during the tenth century

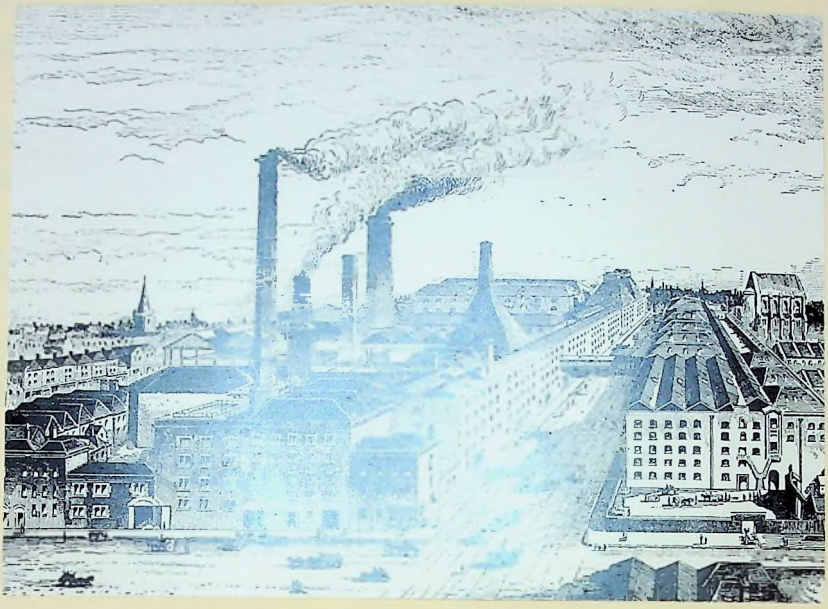
they were greatly taken with this "Uisce Beatha". However they could not get their tongues around the words and anglicised "Uisce Beatha" into "fuisce" and then finally into "whiskey".

2. Distillers Past and Present

Distilling became a traditional national industry rooted in the very soil of Ireland. Again almost nothing is known about the hundreds of distillers in Ireland in the 18th century. There were numerous changes in ownership of these small distilleries, and towards the end of the century large numbers ceased to exist because of the impact of the exise still licence duty.

These distillers found by trial and error, methods that by making the mash in a certain way from certain materials they obtain a product that suited their requirements, even though they might not have been able to give scientific reasons for the steps taken. Ireland, and Dublin in particular, built up a reputation for good whiskey due to the experience of these early distillers. The "poitin men" were described by Alfrad Barnad, as being the forerunners of the distilling industry in Ireland.(2) These men were farmers forced into the illegal trade of producing poitin by economic necessity. Many of them later went into the industry legally.

Today Irish Whiskey is still made in much the same way as it has been down through the centuries. As much a part of the whiskey tradition in Ireland are names of some of the great houses whose brands are still famous throughout the world today. Four of the largest and most successful were all situated in and around the Thomas Street area.



2. John Jameson & Co. Bow Street.

3. The Great Whiskey Houses

There was a time when nearly every Irish town had it's own distillery or brewery. And now, here and there around the country some old mill or warehouse is all that is left to tell the tale. The Dublin distillers were for nearly a century amongst the worlds foremost whiskey producers. They included; John Power & Son, John Jameson & Son, George Roe & Co. and the Dublin Whiskey Distillers. In the following pages I shall give a brief description of each.

John Jameson & Son

The father figure of the Irish distilling trade is surely John Jameson, a man of scottish descent. In Smithfield, Co. Dublin, around the late 19th century a few small distilleries were in operation. One of these was owned by Mr. John Stein. It was his daughter who married John Jameson, who had come to Dublin with his brother William around 1784. John Jameson later became the owner of his father-in-law's distillery. Jameson was a shrewd business man and he quickly built his business into one with a worldwide reputation. (Fig.2) The bonded warehouses of the distillery, long cloister-like avenues stacked with oak casks of slowly aging whiskey, ran deep under the city of Dublin. Production at Bow Street ceased in 1971 and was transferred to Midleton, Co. Cork.

George Roe & Co

Even before Jameson had arrived in Ireland, Mr Peter Roe had set up his distillery in 1757. It was situated almost opposite the main entrance to the Guinness brewery at St. James Gate. As the business expanded so did the premises, until the distillery

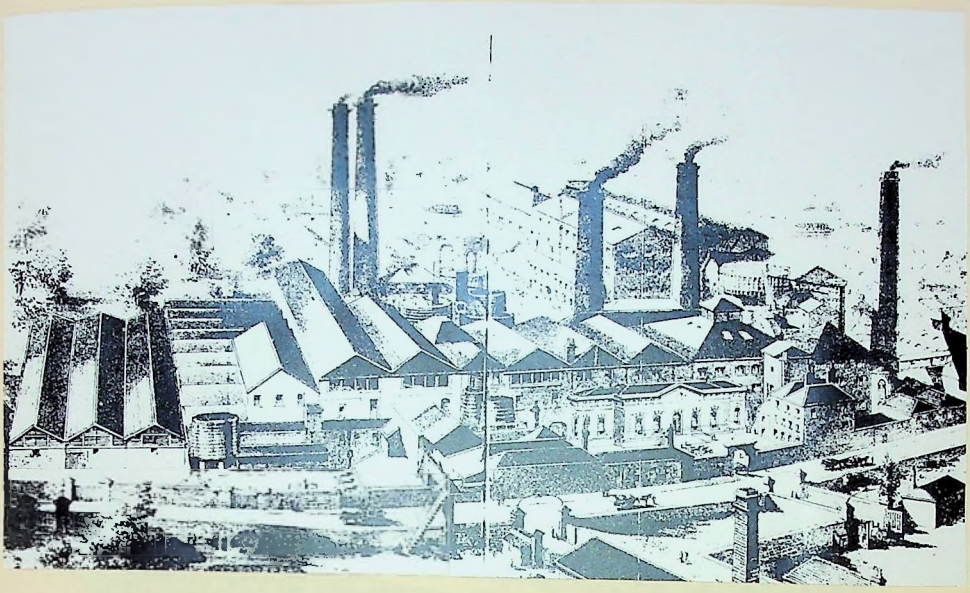
1. Windmill at George Roe Distillery, James Gate.

covered almost seventeen acres with it's main entrance on Thomas Street.

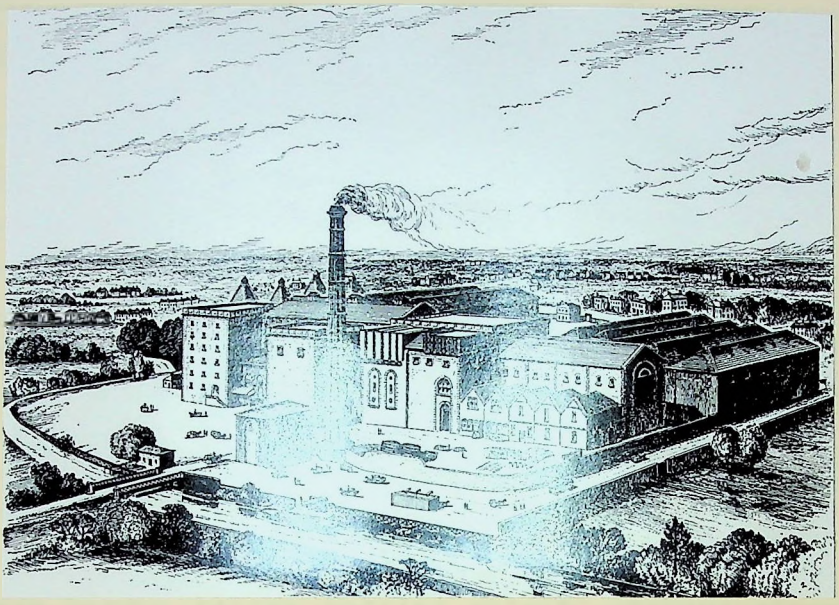
Not much is to be seen of the distillery today, but the old Windmill, once the centre of the distillery, is still standing today (Fig.1). This mill now stands on Guinness's property. It was once a fully operational corn grinding mill equipped with sails fixed to a revolving turret. It supplied the motive power for the entire distillery. The mill is surmounted by a large copper dome from which arose the iron cast figure of St. Patrick who still gazes down on the much changed scene of today. It was the tallest building of its kind seen in Dublin at the time. Unfortunately it was shorn of its sails over a hundred years ago.

Dublin Distillers Company Ltd

The Marrowbone lane distillery (Fig.3) was acquired by the Jameson Family in 1799, with William Jameson, brother of John, as its chief proprietor. In 1889 after nearly one hundred years of production, the Marrowbone lane distillery amalgamated in 1891 with George Roe & Co and the Dublin Whiskey Distillers, of Jones Rd, Tolka river, Co. Dublin, to form a giant trading unit known as the Dublin Distillers Company, Limited. The distillery was built at Jones Road, Dublin (Fig.4). However, there was no family concern; its directors were all business men with little knowledge of the distillers art. John Power & Son was on the other hand, a family run business. Even today direct descendants of Sir James Power still run the family business. It was this distillery which was perhaps the most historic and prestigious of all the distilleries.



3. Marrow Bone Lane Distillery. 1878.



4. Jones Road Distillery, 1878.

John Power & Son

In 1785 James Power (?-1817) (Fig.5) selected a site where the National college stands today. It was situated in the then suburbs of Dublin, just outside the city walls. James Power originally used the site as an Inn and it was from here that the first mail coaches departed for the north and south of Ireland. It was around this time also that the canals opened for traffic, thus forming regular communication with the more remote districts of Ireland. The Inn was situated on a plot of ground formerly known as "The Friary Gardens of St. John"3. It was the property of the Countess of Charville by whom it was leased to James Power. Suspecting that there might be a more lucrative future in the bottled spirit, perhaps after seeing how well his neighbour, Jameson, was doing, Power converted his premises into a small distillery in 1791, thus joining the other similar institutions in the district.

James Power continued to extend his distillery until his death on 13 January 1817. He was succeeded by his son John Power (1771-1885). John Power was a man of great energy and enterprise and it was he who eventually regbuilt the premises. By the middle 18th century it covered over six acres and included the most up-to-date equipment at the time.

The business steadily increased and prospered. On the 6th of December 1821 John Power took his son, James (1800-1877) into partnership on his twenty-first birthday. Henceforth the firm traded as John Power & Son. The firms expansion dates from the abolition of the still licence system in 1823. The distillery was expanding and modernising as business increased and there was a major building in 1871 (Fig.6). This main development of the distillery occurred through the years of the Industrial Revolution. The buildings were designed at a period when steam power was beginning to be used in industry. The buildings which

5. James Power

6. Johns Lane Distiller

made up the distillery at John's lane included grain stores, warehouses, labortories, workshops, stables, a fine still house and of course the main offices facing Thomas Street. In my next chapter I will describe these buildings and the workings of the distillery in greater detail.

In 1833 John Power purchased an estate in County Wexford and built the family residence at Edermine. The Powers were a very well known and highly respected family in Dublin society. The enterprising spirit of the family included many other things besides distilling. John Power was elected an Alderman and was subsequently appointed High Sheriff for the city of Dublin. He had the honour of Baronetcy conferred on him in 1841. In 1854 he laid the first stone of the O'Connell National Monument. He died on the 25th June 1855 at the age of 84 years. He was succeeded in Baronetcy and firm by his only son James Power. James Talbot was married on the 26th January 1843 to Jane Anne Talbot of Castle Talbot, Co. Wexford. Sir James, like his father devoted himself to the further development of the distillery, and was as well known and as influential as his father. He was governor of the Bank of Ireland and chairman of the Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford railways. On his death on 30th September 1877, his eldest son, John Talbot-Power became third Baron and succeeded to the family seat at Edermine. The distillery was left to his younger sons, James and Thomas Talbot Power. The brothers were as civic-minded as their forefathers. In 1884 Thomas Talbot Power donated a sum of money to aid the completion of the neighbouring Augustinian church. Patronage of local churces and cathedrals was shared by the other breweries and distilleries in the area. Both Guinness's and Roe's contributed generously to the upkeep of St.Patricks cathedral, Mr Henry Roe subsribed £250,000 for the restoration of Christ Church cathedral. It was a vast amount of money at the time.

I could not find much information concerning the distillery in the late 19th century. However, there are two quite detailed reports both written in the 1880's giving contemporary descriptions of the distillery: The Whiskey Distilleries of the United Kingdom by Alfrad Barnard a distinguished English historian of the distilling industry throughout Britain and Ireland. The other is from a section in The Industries of Dublin by Spencer Blackett. Both were given conducted tours of the premises. Barnard in 1887 and Blackett in 1882. They give detailed descriptions of the building and I found this information invaluable in understanding the various functions of the machinery and buildings.

James Talbot Power, who died in 1932, was the last of that name in the firm. The present directors F.J. O'Reilly and C.J. and J.A. Ryan are grandsons of Power's two sisters. The families are today mainly living in Dublin. The family estate was sold to a local farmer who has converted it into a Bord Failte guesthouse called Edermine House.

The End of an Era

These famous family companies founded between 1757 and 1895 merged together in 1966 to form the Irish Distillers Group, inheritors of the great tradition of Irish Whiskey. Frank O'Reilly, head of the John Power company at the time, was the chief architect behind the 1966 consensus of the major distilling firms to amalgamate. The decision to build a new distillery, the first to be built in Ireland for over a hundred years was inevitable. The great Dublin houses of Powers and Jamesons, in the heart of the old city, were now hemmed in by a rapidly expanding city with no possibility of further physical expansion. It was a difficult decision to phase out these renowned Dublin landmarks, which had given nearly two hundred

7. Headquarters of Irish Distillers Group, Bow Street.

years of service and generations of highly valued employment to the area. However, the old era was dying and new possibilities emerging. As Dublin's long distilling tradition passed quietly into history, Midleton, County Cork arose in 1975. Today it is a symbol of a revitalised Irish Industry. Dublin's link with the distillery is regained at the new head office building at Smithfield (Fig.7) erected on the site of the old John Jameson spirits store adjoining Bow Street. Smithfield, like Powers, is an inspired adaption of an old industrial building.

CHAPTER II

JOHN POWER & SON, JOHN'S LANE, THOMAS STREET

1. A Brief Introduction of Industrial Architecture

Industrial architecture has never attracted much attention throughout Ireland and has never been widely appreciated. These buildings, however are unique examples of our industrial heritage. It has only been until quite recently that development plans and architectural surveys are recognising the historical and architectural importance of such buildings. The renovation and re-using of these old buildings is today considered extremely fashionable. Most people think of Ireland as having no industrial heritage to speak of, but in fact our development in this regard has paralleled that of Britain, although on a much smaller scale. Ireland has a lot on industrial buildings with their origins in the Industrial Revolution or before. Many of these buildings are of architectural interest and still form impressive landmarks in our towns and cities.

The Industrial Revolution changed the face of many European countries. In Ireland the main impact was in Ulster, and its most obvious effect was the tremendous growth of Belfast. Throughout the west of Ireland, around the late 18th century, industry was based on traditional activities, for example, brewing, distilling, milling, engineering and cloth manufacturing. These industries were established solely to provide for the needs of a growing population. They were usually family run and catered for a local market with little or no emphasis on export.

The style and appearance of these industrial buildings were often quite different from the residential and public buildings of the same period, although the materials used were the same: stone walls, timber floors and slated rooves. Several storey buildings were often a feature of early industrial buildings. Usually so, to utilise valuable ground space. There were various types of industrial buildings, ranging from the mill to the large textile mills in the towns of Ulster and the big breweries and distilleries in the cities. The architectural appearance of these buildings also varied. The smaller mills were simple and somewhat severe in appearance with perhaps a brick trim around the windows as the only form of decoration. The larger buildings were often more ornate, built in brick and stone with diverse architectural features; columns, cornices, ornamental doorways and windows. However, it is difficult to pinpoint one particular style amongst industrial architecture. Powers distillery doesn't fall into one particular category because it was built in different stages over many years. These great big industrial buildings were conceived as buildings whose main function was to house fascinating and complex machinery. Their main offices fitted into the street scene without any discription of rhythm or proportion. The larger buildings, like the distilleries I have previously mentioned were usually concentrated into clearly defined areas, usually close to a river. Jamesons and Powers were situated not more than a ten minute walk away from each other on opposite sides of the River Liffey. Because there was so many different types and sizes of machinery, the overall effect was of a jig-saw like variety of buildings, as seen in the former site of Powers today. Each building was built to house various types of machinery and functions. The industrial process of these distilleries had a vertical emphasis and each activity was carried out on a different level, an example of which occurred in the granary of Powers, where the corn was stored, milled and dried on different levels. This part of the building had to be

several stories high, and were extremely compact. These buildings must have made a tremendous impression when first built. They were massively constructed to carry the weight of the heavy machinery and its vibrations, as a result they are structurally sound today and make perfect candidates for renovation programmes.

At the end of the 19th century the architectural concept began to change. This was due to a number of reasons: the source of Power was changing-water was by now merely a folk memory. Steam and even more so electricity were the energy sources. With the advent of motor transport it was no longer necessary for industries to be situated in big cities. As seen today most of our major industrial estates are situated in the suburbs. The use of new building techniques structural steel and concrete, created enormous opportunities and allowed for more flexible building systems and larger roof spans, giving larger internal spaces. The functional tradition had now declined and factories began to look more and more like public buildings. A new sort of architecture emerged to meet the needs of commerce and industry. It was exemplified by red brick facades and granite arched ground floors. These commercial buildings, with classical motifs and mouldings, displayed a wealth of craftsmanship that unfortunately is missing from more modern buildings of its kind. The frontage of Powers facing Thomas Street is a fine example of such craftmanship, of which I shall be talking more about in my next section.

The 1930's was the next major phase in industrial development. A programme of industrial development began to provide alternative employment to the large numbers leaving agriculture and to help reduce the steadily growing rate of unemployment. They were the first examples of industrial buildings aswe know them today. These buildings, even more so than during the Industrial Revolution, are considered essentially a protection

List of Buildings

1. Lodging House
2. Counting House
3. Malthouse
4. Corn-receiving room
5. Kiln
6. Copperhead
7. Brewhouse
8. Backhouse
9. Still House
10. Canpit
11. Spirit Stores
12. Warehouse
13. Gatelodge
14. Johns Lane
15. No. 2 Engine Room
16. Laboratory
17. Kiln

8. Guideline of Powers Distillery.

for extremely large and complex machinery. These buildings lack the character and craftmanship of the earlier mills and distilleries and are of little architectural interest.

John Power & Son, John's Lane, Thomas Street.

The distillery on Johns Lane is both an interesting and curious example of victorian industrial architecture. Curious because the buildings were not designed at once but in various different stages of extension and rebuilding. Different buildings were added and extended as the business expanded. The result being a confusion of different buildings all of varying shapes and sizes.

In researching this paper I walked around the college and decided I wanted to know exactly what each building was originally used for. To do this it was necessary to understand the basic processes and stages involved in making the whiskey. It would be impossible for me to understand the technical side involved but through speaking to various people, including two former employees of Powers and from the accounts of Barnard and Blackett I have managed to form a basic understanding of the whiskey-making process. Next, I decided to describe each building individually according to its stage in the process, for example, I shall start with where the corn first entered the building in sacks and work my way through the distillery and finish in what is now the concourse, where the finished product, bottled and put into crates, was loaded onto the delivery trucks to be distributed around the country. From the few prints available of the distillery all dating before the end of the 19th century, I have drawn up my own interpretation of what the distillery looked like in the 20th century after all the major alterations were completed,(Fig.8). It is to be used as a general guide to be referred to when locating the

9. The Old Lodging House

various buildings in the distillery. I also want to give an account of what life was like for the men who worked for Powers. I spoke to two former employees, Mr John Blake and Mr Henry Ryan 1. I found their information invaluable towards a greater understand of the distillery. They brought me on their own guided tour of the distillery and from memory, explained the processes involved in making the whiskey. Theyalso gave me an interesting and colourful account of their days working for Powers. Mr. Ryan had worked for Powers for over forty years. His father and Grandfathers before him, were also Powers men. Mr. Blake had been with the company for years. They both were fishermen from County Wexford. In keeping with the Powers' tradition the men would leave their families at the beginning of each whiskey season. They would come up to Dublin to work in the distillery for the winter months. If they had built up a reputation and had worked hard they were asked back by Powers, to work the following season. It was the challenge of being asked back that gave them the incentive to work hard in the hope of being re-employed. They preferred to spend the cold winters up in Dublin, as Mr. Ryan put it "it suited us to fish on the Slaney during the Summer and it suited them to bring us back for the next season".2

I shall begin my account of the distillery with the "lodging house" as it was then called.

The Lodging House

This three-storey red bricked building facing Thomas Street (Fig.9) known as "The Old Fire Station" was taken over for accommodation by Dublin Corporation in 1966 (3). However, before it was either of those it was originally called "The Lodging House" where the men would stay when they came up from Wexford. Part of it was also the offices of the main distiller,

RULES

OF THE

LODGING HOUSE

105 THOMAS STREET

1. This house is instituted for Single Labouring Men, or Married Labouring Men, whose wives are in the country, and for them only. No tradesmen or strangers admitted.

2. The charge for each man in the house is 2s.-0d. weekly for which he receives furnished accommodation (single bed) and washing as follows, weekly one pair of drawers, one inside vest, one flannel shirt, one pair of socks, two linen collars, two pocket-handkerchiefs, and once every fortnight one night shirt, and occasionally one linen shirt.

3. Each man shall purchase his own provisions, which the House-keeper will cook for him.

4. All gas in house shall be turned off at 10 o'clock, p.m.

5. No man shall be out later than 10 o'clock, unless he has arranged with another Man to stop up and let him in, when at the Theatre, etc.

6. If any of the men are on night work which will terminate at any hour between 10 p.m., and 6 a.m., they must make arrangements with a man in the house to open the door when the Bell is rung.

7. No man shall smoke or use candle-light in the bedrooms.

8. Distillery men not staying in 105, or visitors to the men, must not go into the house, they can stay at the inner door, till the man they want comes to them, as the house becomes too crowded when others not belonging to it are admitted.

9. Each man is provided with two flannel night-shirts, to be given up to the house-keeper when leaving the lodgings.

10. Latch Keys are provided for the men, and charged for at 2s. each which will be refunded upon leaving the lodging and giving up the key. If the key be lost the 2s. will be forfeited.

JOHN POWER & SON,

6th January, 1879.

11. Centre Door where corn was first delivered.

the man in charge of all the workers. This building housed about seventy or eighty men at a time. Frank Ryan whose father often stayed in the lodging house, told me of the original rules of the lodging house, a copy of which I obtained from The Whiskey Corner Pub, Smithfield (Fig.10). A red brick and granite building of the same design as the main offices, was attached to the lodging house. It was through the large door in the centre of figure 11 that the corn first entered the building. It was carried by the farmers to the Malt House.

The Malthouse

The largest and most impresive building in the distillery was the Malthouse or Granary, as it is most commonly called today. It is a huge five storey building carried on metal columns (Fig.12). An interesting feature of this building is a weather vane surmounted on a cupola (Fig.13). It is situated over the central bay window and bears the date 1817. It was a common feature for mills and distillers to carry small turrets or cupolas as an architectural feature, especially in early and mid-victorian factories and industrial buildings. The cupola is one of very few attempts at decoration on this large building. It is obvious that this sturdy building was used for the practical purpose of storing grain and it was not seen necessary to make any effort at decoration. These buildings were considered overlarge and awkward and were not all considered to be aesthetically satisfying by victorian standards. To find their bare walls attractive is wholly a late 20th century discovery. It is now considered extremely fashionable to renovate such buildings for private and commercial purposes. However, in the Victorian era, architecture had no place in the Industrial Revolution. The design of such buildings was considered beneath the dignity of the architect. As a result he received neither training nor

12. The Malthouse

13. Weather vane surmounted on a Cupola.

14. Detail of the roof structure of the corn receiving room.

15. Spreading the Barley.

16. The Kiln House.

17. The Mill House

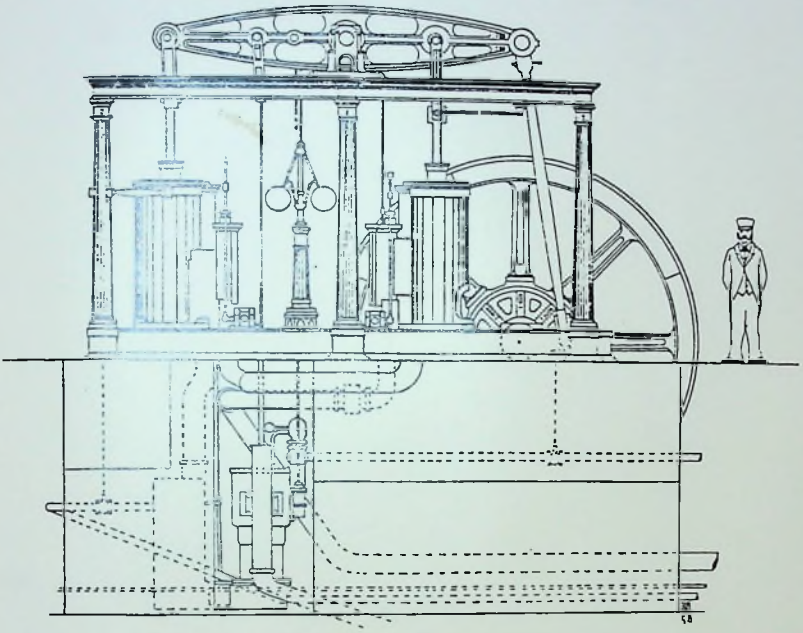
transported by elevators to the required floors. The ground floor was used as a whiskey store, the second for kiln dried corn and the other three were used for storing and seasoning the corn. After the grain had been cleaned, the next task was to convert it into malt. Though simple in principle the production of good malt demanded experience and great care. Under controlled conditions the barley was seeped in water and spread out to grow for several days (fig.15) while chemical changes took place in each grain and the enzyme diastase was formed. The corn was next sent to the two adjoining kilns to be dried. Of the two only one kiln remains and this is attached to the main granary, (Fig.16). The other one was situated alongside the library and a small garden area marks its original location. The reason for the tall, pagoda-like roof structure was to help transport the steam from the drying malt up out of the ventilated box like structure on top, according to Mr. Ryan.

> When the corn was dried a lot of steam would come out of it, then it came up out of the top of the, if there was a draught it would take a long time, but as time went on a motor was applied that drew out the steam and allowed the corn to dry much quicker.

The interior roof structure of these kilns was lined with wood and stained oak, and Barnard likened them to "small English Parish churches". 8.

The malt was next passed by elevtors to the mill house where it was ground into flour. At Johns Lane the traditional method of grinding between millstones had been practised for generations and was there well into the 1950's. The mill house was situated back up in the centre of the granary. The arched doorway in figure 17, with a decorative trimwork of granite blocks was the original entrance into the mill house. However since the

The Number One Engine in John's Lane Distillery, 1878



18. The Number One Engine

19. The Window behind which is situated the Number One Engine

granary has been gutted it is no longer in evidence today. Powers were much famed for the introduction of novel machinery. It is here in the part of the granary once known as the "Mill Engine Room" where one such sample can still be seen today. This grant beam engine was erected by Turnbull, Grant & Jack of Glasgow in 1878. This engine (fig.18) was the first of its kind erected in Britain and Ireland. It would be impossible for me to describe the engine technically (9) but its main function was to drive all the machinery, including the elevators and the seven sets of millstones in the adjoining millhouse. Every year on the first day of the new whiskey season the engine was started up. For point of reference I shall call this engine the number one engine. It was possible to see the engine in operation from the opposite building through the tall elegant wooden framed window in figure 19. An iron gangway joined these two buildings. There were originally four other engines on the former distillery, one of which was of equal importance to the Number One engine, this I shall refer to as the Number Two engine, of which I shall be mentioning later. The other two engines known as the Willans engines were installed in 1890s and their function was to provide the distillery with electric light. One of these was situated in the Motor Room, now used as a life drawing room it the History of Art block. This engine ceased operation in the summer of 1932 when it was replaced by a motor supplied by the E.S.B. (10). The Number One engine also ceased operation in the summer of 1932. This group of engines including the three remaining stills form one of the most impressive groupings of industrial archaeology in Ireland.

Much has changed in the Granary, with the Mill Engine Room and the Baltic timber roof structure remaining unchanged today. This roof structure consisting of huge timber beams (fig.20) is most evident in what now makes up the large lecture hall on the top floor of the granary. This room was originally used to store oats for the horses and was commonly called "The Dry Oats

20. Detail of Roof Structure on the Granary.

Loft" (11). The part of the building nearest the main entrance on Thomas Street made up a workshop. This is now the crafts area today. In this building carpenters and blacksmiths were kept busy throughout the year.

The Brew House

Next the freshly milled flour or "grist" as it was called was transported along chutes into the meal loft opposite the Mill House. The loft has since been demolished and the chutes dismantled, but if you refer back to my drawing of the distillery (fig.8) it is possible to see where they were once located. The flour was carefuly weighed and put into bins ready for the mash tuns. This weighing was very important as Mr. Ryan and Mr. Blake informed me "it was very essential to have the right weight and the corn ground to the right consistency, if it was too coarse it wouldn't do and if it was too fine it wouldn't do". (12) The meal loft was situated above the Brew House which also has been demolished. Mr. Blake and Mr. Ryan carefully demonstrated where the Brew House was situated. Figure 21 gives a rough idea where it once stood. The blue arched door in the photograph connected the copperhead with the Brew House and the paved courtyard area is where the brewhouse was once situated.

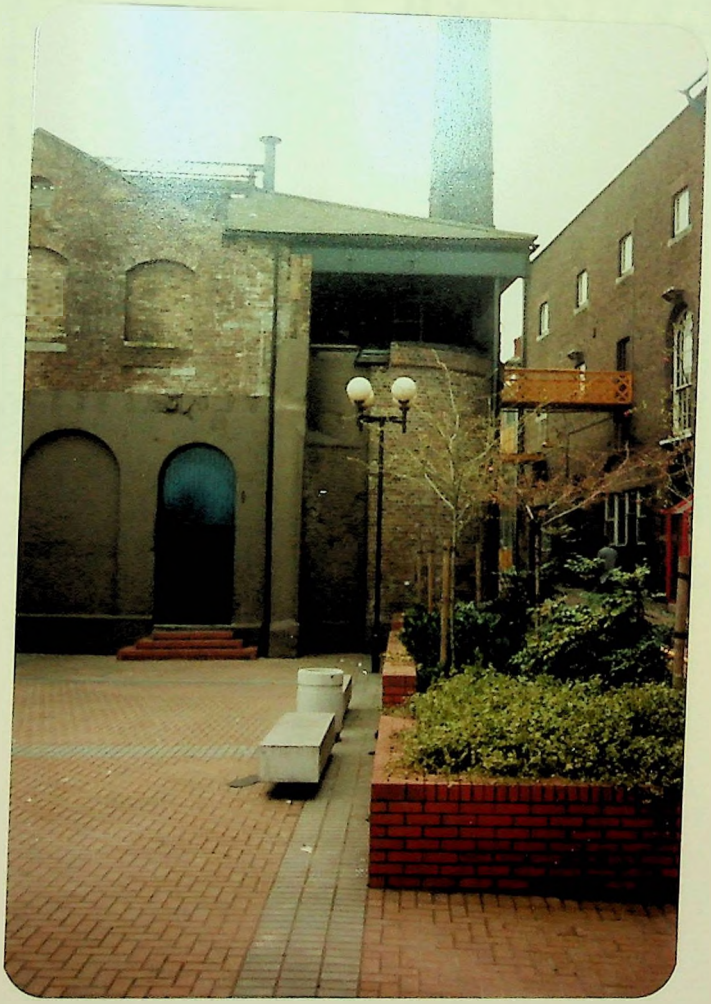
The grist was fed slowly into the giant mash tuns, where it was mixed with hot water by revolving rakes. The machinery in this room, including the mash tuns, were all powered by the Number Two engine in an adjacent room. In the mash tuns the diastase converted the starch into sugar and the resulting liquor was known as "wort". It was pumped along to the Back House, an area where the carpark is now situated.

21. Original site of the Brewhouse

The Brew House was built in 1817 at the same time as the granary, by Ninan Hill. In 1977 a list of items (13) of architectural interest was drawn up by the architects in charge of its renovation, Burke Kennedy & Doyle. According to it the brewhouse contained examples of early industrial light fittings that were of special interest. Unfortunately these have not been retained, since the building was demolished.

The Copperhead

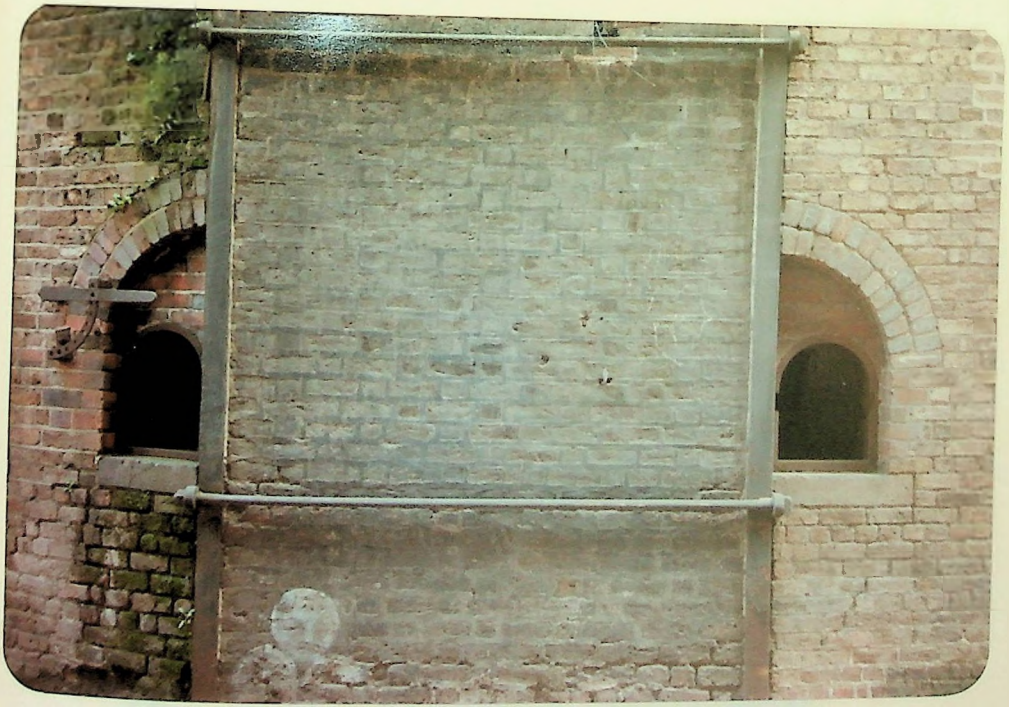
Attached to the Brew House was the Copperhead (fig.22). It was only until about two years when it was renovated and it is now used by Fine Art Students. The upper part of the copperhead was reached by an iron stairway on the opposite side of the building to the granary, (fig.23). This building once housed four large copper structure used to boil the water that was to be mixed with the wort before it went into the mash tuns. The coppers, in turn, were heated by a fire at the base of the square chimney stack. This chimney stack is the only one remaining of the four originally situated around the distillery. In figure 24 you can see two small arched entrances at the base of the chimney. In figure 25 there is an iron lever over the archway, I asked Mr. Ryan what it was there for, and he explained that it once operated a small door, or damper as it was called, it was opened and closed by this lever and coal was shovelled in to heat the fire. Square chimney stacks are older than round ones and this one dates from around 1820. It is held in a strengthening iron cradle, which protected the chimney from possible collapse (fig.26). The largest chimney was originally attached to the back wall of the History of Art block. In the photograph (fig.27) it is possible to see from the brickwork where the chimney oncestood. This chimney had for years been a landmark on the skyline of the Liffey Quays. In 1985 the chimney was dismantled brick by brick because it was



22. The Copperhead

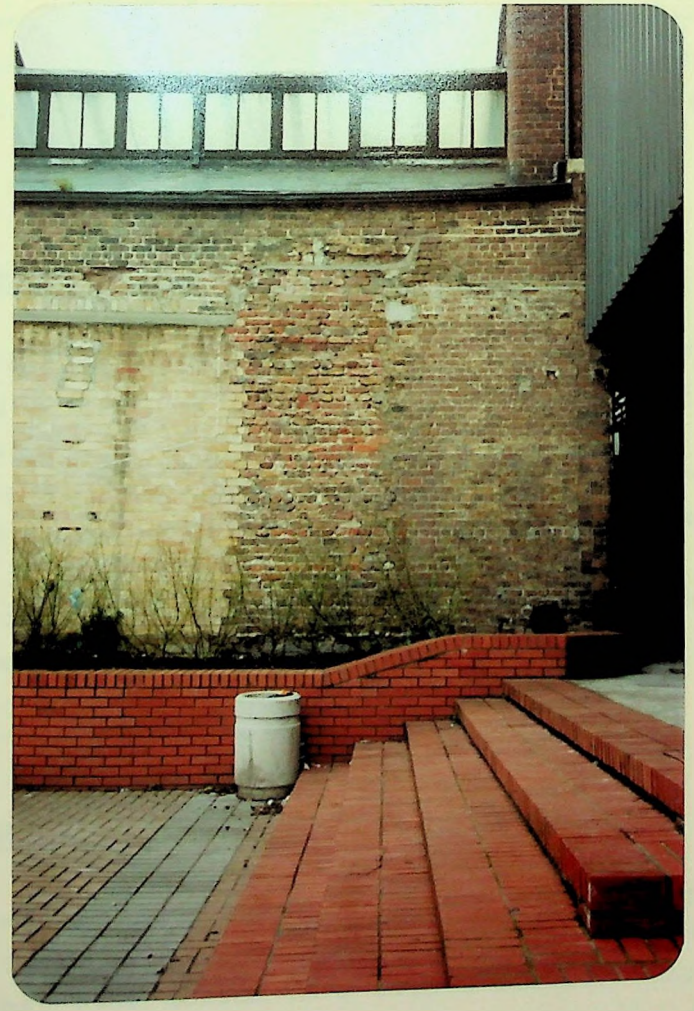
23. Stairway leading to copperhead

25.
Detail of
metal
lever.



24. Furnace at the base of square chimney.

26. Square chimney stack.



27. Original site of round chimney

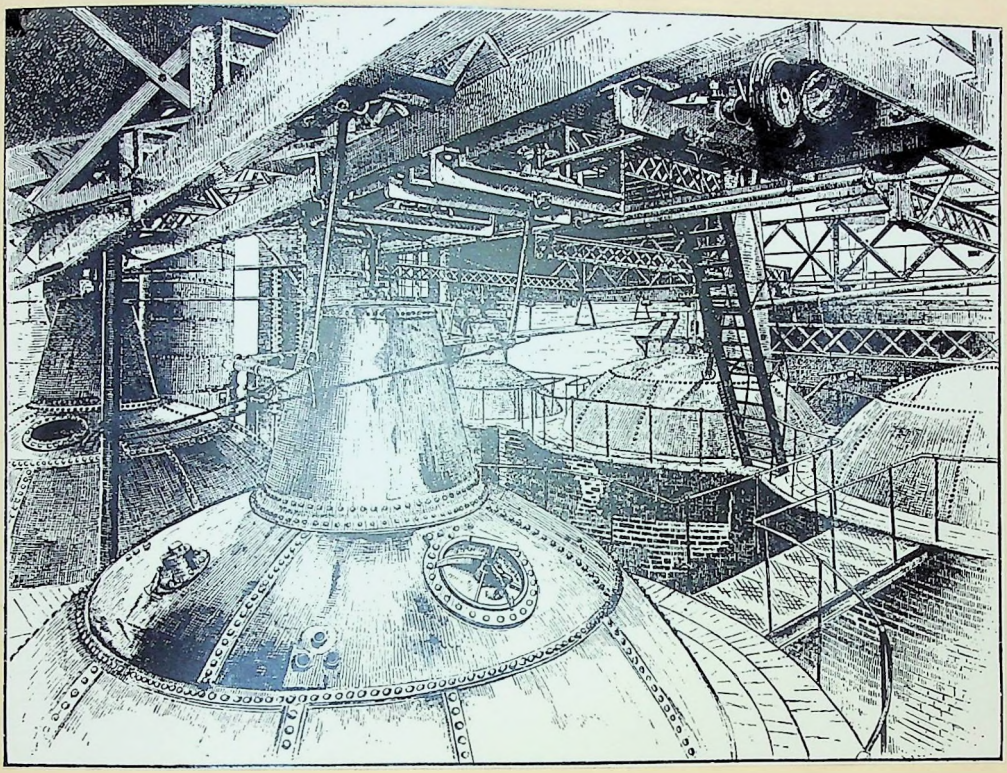
found to be twisted at the top and the college saw it as a dangerous liability, especially with over 400 students on the site.

The Back House

It was in this building, now demolished, in which fermentation took place. It was a large building, "140 feet long by 44 feet broad" (14). It contained nine large washbacks capable of holding one brewing each of 36,000 gallons. It was in these washbacks that yeast was added to the wort which converted the sugar into alcohol. The resulting liquor was called Wash, which was then pumped up to the adjoining Still House. This building was said to be the oldest part of the distillery, dating from circa 1780.

The Still House

Mr. Blake worked in this part of the distillery for many years and he was able to give me a colourful description of the building that once housed five copper stills. This once noble building dated from 1851. To give some indication of its size, it was 68 feet long and 66 feet wide and 57 feet high. The building was kept in immaculate working order and the stills kept "as bright and as clean as burnished gold".[14] These once gleaming copper stills (fig.28) were the heart of the distilling process, where the whiskey was distilled from the fermented wash. At the time when Barnard paid his visit to the Still House in 1887 these pot stills were the largest of their kind in the world. Today, three of the original five stills remain on the site (fig.29 & 30). In figure 28 the two stills in the left foreground of the illustration are no longer in situ, they were placed where the red brick steps are in figure



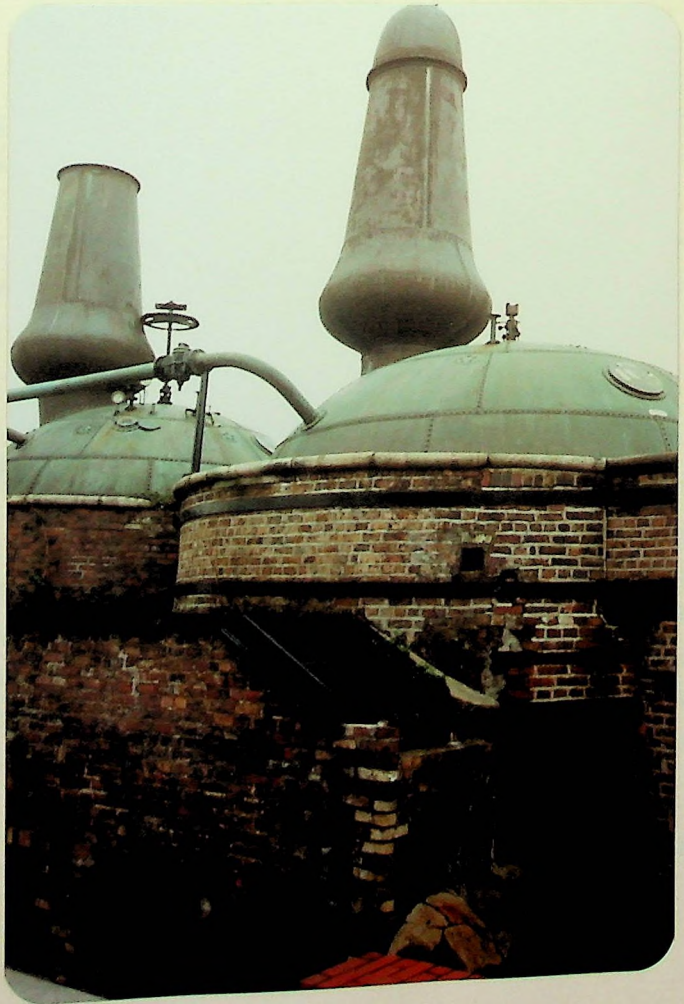
28. The Still House

29. Remaining Three Stills

30. Three Stills

31. The Furnaces under the stills

32. Detail of draught entrance



33. Detail of iron stairway

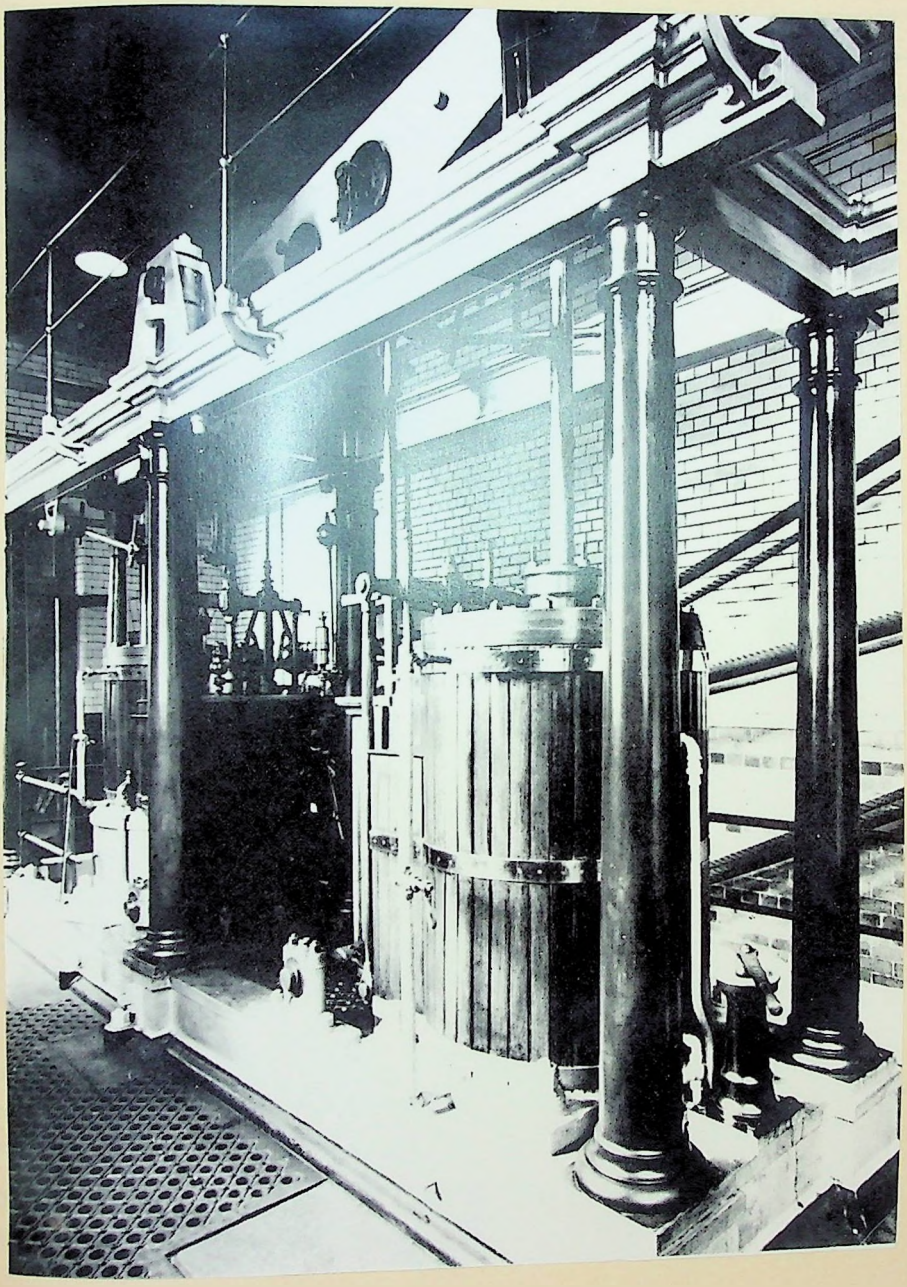
29. Before the Still House went electric in the 1950's, the stills were heated by shovelling coal into a wide furnace under each still (fig.31). A draught would circulate through the arched openings to help keep the fire going (fig.32). A draught would circulate through the arched openings to help keep the fire going (fig.32). A constant supply of coal had to always be on hand, so a substantial pile was always kept in front of each furnace. According to Mr. Blake it was back breaking work, but it did have its advantages; at lunchtime some of the men would come over to the furnace and cook their sausages and rashers over the hot coals, it saved them the journey up to the canteen, they would sit and read the newspaper while their lunch was cooking. Both men enjoyed working for Powers and I believe they speak for most of the men in the distillery. There was always a good rappore between the workers, and the O'Reillys, as Mr. Blake summed it up, "We were one big family". 15.

On one side of the stils part of the original iron stairway remains (fig.33). The men would walk up this to get the circular stone walkway around each still. It was from here that they would tend to the spirits, and check for the right temperatures. Mr. Blake told me that he would be a wealthy man if he had a penny for every time he walked around those stills. The brick wall around each base has been retained, (fig.31).

The Number Two Engine House

From the Still House I next visited the Number Two Engine House (fig.34). This building was built and its engine installed in 1886. This engine is slightly smaller than the Number One engine but similar in general design. This engine (fig.35) was responsible for working the mash tuns and all the machinery in the Still House. It was erected in 1886 by Turbull Grant & Jack

34. Number Two Engine Room



35. Number Two Engine

of Glasgow (fig.36). With the installation of electric motors in the 1930's by the E.S.B. by the E.S.B. this engine was gradually phased out, although it was still maintained in perfect working order as a showpiece of the distillery. The building itself (fig.34) is still arhitecturally very fine. It was built in the 1870's and was designed by the architect W.D. Caroe (16). It is built of Athy Stock and Staffordshire brick with a chiselled white granite brick base. The tall windows are lined with decortive brick trimming moulded around the plate glass window. The window sills are of the same granite as the base, (fig.37). Between the two windows is a double faced clock set in a circular moulding of white granite which contrasts beautifully with the brick work. The clock originally was visible day and night from both inside and outside the Engine House. Unfortunately the inside face has been crudely dismantled, leaving behind only the two hands of the clock. Although built almost seventy years after the granary the architect has made an effort to make sure the Engine House fitted in with the rest of the buildings. It is a tastefully designed building, more so than the granary, but the two managed to compliment each other. The granary is built of a brick similar to the type used in the Engine House. Both buildings have slated rooves and chiselled granite bases.

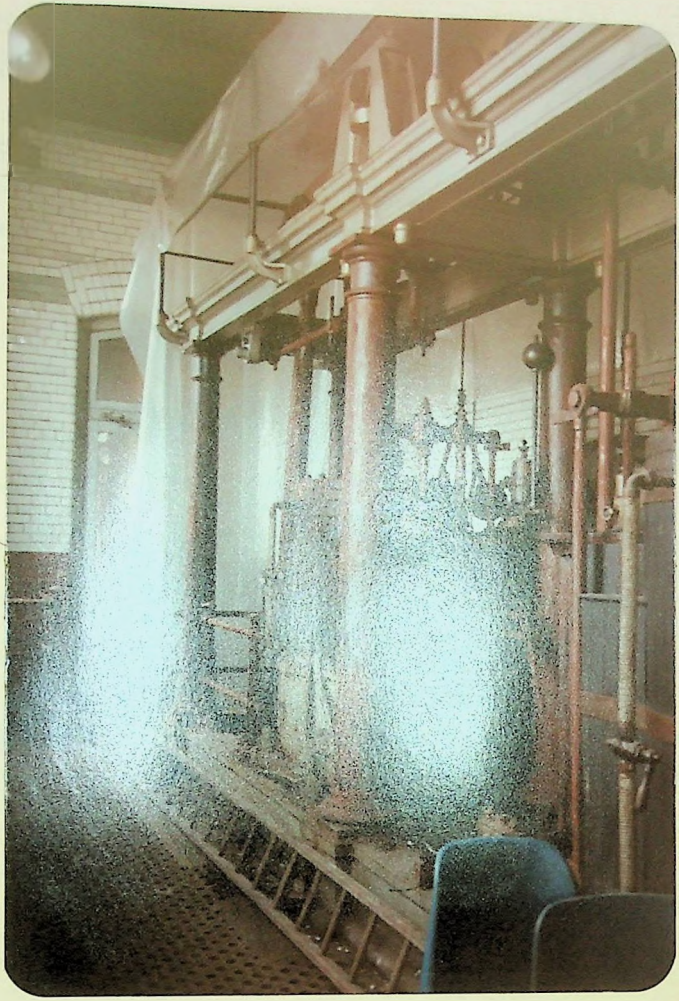
Inside the walls are lined from floor to ceiling with enamalled brick in red white and grey (fig.38) with a beautiful ceiling of pitched pine still in remarkable condition today (fig.39). The engine house was described by Barnard as being "The finest in the Kingdom".17.

36. Detail of No.2 Engine

36 No.2 Engine House.

38. Number Two Engine showing enamall bricks

39. Detail of pitch-pine ceiling



38. Number Two Engine showing enamall bricks

Distillery Fires

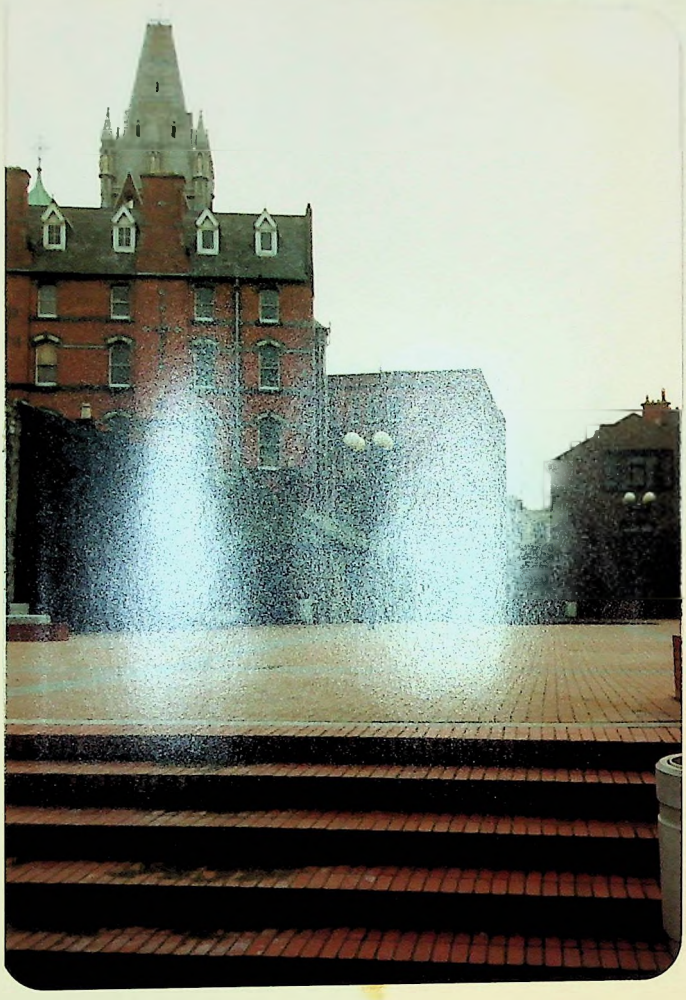
It is remarkable that so many of these 18th and 19th century buildings have survived considering the number of major fires the distillery has sustained and the highly combustiable nature of the work and product.

The first of these fires occurred around 1877. The fire originated in the Still House and spread to two huge vats of first proof whiskey. An account in Freemans Journal gives a dramatic account of the fire;

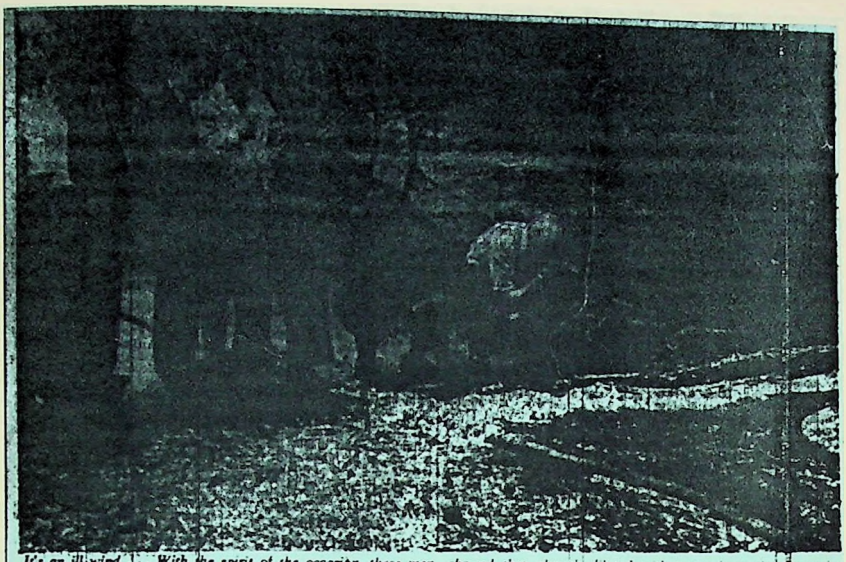
> "The roof of the receiver went flying into the air followed by flames which reached fully over the high spire of St. John's Chapel". 18.

Fortunately however, nobody was killed. Mr. Ryan happily told me that only two men were ever killed on the premised during the whole history of the distillery. After this fire Powers were prompted to form an amateur fire brigade which would always be on hand if a fire was to break out. Every possible care was taken in the reconstruction of the damaged areas. As a result the Still House and the surrounding areas were built of fireproof construction. The small fire brigade was situated in a section of the small rooms which made up the gate office on the John Lane's side entrance. Building in the middle left side of figure 40, with the double doors is where the fire brigade was kept at all times.

Another major fire occurred on July 6 1961. Mr. Blake could recall the exact date and time when the fire broke out. It was 1.15 and he was sitting having his lunch by the round chimney stack when he heard a hue and cry coming from the warehouses. It was described by the Irish Times as "one of the biggest city fires in recent years". (19). From the photograph in figure 41



40. Fire Engine Department



It's an ill wind . . . With the spirit of the occasion, these men showed that, though diluted with water from the firemen's hoses, some of the whiskey was still palatable after the fire in Power's distillery yesterday.

Fire destroys distillery warehouse

Irish Times Reporter

HUNDREDS of hogsheads of maturing whiskey exploded yesterday afternoon, as one of the biggest city fires in recent years swept through the Dublin distillery warehouse of John Power and Son Ltd. in John's lane. Firemen from every station in Dublin were called out to fight the flames, and brought the fire under control shortly before 4 p.m. Last night they still were standing by, damping down the ruins of the bonded warehouse, destroyed in the fire.

The fire was discovered at about one o'clock by a passer-by, who informed the man on duty at the entrance to the distillery. By the time the first units of Dublin fire brigade arrived on the scene—within a few minutes—the flames had gained a hold on the warehouse, and the hogsheads of whiskey were beginning to explode.

Police diverted traffic, and cleared the area surrounding the distillery of people, at the height of the fire, and pupils in a nearby national school, as well as the employees of a neighbouring factory, were evacuated as a precaution.

FIREMAN INJURED

Smoke-grimed firemen concentrated their early efforts on confining the flames to the area of the bonded warehouse, and preventing them spreading to other warehouses and a new gin plant, situated nearby in the distillery. One fireman was injured and taken to hospital. Meanwhile, three families were evacuated from houses in John's lane, which adjoined the wall of the distillery. Last night, however, they were able to return to their homes.

Mrs. Annie Connor, whose family occupies one of the three houses, said that she was preparing luncheon for her husband, who is a distillery foreman, and her two daughters when a worker came and warned her about the fire. Later, the police called, and requested her to evacuate the building. She later returned to the house, in spite of their warnings, to rescue the family's budgerigar, "Joey," which had been left behind.

Most of the distillery staff were at their luncheon when the fire broke out, but they assisted the firemen to fight the flames and prevent other warehouses and plant being damaged. One man, Mr. Desmond Johnston, of 19 Church road, Sutton, said: "We were in the canteen having lunch when the fire broke out. When we saw the flames, we rushed out and did what we could with our own hoses, but the flames had taken a grip and they were of little use."

41. Irish Times Report on Distillery Fire.

it is almost possible to make out from the photocopy some of the distillery workers tasting the whiskey, which although diluted by the firemens hoses was still palatable.

Next I shall describe the Canpit Room, which is where the distilled whiskey was then sent from the Still House.

Canpit Room

The spirit is pumped into what were termed safes, which in this case was 20 feet long made of mahogany and brass, described by Barnard as "The most ingeniously arranged one we have ever seen". This safe was secured with inland revenue locks. This safe was attached to sampling boxes for the testing of the strength and quality of the spirit produced. The liquid was then passed into receivers as finished whiskey.

This building was demolished along with the Brew House and Still House. From figure 42 it is possible to get an idea of what the interior of the Canpit Room looked like. The Canpit Room and the Still House were corrected by a narrow passage-way. It was in the Canpit where the chief distiller excercised constant control over the whole distilling process. To work in the Can-pit Room was considered to be the highest honour which could be bestowed on a distillery worker. Mr. Blake told me that you worked your way up from a fireman to the copperhead, from here you graduated to the brewhouse or the still house, and if your hard work had been recognised you were promoted to the Canpit Room. Mr. Blake modestly told me that he had worked in the Can-pit and had also been a foreman.

42. Canpit Room

Spirit Stores

From the receivers, we follow the progress of the whiskey to the Spirit Store. It was conducted through pipes to three vats awaiting to receive it. It was then filled into carefully selected oak casks. These oak casks were made and repaired on the premises (fig.43) in the part of the Spirit Store known as the Cooperage. When the distilled whiskey was first poured into these casks it was almost colourless in appearance but after maturationthe tanine in the wood permeated the liquid to give it its well known amber colour. The cooperage along with the spirit store was demolished in the 1880's. In figure 8 it is possible to see where they were located in relation to the rest of the distillery.

At this stage the long process of distillation was completed but it was only the beginning of a seven year period of maturation.

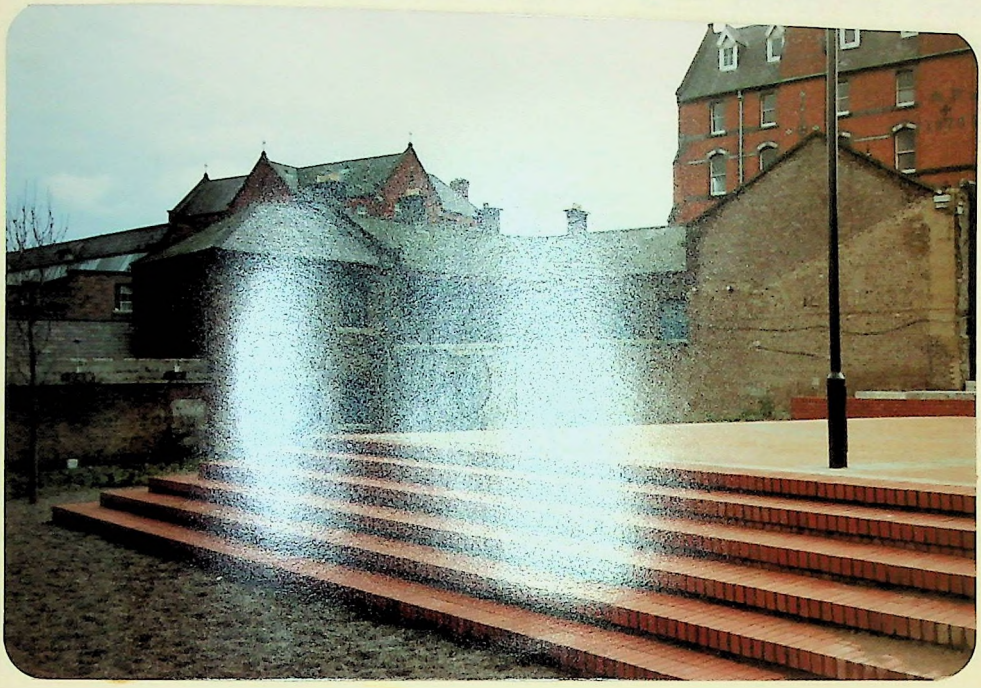
Warehouses

For at least seven long years the whiskey will mature in casks in the warehouses. Powers had seventeen such warehouses which held about 12,000 casks of slowly maturing whiskey. Powers also had warehouses in Westland Row, Dublin. The casks were sent here from the Spirit Store along a tram line called the cask track.from the photograph (fig.44) it is possible to see what is left of that tramline. A curious feature of one of these warehouses still standing although unused, is the grass growing on its roof. This roof is plainly visible from the visual communiations block and I have always been puzzled by this curious sight, so I was delighted when Mr. Blake and Mr. Ryan enlightened me.

43. Cooper at work

44. Tram Line

45. Gate Lodge.



46. Lodging Houses

'Johnny Ryan and Dinny O'Connor had a flat roof on it, they had it covered with clay and they used to grow grass on it, they kept a garden there and sowed potatoes, they stopped growing potatoes after the war and just kept a garden and every now and again they'd get up on the roof by way of the tram line and now the grass'. 20

Needless to say it must have made a curious site.

Gate lodging and lodging houses

On my way back up from the site of the Spirit Store towards the History of Art Block, I passed the John's lane entrance and the small gate lodge (fig.45). This gatelodge was almost exclusively used for checking the daily coal deliveries. It was manned twenty-four hours a day. Originally there was a weighing bridge outside it used to weigh the incoming coal. In the courtyard area in the foreground of the picture a "huge mountain" of coal was wheeled in every day, even throughout the summer months, so at the beginning of the whiskey season the men would come back to a fresh supply of coal waiting to be used. The adjoining houses in figure 46 were also used as digs for the men who came up from Wexford.

Laboratory Department

Neither Spencer Blackett or Alfrad Barnard made any reference to this building in their respective books, So I can only assume that it was added on at the turn of the century, probably in the early 1990s. Today this building makes up the history of art block. The main entrance into it is through an arched iron doorway (fig.47). Just below the centre of the door I noticed two curious round shapes (fig.48) asked Mr. Ryan what

47. Entrance to Laboratory

48.
Spy-Hole

they were for and he explained that it was once part of a peephole device, but it has since filled in. You could look through if a fire was suspected in the building. It enabled you to detect a possible fire without having to open the door and thus risking the spread of the fire.

After passing through this door, there is a stairway immediately on the left with an interesting wooden banister and hand rail (fig.49). This stairway once led to the main laboratory. It was that the distilleries chemists worked, testing and analysing the spirit. The main working area consisted of a well lit room with a centre of raised glass, supported by beams. Every day at 11.430a.m. a crowd of about six men were picked at random from around the distillery and brought up to this room, here they were seated around a table containing a few small glasses of whiskey. No better men to judge the quality of the whiskey, and the men would look forward to sampling the whiskey they had worked so hard to produce. Back downstairs to where Nicci Gordon Bowe's office is today, was the pay office. It was at this window (fig.50) where the men would collect their wages every friday. Opposite this window are three rooms. One of which was a smaller laboratory which today makes up a lecture room. The centre room was an electricians workshop and the other smaller lecture room was once the Gents. Up the corridor is a panelled room, also used as a lecture room today. This room was where the men were sent to be reprimanded if they had been caught idle. It contained a large table with a green cloth and the man had a habit of saying "you'll be sent up to the green cloth" (21). However I was told not much reprimanding was ever done. Opposite this room was were once the Willans engines was kept along with a water pump attached to hydraulic pipes. These pipes were arranged to carry water to every building in case of fire. A metal box set into the wall outside this building can still be seen today (fig.51) hoses were attached to the connections in

49. Stairway leading to the laboratory

50. Pay Office

51. Metal Box Containing water pumps

52. Water Pumps

figure 52. Inside, almost the ground floor is lined from floor to ceiling with enamalled bricks (fig.53) and upstairs the stone walls have been whitewashed.

Outside a garden marks the area where the casks were originally placed fullof the fullymatured whiskey ready to be brought into the concourse area. They were wheeled up along a pathway known as the styx (fig.54) and brought over to the area just before the stairs leading down to the canteen in the concourse area. The black steel structure in the : upper left part of figure 55 was originally a hoisting mechanism which lifted the casks on to the awaiting trucks.

The canteen area used by the students has remained unchanged, with just the smallest amount of redecoration.

The Counting House

Following the Famine,the late 19th century was one of substantial prosperity. This increase and wealth was reflected in the size and treatment of the new commercial buildings. The main offices of Powers Distillery are a fine example of Victorian commercial architecture. The neat offices were described by Brackett at the beginning of his guided tour:

> The frontage on Thomas Street is built of Scottish red brick and white Glencullen granite, and the clear style of its architecture lends an impressive air of superiority to the vicinity. 22

In figure 56 which is dated circa 1878, the frontage consisted of six bay windows. No record was made of the additional three right bays being included in this building. However in 1893 Powers exhibited at the worlds fair Chicago and I was given a

53. Detail of enamalled brickwork

54.
The Styx

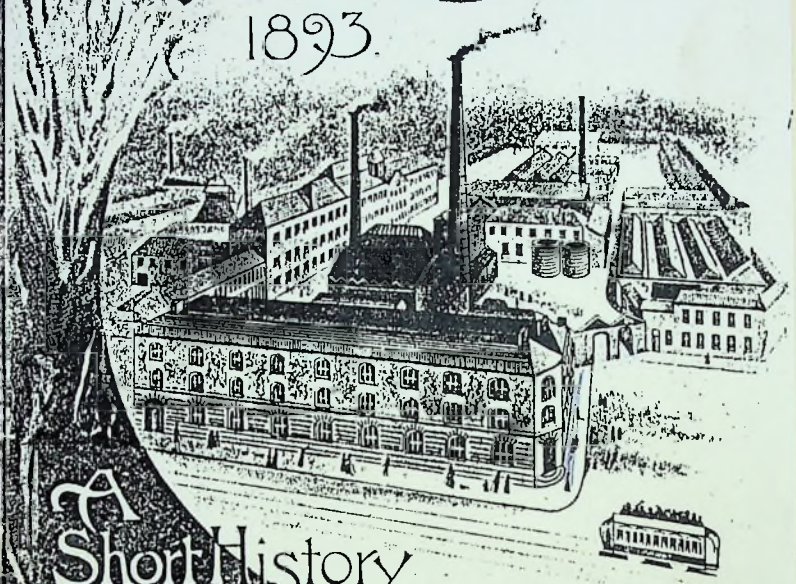
55. The Concourse

56. The Counting House Circa 1878

57. Cover of Powers World Fair Brochure

Souvenir World's Fair Chicago

1893.



A Short History of the Old Establishment in Dublin

NOW IN ITS 102nd Year.

Sir John Power & Son,

John's Lane Distillery, Dublin.

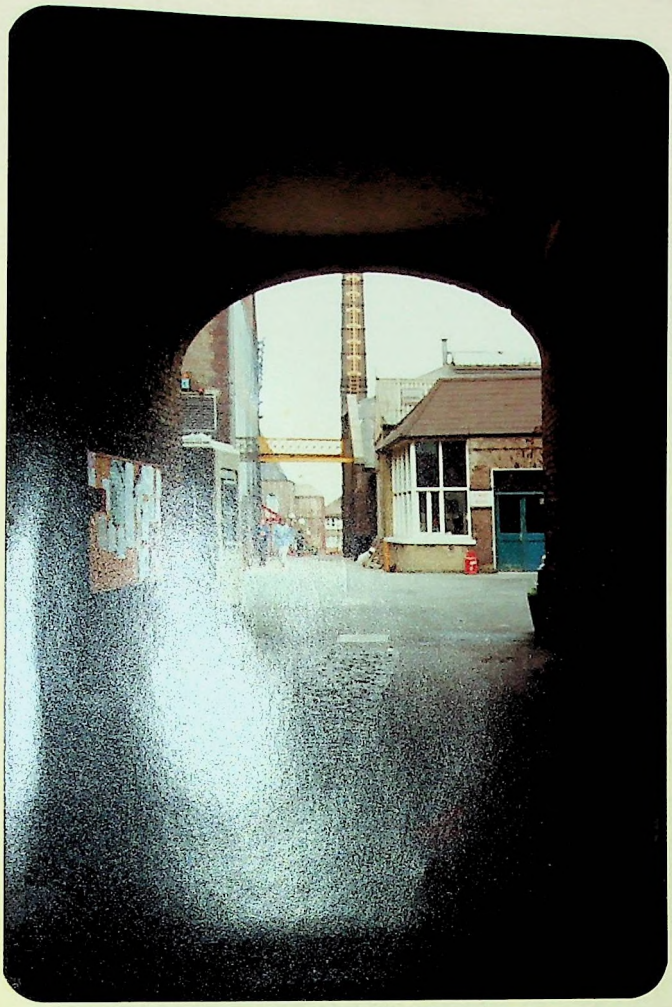
Percy Ward & Co. Ltd. Belfast.

copy, by Mr. John Ryan a descendant of James Power, of a small brochure supplied by Powers to accompany their exhibit at the worlds fair. On the cover of this brochure (fig.57) is a small illustration of the distillery showing the additional three bays. Since this is added 1893 I can assume that they were added between 1878 and 1893. To add weight to this in 1890 the corporation widened the southend of Johns Lane (23). It makes sense that the extra three bays were probably added during this street improvement. Standing from across the street it is possible to see from the brickwork exactly where the addition was made. There is more of a space between the last three windows than there is between the original six bays, suggesting that the building was not designed as a whole, but rather in two separate stages. In the Irish builder (24) N.D. Caroe is said to be the architect of these offices.

The offices are made of two types of brick, the previously mentioned white Glencullen granite for the ground floor and a contrasting red brick for the first and second floors. There are three separate entrances to this building, facing Thomas Street. The largest being a double ope gate set in an archway (fig.58). Like today, everybody, including the workers and management entered the building through this gateway. The workers would clock-in for work in what is now the attendants office (fig.59). Originally the name of the company was surmounted in handsome brass lettering over this entrance (fig.60). It has since been dismantled and is preserved in perfect condition in The Whiskey Comer Pub Museum. Every Saturday morning the brass lettering was polished and every other morning at 6 am the sign was lit up. It became a popular landmark on Thomas Street to see Power's main entrance lit up at 6 am precisely every morning.

Beside this entrance way is a double ope panelled door (fig.61). It is surmounted by a decorative semi-circular

58. Front Entrance



59. Front Entrance and Time Office

60. Brass Lettering originally over the front entrance

61. Doorway facing Thomas Street

fanlight. This doorway was seldom if ever used. It still hold the original brass fittings (fig. 62 & 63). The most interesting and elaborate doorway is the right corner bay (fig.64) also is a double ope panelled door set over four curved granite steps and is flanked on both sides by relieving plasters. The two upper panels are decoratively carved (fig.65) and have stained glass roundrels in blue tones and pale neutral colours. The plasters on either side end in decorative carved scrolls, and a cornice diuicles the ground floor from the first floor. This door led into a hallway and again into clerks' offices. However it was seldom used.

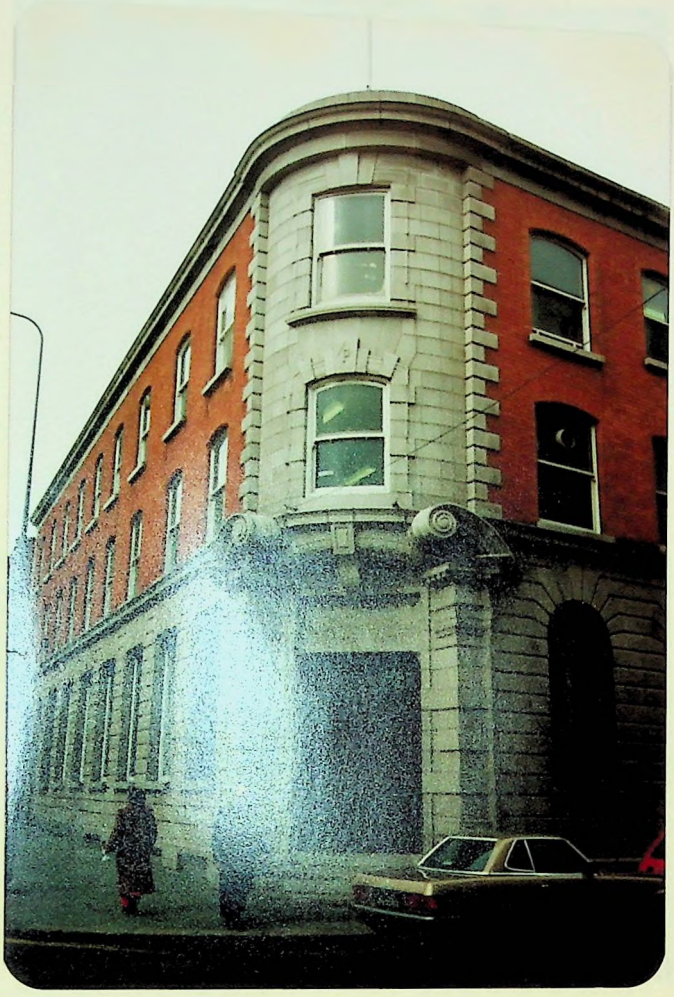
The two corner bay arched windows have curved glass. The first floor bay window has the Powers logo "P" carved on the keystone (fig.66). The sills and surrounding walls are of white granite. The seven tall, straight windows in the frontage are also set in granite with granite sills. The remaining windows on the first and second floor are curved topped with timber-frames and sheet glass. The sills are in contrasting white granite. The door into the main offices on the concourseside (fig.67) is a beautiful double ope door with decorative leaded lights set into a semi-circular fanlight with radiating bars (fig.68). On the same wall to the right of the door from the outside is a large round-headed window (fig.55). This window is divided into a "Palladan Window" (25) framework with the radiating bars over the smaller central arch. Parallel to this wall is a wooden counter (fig.69) topped with a leaded screen. Like today, it was used to separate the reception area with the clerks' offices behind. A column supports a heavy plastered beam dividing the front from the rear of this large room. The large windows allow a substantial amount of light into this high ceilinged, airy room. A door leading to a smaller office and hallway, is a superb example of the craftmanship of the interior decoration of this building (fig.70). This impressive structure consists of a double ope door in the centre. The two

62. Detail of Brass fittings

63. Detail of Brass fittings

64. Right Corner Bay Doorway

65 Detail of Right Corner Bay



66. Right corner bays

67. Doorway into main offices

68. Detail of fanlight

69. Detail of leaded counter

70. Timber framed screen in main offices

71. Detail of date and logo

rectangular upper panels are of leaded glass and it is furnished with the original brass fittings. An elaborate timber framed screen extends from floor to ceiling with leaded glass throughout a carved pew like seat is attached to the screen on both sides (fig.71). It runs at a neat right angle to the Thomas Street facade. The door is surmounted by a carved triangular pediment carved with the year the distillery was founded in 1791, and the Powers logo (fig.71). The door on the other side of the leaded counter facing the reception desk, leads into what originally was the company's boardroom. This beautiful panelled room from floor to ceiling is rectangular in plan. With an elaborately carved wooden fireplace (fig.72) with an inner surround of glazed brick. On the wall opposite the fireplace's a panelled recess fitted as a seat (fig.73).

Back outside a stairway with a wooden handrail of an iron bulustrade which ends in a spiral (fig.74) leads to the first floor. Above the landing is a circular stained glass window (fig.75) reminiscent of the round windows on the front right corner bay doorway. The glass is in the same beige and blue tones. The first and second floor was given over to the managements' offices. Part of the second floor was also a dining room for the office staff. Food and coal were transported by a small elevator which led from the canteen in the basement up to the second floor (fig.76). It is of panelled wood from floor to ceiling with brass handrails attached. The building also contained a billiard room for management, it was situated where the life drawing room is today.

From the second floor of this building it is possible to get a good view over the rooftops of the former distiller (fig. 77,78). It is in figure 77 that you can make out the warehouse in the distance with the grass roof.

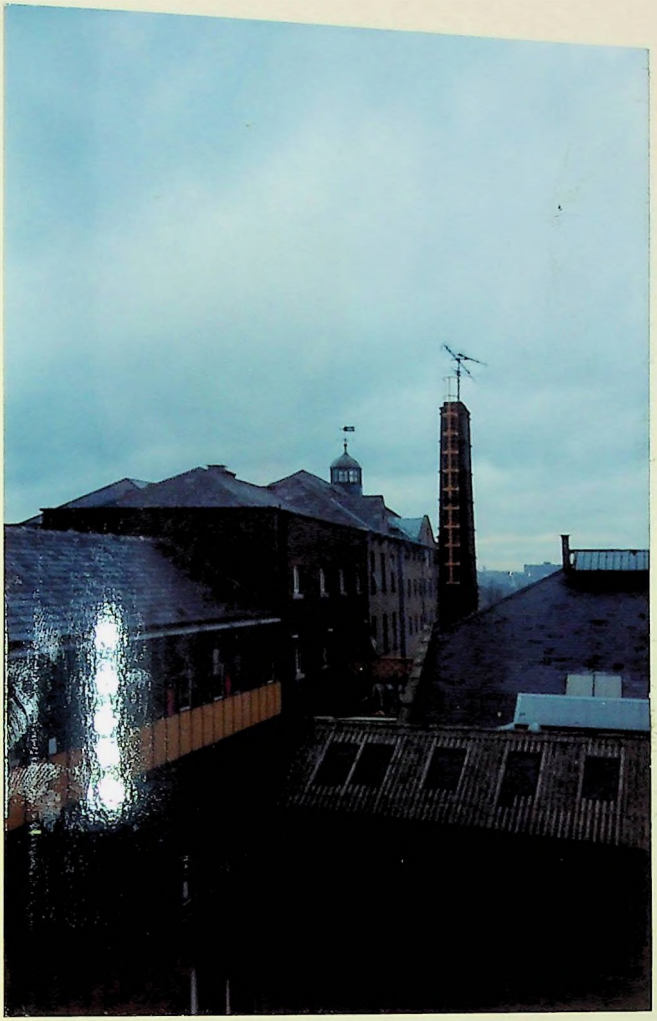
72. Fire Place in the boardroom

73. Panelled seat

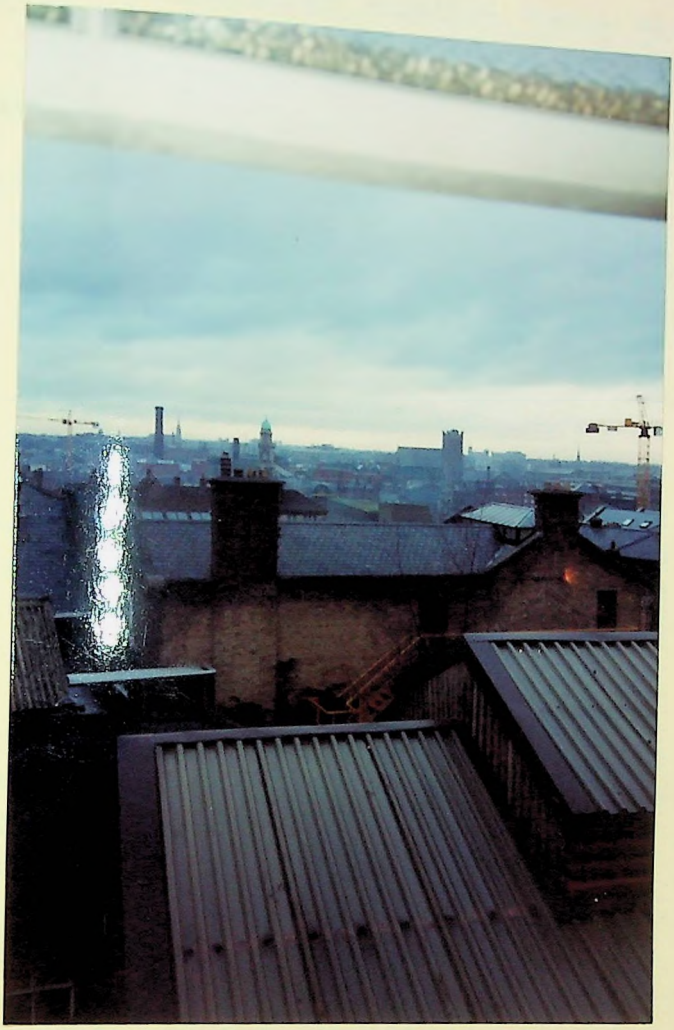
74. Detail of stairway

75. Circular leaded window

76. Food Elevator



77. View of Distillery rooves



78. View of Distillery roofs

CHAPTER III

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN, THOMAS STREET

1. New Buildings in Old Settings

The integration of new architecture into the historical substance ofour towns and cities is one of the most difficult problemsfaced by architects today. The problem is also one which meets with the most controversy and criticism. Uncertainty reigns even in the industry itself as soon as it is a question of erecting new buildings with modern means and modern requirements into an old setting. It does not take a student of architecture to know, even in the brief walk from Thomas Street to Trinity College that we have been ruthless with our architectural heritage. We are in constant danger of loosing the unique characters of our cities and towns due to a total lack of regard for our old buildings.

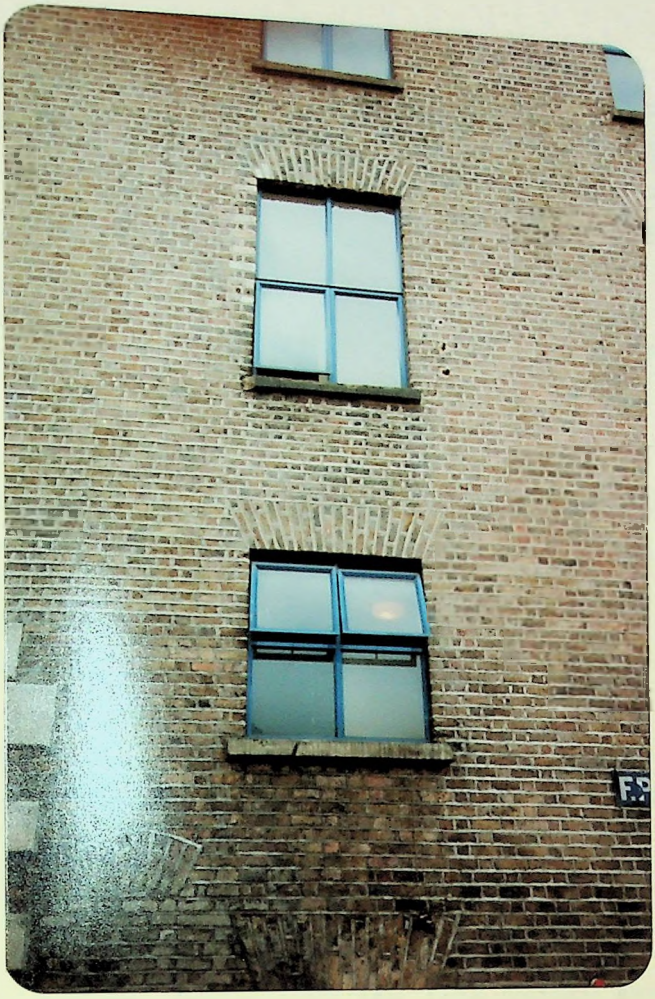
The necessity of creating new premises for the National College of Art & Design became also the opportunity to preserve and renew the fine complex of 18th and 19th century distillery buildings on Thomas Street. When faced with such a task there is always a conflict between two necessary requirements; the necessity to preserve our architectural heritage and the necessity to develop modern architecture. The conflict arises when the new comes up against the old.

Today in Thomas Street where Powers Distillery once stood, new contents fill the old structures. Whenever the old architecture has not been adequate it has been converted and transformed.

Adaptation or Contrast?

In 1977 a study was initiated by the National College of Art & Design to be carried out by the architects Burke Kennedy & Doyle to assess the suitability of Powers as a new location for the College. In order to preserve this group of buildings an architectural theme had to be decided upon. The architects either had to adapt or imitate the form of these old buildings or to go the opposite way and choose a contrasting theme. In the integration of old and new buildings I think to imitate the existing form of the old building represents a need to cling to the past, probably out of fear or dislike of the new, and a fear of contemporary architecture. In most cases to imitate is to go in the wrong direction. We need a new architecture, but perhaps one with a memory and we need to respect that memory. In adapting the old distillery into an educational building the architects must have regard for the existing setting and a respect for its history. In other words I feel that in order for a new architecture to emerge that is independent from the existing setting, while still having respect for its history, a contrasting theme must be adapted. This contrasting theme will highlight the original building while at the same time allowing a new architecture to emerge. This contrasting theme was used by the architects for the conversion of the distillery into the National College of Art & Design. In their choice of materials and methods they have made use of modern resources - aluminium, glass and brick, whilst in the outline of the building, in the block itself, they have continued the composition of the existing building, so that the new becomes part of the whole.

The new materials used in the structure were chosen for colour and texture as a foil to the original. The smooth bright yellow and reds of the aluminium are perfect to express and contrast with the roughness of the old brick and granite of the granary. Practicallyl the whole of this building was gutted, apart from



79. Detail of Granary windows

the mill engine room, to make way for a more spacious studio area. The windows were made discreetly bigger (fig.79) to allow for better light while keeping the original brick trimwork intact. The window panes have been painted a tasteful blue, to contrast with the neutral tones of the brickwork. New floors and ceilings were constructed with only the original old Baltic timber ceiling remaining. The entire interior walls have been white washed to give an added feeling of brightness.

In landscaping the materials used are similarily smooth and regular. The banked grass and shrubbery and areas of low knotted planting in smooth modern red brick provide beds of green to a backdrop of stone grey and brightly coloured aluminium. The smooth red brick paving contrasts with the rough cobbled pathways (fig.80).

Renovation of the buildings had been assisted by the fact that Irish Distillers had kept them well maintained. The transformation of the old distillery has been likened to a 'readymade Pompidov building'. However it did attract its fair share of criticism at the time.

The original scheme, devised in the late 1970s, envisaged that most of the buildings in the disused distillery would be converted to provide for the needs of the college's various departments with minimal new construction. This was the intention of Burke Kennedy & Doyle. In an interview with Mr. Doyle(2) he explained to me his original plans for the distillery. The group of buildings which made up the Brew House, Canpit Room and Spirit Stores were to be converted into studio space and a library. He explained that the interesting arrangement of the various buildings would make a library full of comfortable alcoves to study in. They listed the buildings as being of much architectural interest and advised that they should be preserved. However the College sought permission to

80. Old beside the new

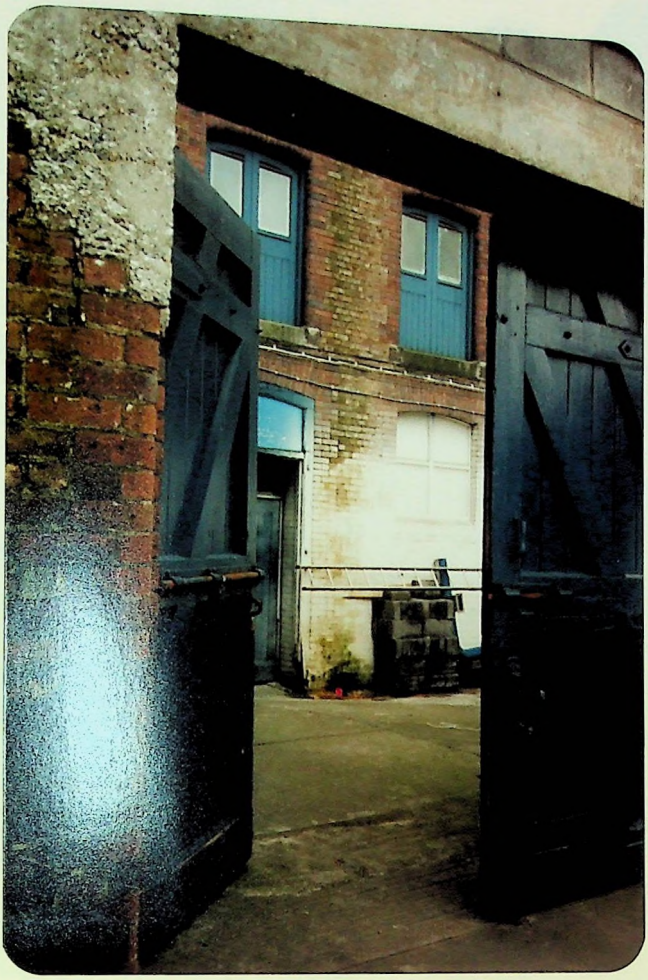
81. Former Lodging Houses

knock down the copperhead and Brewhouse (3), both listed for preservation. Permission was granted to knock down the brewhouse and the college was accused of "wanton vandalism" (4).

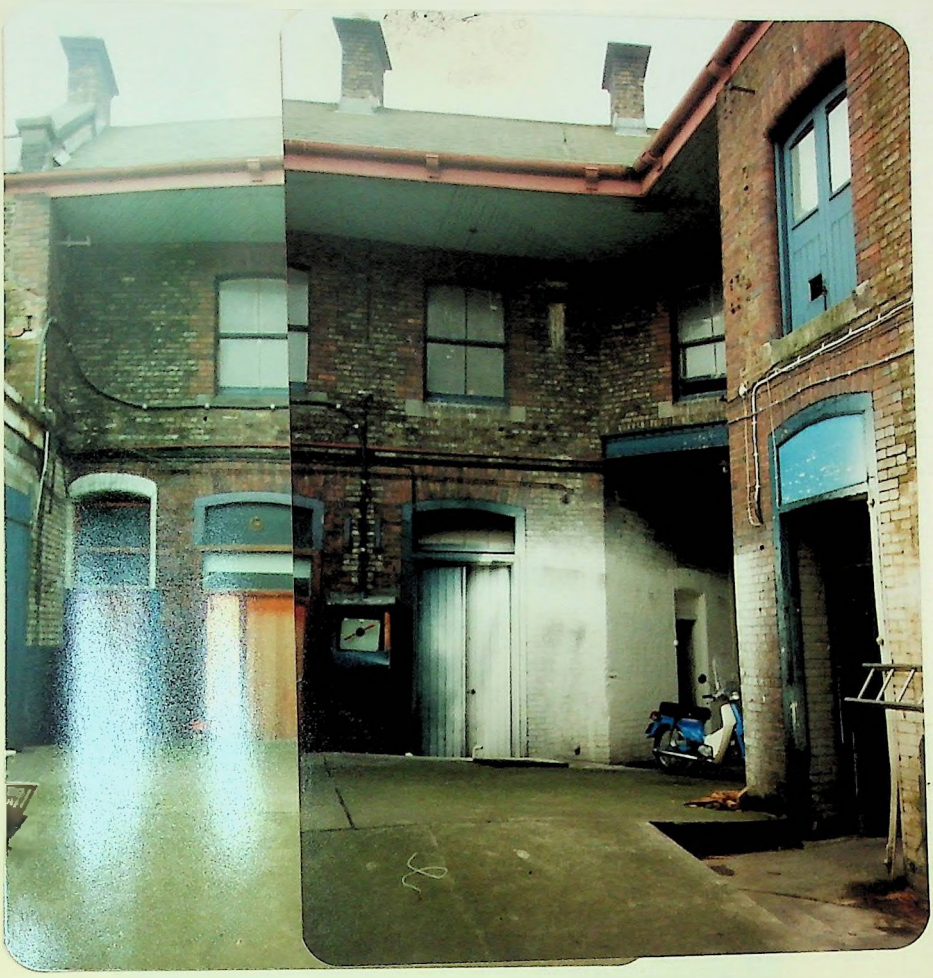
This change in direction, reflected a change in architects. The earlier two phases of converting the granary and the main offices was carried out by Burke Kennedy & Doyle, but because of a falling out between themselves and the college they were not retained to the final stage. Instead the contract was handed over to the husband and wife team of Peter and Mary Doyle.

Mr. Doyle, a committed modern architect, drew up an outline to replace the existing "clutter" (5) of buildings with an L-shaped modern block on the John Lane and Oliver Bond street perimeter. While Burke Kennedy and Doyle saw great potential for restoration in Peter & Mary Doyles "clutter", Peter Doyle saw them as "a jumble of rundown buildings, mostly of no architectural, merit" (6). They did not understand why the buildings had been listed for presentation. The result of his work is the open spaced courtyard area. I feel, while such a large space is fine if utilised to its full capacity, but in a college were space is of the utmost value I cannot help feeling that this vastly underused and ignored part of the college is a waste of the much needed space which the college is crying out for. Its only good point being that it shows of the long facade of the restored granary to the best advantage.

In researching this paper I discovered various parts of the old distillery, still standing, which previously I had never known existed. The former lodging houses (fig.81) which border the L-shaped courtyard are one such example. In fact I was not even aware that they even belonged to the college. On inspection of this area, I was surprised and appalled by the derelict state



82. Entrance to Lodging Houses.



83. Section of Courtyard

84. Detail of carved Wood Banister.

85. Detail of door with brass knob.

of these once beautiful 19th century houses. No attempt has been made to refurbish them and they were obviously not included in any of the architectural phases to convert the distillery.

It is possible to gain entrance to these buildings from the John's lane side directly behind the church, but I entered them through the main gateway in figure 82. This led into a small but bright courtyard (fig.83) surrounded on three sides by the houses. At present a section of the ground floor area is used as a makeshift workshop area for the college foremen with shower and toilet facilities. Access to the upper floor was through the doorway in figure 83 which is partially sprayed white. The stairway was blocked by discarded rubbish and clutter which had built up over the years. On removing this I discovered a narrow winding stairway with a 19th century carved wooden banister (fig.84). The stairway led to an assortment of rooms, all of different shapes and sizes. Although derelict and boarded up the rooms are in quite good condition and are structurally sound. The doors are old pine, complete with the original brass doorknobs (fig.85). Surely to refurbish these derelict buildings would provide valuable on-campus accommodation for the students who have to search elsewhere around the city for rented accommodation. It would also bring more life to that part of the college which is at present almost totally ignored and neglected and instead bring a more lively atmosphere to the college.

Unfortunately not much of an attempt has been made either, to show off the interesting collection of industrial archaeology we inherited from Powers. These buildings and machinery are attracting increasing numbers of people interested in old engines and old industrial processes. When the library was built alongside the Number One engine, instead of attempting to preserve or even incorporate the engine as a feature in the

library, the floor has been extended out over the engine, hiding half of it from view. The parts of it that are visible are rusty, filthy and totally neglected.

Across the way lies the Number Two engine house. Although its exterior has been tastefully preserved the inside could not be more different. This once gleaming engine, the showpiece of the distillery and much talked about by industrial archaeologists now lies ignored and filthy, partially covered by a plastic sheet (fig.38). Mr. Ryan and Mr. Blake reflected on the engine when it was once the showpiece of the distillery. "The brass handles of the engine were polished until they shone and you could hardly hear the machine working it was so well oiled" (7). Now everything is tarnashed and rusty, the enamalled brickwork is filthy. It is at most a storeroom for discarded tools and useless bits of rubbish.

Three of the copper whiskey stills, with their elegant spherical bases leading into beautifully tapered and curved spouts, provide at most, curious pieces of sculpture, with most students being totally ignorant as to their original functions. Just a small plaque is all that is needed here to explain to any interested student or indeed tutor, the original function of these three stills.

The distillery would be an ideal place for a small museum of industrial archaeology. It would bring more outside interest into the college and also allow the students to have a greater knowledge and sense of history about the old Powers distillery. It would also give people a chance to see these machines in their working environment. We should be proud of our inheritance and we should be showing it off as a focal point of the college, instead of allowing it to gather more dust.

CONCLUSION

In writing this paper I hope to have given the reader a clear picture of the distillery before it's conversion into the National College of Art and Design.

The architects have been successfull in highlighting and maintaining the rough 19th century walls of the former distillery. Through their use of modern resources they have provided a successful contrast with the old buildings.

Today, the College of Art as we know it is not the product of one architectural firm. The final stage in the renovation was carried out by the modern architects Peter and Mary Doyle.

In my opinion the college would have benefited more from the proposal put forward by Burke Kennedy & Doyle. Their plan was to retain practically all of the former distillery site. However Peter and Mary Doyle saw these as merely a "clutter" of derelict buildings of no architectural merit. They introduced a solution of demolishing these buildings and in their place created the Piazza-area which we have today. Mr. Doyle was of the opinion that his proposal would lend a "feeling of excitement" to the college. In fact what he achieved was the reverse.

It is no wonder the college authorities are moaning about lack of space. I find it ironic that the claustrophobic Fashion, Fine art, and Core studies departments in the granary look out at a vast area of underused space. This Piazza at most provides a few students with a sunny corner during the months of May and June.

A lot of areas in the College, have little or no room for physical expansion. The library is already crowded and the Visual Communication department in the administration building had to decrease the number of students entering due to lack of space.

Even if the Brewhouse, canpit room and part of the spirit stores had been retained it would have provided more breathing space for the college, we would still have a courtyard area, but a smaller and more practical one that would provide a focal point for the college grounds. It would also bring more life and atmosphere to that part of the college, which today is vastly underused and ignored.

My general conclusion is that we have not utilised to our best advantages the space provided by Irish Distillers.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER I

1. Smithson, A. Dublin Historical records, Vol VI page 7.

2. The making of traditional Irish Poitin is described in Alfrad Barnards, The Whiskey Distilleries of the United Kingdom Pages 9-11

3. Taken from a brochure supplied by Powers on 1 May 1893 page 6 par.2. It was given to me by Mr. John Ryan of Irish Distillers.

CHAPTER II

1. Interview with Mr. Frank Ryan and Mr. Blake on Feb. 15 1990

2. Interview with Mr. Ryan Feb.15 1990.

3. Crowe, Maire. Evening Herald 6 June 1986.

4. Taken from brochure supplied by Powers on 1 May 1893, p.8.

5. Blackett, Spencer. Industries of Dublin page 43, para.1.

6. Barnard, Alfrad. Whiskey Distilleries of the United Kingdom Page 359, Para..

7. Interview with Mr. Ryan Feb.15 1990.

8. Barnard Spencer. Whiskey Distilleries of the United Kingdom Page 359 Para.1.

9. See further G. Bowie 'Two stationary Beam Engines in Powers Distillery in Industrial Archaeology Vol.11, no.3.

10. This information was gathered by a telephone interview with Mr. John Irvine, architect Feb 10, 1990.

11. Interview with Mr. Blake & Mr. Ryan Feb 15, 1990.

12. Interview with Mr. Blake & Mr. Ryan Feb 15, 1990.

13. List of items obtained from the Irish architectural archives.

14. Barnard, Alfrad. Whiskey Distilleries of the United Kingdom Page 359, Para.1.

15. Interview with Mr. Ryan and Mr.Blake Feb 15, 1990.

16. Blackett, Spence. Industries of Dublin Page 49, Para 2.

17. Barnard, Alfrad. Whiskey Distilleries of the United Kingdom Page 363 Para 2.

18. Freemans Journal 17 May 1877. Taken from an account in "Architects Survey of Thomas Street" Vol IV Page 201.

19. Irish Times 6 July 1961 page 9.

20. Interview with John Blake & Frank Ryan Feb 15 1990.

21. Interview with John Blake & Frank Ryan Feb 15 1990.

22. Blackett, Spencer. Industries of Dublin Page 43.

23. Architectural Survey of Thomas Street Vol IV page 201.

24. Irish Builder. July 20 1905 Vol.47 page 522.

25. Architectural Survey, Thomas Street Vol. IV page 201.

CHAPTER III

1. Wren, Timothy, 11 April 1981.

2. Interview on Nov 28 1989 with Mr. Des Doyle.

3. Mc Donald Frank, Irish Times 13 August 1985 Par.1.

4. Mc Donald Frank, Irish Times 13 August 1985 Par.7.

5+6 Mc Donald Frank, Irish Times 13 August 1985 Par.12.

7. Interview with Frank Ryan & John Blake Feb 15, 1990.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnard, Alfrad. The Whiskey Distilleries of the United Kingdom Published 1897.

Blackett, Spencer. Industries of Dublin. Published 1882.

Bowie, G. Industrial Archaeology Vol II.

Burton, Anthony. Our Industrial Past. George Philip Publishers, 1985.

Craig, Maurice. Dublin 1660-1860 Allen Figgis & Co 1982.

Gloag, John. Victorian Taste. David & Charles Publishers 1972.

Magee, Malachy. 1000 years of Irish Whiskey. O'Brien Press 1980.

McDermott, Matthew. Dublin's Architectural Development 1800-1925, Published 1968.

Mc Guire, E.B. Irish Whiskey Harpe & Row, 1973.

O'Donnell, E.E. The Annals of Dublin, Fair City. Wolfhound Press 1987.

Service, Alastair. Victorian Architecture. Thames & Hudson 1977

Shaffrey, Patrick & Maura, Buildings of Irish Towns, O'Brien Press 1985.

Vince, John. Power Before Steam, Published by John Murray Ltd 1985.

A history of Technology Vol. IV. The Industrial Revolution 1750-1850. Oxford University Press 1958.

Dublin Historical Records.

Thomas Street Heritage Survey. Vol.II Guinness Hop Store.

INTERVIEWS

Doyle, Des. Burke Kennedy & Doyle Partners, Hatch St. Oct 5 1989.

Irvine John. Architect telephone correspondence January 1989.

Mr. John Blake. N.C.A.D. 15 Feb 1990.

Mr. Frank Ryan. N.C.A.D. 15 Feb 1990.

Mr. John Ryan. Irish Distillers 21 January 1990.

PERIODICALS

1. Anonymous 'National College of Art & Design Phase One' Plan 2. February 1982.

2. Coghlan Denis 'T.D.s and Ministers may get premises' Irish Times 8 April 1980.

3. Dick Williams 'John's Lane Steam Engine' Technology Ireland, Jan 1979.

4. Jacob Robert 'Rusting Engines' Irish Times 15 Aug 1985.

5. Liddy Pat 'John's Lane, Thomas Street' Irish Times 8 June 1983.

6. Mould Daphne 'Rusting Engines' Irish Times 3 Aug 1985.

7. McDonald Frank 'Listed Buildings' Irish Times 13 Aug 1985.

8. McDonald Frank 'Arts and Studies' Irish Times 24 July 1986.

9. Walshe John 'Liberties to get a new boost' Irish Independent 1981.

OTHER SOURCES

Pearse Street Library.
Irish Architectural Archive.

Ilac Centre Newspaper Library.

Irish Whiskey Corner Pub, Bow Street.

John Young, Irish Distillers.

Peter Walsh, Curator of Guinness Hop Store.

Joan Walsh.

Keogh, Peter, former employee of Irish Distillers.

John Turpin, Director of National College of Art & Design.