

**Bedford Row**

**Lying – In**

**Hospital**

**P5**

## **Contents**

<b><u>Introduction</u></b>	<b>1</b>
<b><u>Annual Reports (1868 – 1971)</u></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><u>Management Committee (1927 – 1970)</u></b>	
Management Committee Minute Books (1927 – 1941)	4
Letters relating to financial matters (1890 – 1969)	5
Letters relating to repairs and renovations (1899 – 1970)	7
Irish Sweepstakes Fund (1930 – 1960)	7
Sale of Premises to Irish Cinemas Ltd (1961 – 1970)	8
<b><u>Medical Staff and Patients (1904 – 1975)</u></b>	
Registration of Births (1904 – 1975)	9
Visiting Medical Staff Minute Book (1884 – 1948)	10
Sub Committee (of Limerick Child Welfare Committee) for Control of Midwives (1923)	11
Annual Medical Reports (1957 – 1960)	11
Letters to Medical Staff (1921 – 1942)	12

### **Introduction**

The Bedford Row Lying-In Hospital collection held by Limerick City and County Archives consists mainly of annual reports, minute books of the management committees and medical staff committees, patient registers and miscellaneous correspondence. The earliest document in the collection dates from 1868, and latest documents date from the time of the closure of the hospital in 1975.

The Bedford Row Lying-In hospital was founded in 1812 as a charitable institution to provide maternity care for the poor of Limerick city. The 1868 annual report outlined the important role of the hospital, noting that ‘those who have witnessed the sufferings of the wives and mothers of the poor who meet their hour of trial in a crowded hovel or dreary cellar can alone appreciate the benefits of this Institution, which secures to them safety, comfort and quiet, and in many cases provides clothing for both women and children’ (P5/1). By 1898, the services of the hospital had expanded. The hospital acted as a training centre for nurses, a dispensary for treatment of diseases peculiar to women and children had been established, and the Child Welfare Committee operated a clinic for children from the basement of the hospital.

From 1812 until 1960 the hospital was managed by a voluntary Ladies Management Committee, which was elected annually. The responsibilities and concerns of the management committee included the management of medical staff and financial affairs of the hospital, the maintenance of the hospital building, and improving the facilities and services at the Bedford Row hospital. The hospital was financed by fundraising activities of the committee, voluntary subscriptions, and by an annual grant from Limerick Corporation. Physicians gave medical service free of charge for destitute patients. Physicians also used the facilities of the hospital to care for private (fee-paying) patients.

The management committee minute books (P5/26-28) and annual reports (P5/1- 25) frequently recorded the need for building work at the hospital to improve facilities and eliminate overcrowding. Whilst various improvements to the hospital building were carried out in nineteenth and early twentieth century, the financial resources needed to carry out a major building project, were not available to the committee. In 1930 the Public Charitable Hospitals Act established the Hospital Sweepstakes. The Bedford Row hospital, as a charitable institution, qualified for support from the Hospital Sweepstake fund and the financial position of the hospital became sound. The management committee decided to purchase a new site to build a new maternity hospital. In 1935 a site was purchased at Belfield Park, on the north side of the Shannon River. However plans to erect a new hospital were halted by the onset of World War II. In 1949 the Minister of Health announced plans to build a Limerick Regional Maternity hospital to service Limerick city and county, Tipperary and Clare, which was to be operated by Limerick Corporation. Limerick Corporation was instructed to compulsorily acquire the Belfield site for this purpose.

External pressure was then put on for the closure of Bedford Row Hospital. The hospital was excluded from the Hospital Sweepstake funds, and the Corporation grant was withdrawn in 1956. However the hospital continued in operation until 1975. During this time, it mainly provided maternity care for private patients of the physicians rather than for poor of the city.

The collection is organised into three sections. The first section consists of published annual reports (P5/1-25). These reports provide a useful overview of hospital activities, number of patients treated, and financial position of the hospital on an annual basis. However there are no annual reports in the collection for the first fifty-three years of the hospital, and there is an incomplete set of reports for the years 1868-1971.

Section two relates to the activities of the management committee. The management committee meetings were held regularly, and the surviving minute books (P5/ 26-28) are important source for investigating the administration and financing of the hospital, the management issues which arose, and the role of various individuals in the operation of the hospital. This section also includes miscellaneous documents relating to financial matters, repairs and renovations, and the Hospital Sweepstakes fund. One useful document in this section is P5/44, which traces the historical development of the hospital.

Section three relates to the medical staff and patients of the hospital. The patient registers (P5/49-54) may be useful to family historians, and to researchers interested in analysing medical treatments at maternity hospitals. However because of the personal information contained in these registers, the records are closed for one hundred years. All of the registers will be made available to researchers by 2075. Also in this section is the minute book of the visiting medical staff (P5/55). Medical staff meetings were held very intermittently. However the minute book relates to meetings held between 1884 and 1948, and therefore it is a very useful source for researching the development of the hospital, and the role of the visiting physicians.

Whilst there are considerable lacunas in the Bedford Row collection, it is nonetheless, a key source for exploring the history of the Bedford Row hospital. The collection will therefore be useful to local historians researching the hospital and its role in Limerick city throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. It is also useful to those interested in social and medical history, particularly researchers interested in topics such as charitable institutions, and in maternity medicine. The registers of births will also be useful to family history researchers.

The Department of Health records held by the National Archives of Ireland, includes documents relating to the relationship between the Department of Health and the Bedford Row Hospital in the twentieth century.

## **BEDFORD ROW LYING-IN HOSPITAL**

### **Annual Reports (1868 – 1971)**

Printed annual reports of Bedford Row Lying-In Hospital. Reports outline activities of management committee, numbers of patients treated, improvements made to building, annual accounts, list of medical staff, management committee, visiting committee, and of subscriptions and donations received. Reports from 1935 onwards are in booklet form, and from 1936 onwards include a medical report. Annual reports were not published between 1957 and 1960. Incomplete set of annual reports.

1	1868	2 pp
2	1879 Includes handwritten alterations to accounts	2 pp
3	1898	2 pp
4	1916 Includes handwritten alterations	2 pp
5	1927	2 pp
6	1935 Photocopy	12 pp
7	1936 Photocopy	11 pp
8	1940	13 pp
9	1941	13 pp
10	1942	13 pp
11	1943	13 pp
12	1944	13 pp
13	1950	14 pp
14	1952	14 pp
15	1953 Includes handwritten alterations	12 pp

16	1955 and 1956 Includes handwritten alterations	23 pp
17	1961 and 1962	15 pp
18	1963 and 1964	20 pp
19	1965 Includes handwritten addition	8 pp
20	1966	7 pp
21	1967	7 pp
22	1968	7 pp
23	1969	7 pp
24	1970	7 pp
25	1971	7 pp

### **Management Committee**

#### **Management Committee Minute Books (1927 – 1941)**

Minute Books containing minutes of management committee. Meetings were generally held monthly. Minutes of 'special meetings' held intermittently to discuss issues needing immediate attention, and minutes of sub-committees also occasionally recorded. Minutes record date, attendance, details of correspondence received, matters discussed, and resolutions passed. Committee membership consisted entirely of ladies until 1961, after which management committee was composed mainly of doctors. Entries relate to topics such as fund-raising activities including flag-days, bridge drives and dances; hospital accounts and investments; hospital staff recruitment, salaries and duties; repairs and extensions to hospital building; proposed hospital building at Belfield, Ennis Road; hospital sweepstakes. Entries generally signed by chairman.

3 volumes

26	2 March 1927 – 8 June 1932	c. 250 pp
27	6 July 1932 – 11 December 1936 Includes index	c. 200 pp
28	14 January 1961 – 1 March 1969 (4 May 1974) Includes financial report for each month. Includes minutes of annual general meetings held between 1961 and 1974.	c. 100 pp

**Letters relating to financial matters (1890 – 1969)**

- |    |                                  |  |
|----|----------------------------------|--|
| 29 | 30 September 1890                | <p>Letter to Harriet O'Brien<br/>(President, Ladies<br/>Management Committee)<br/>from William Syndey Cox (insurance agent) requesting cheque for<br/>insurance policy on furniture in Lying-In hospital.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1 item.</p>  |
| 30 | 3 October 1896 – 19 October 1898 | <p>Letter to Harriet O'Brien<br/>from James Welply<br/>(agent) enclosing<br/>statement of account and vouchers for Bedford Row and Henry Street<br/>properties. Credit entries on statement of account have been numbered<br/>to correspond with enclosed receipts, and include entries for items such<br/>as 'P. Morony repairing roof and new trap door', 'Sun Fire Insurance<br/>policy' and 'poors' rate made April [18] 97'. Receipts not included for<br/>entries '1', '2', '3', '6' and '7'.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">7 items</p>  |
| 31 | 12 May 1900                      | <p>Letter to Harriet O'Brien<br/>from John Dundon,<br/>(solicitor) discussing<br/>Ffelan V Russell, which relates the administration of the will of Mary<br/>McMahon (deceased). Also encloses copy of draft scheme to be put<br/>before the Master of the Rolls, High Court of Justice, Chancery Division.<br/>By this scheme the residue of the personal estate of Mary Mahon will be<br/>administered by the commissioners of Charitable Donations and<br/>Bequests. The commissioners will pay two thirds of dividends arising<br/>from 'Mary Mahons Bequest' to the treasurer of Barrington hospital, and<br/>one third of dividends to the treasurer of Bedford Row, Lying-In<br/>hospital.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">5 pp</p> |

- |    |                                 |   |
|----|---------------------------------|---|
| 32 | 29 October 1915                 | <p>Circular memorandum received from Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests for Ireland regarding conversion of new consoles held by them into £4 ½ per cent war stock, and new dates for payment of dividends.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1 p</p>   |
| 33 | 26 July 1912 – 13 February 1920 | <p>File of letters and copy letters relating to fees payable to hospital for attendance on wives or other dependants of the military. Includes letters to Dr. Every Massey from J. Rowan (S. Q. M Seargent) disputing £1.1.0 fee for attendance on his wife; letters between secretary, Bedford Row hospital, Lieutenant Colonel Ford (medical officer in charge, military hospital Limerick) and Dr. Every Massey (acting secretary, visiting medical committee) relating to quotation for lowest daily rate chargeable for soldiers wives admitted to hospital.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">c. 15 items</p> |
| 34 | 23 April 1914                   | <p>Letter to Limerick Lying Hospital from M. Stewart (district valuer, Commissioners of the Inland Revenue) enclosing amended provisional valuation of land occupied by Limerick Lying-In hospital in Bedford Row.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3 pp</p>   |
| 35 | 31 December 1927                | <p>Statement of accounts of Bedford Row hospital for year ending 31 December 1927.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1 f.</p>   |
| 36 | [] January 1967 – 21 March 1969 | <p>Letters from Desmond F. Wallis, (chartered accountant) to Dr. John</p>   |



A. Holmes, relating to extra charges on patients, and salary scale for midwives. Includes incomplete letter.

3 items

**Letters relating to repairs and renovations (1899 – 1970)**

- |    |                             |   |          |
|----|-----------------------------|---|----------|
| 37 | 7 December 1899             | <p>Letter to Harriett O'Brien from Robert Fogarty (engineer and architect) enclosing specifications for building new parapet wall and railing outside hospital. Also enclosed is tender for work amounting to £195 received from John Ryan and Son.</p>   | 3 items  |
| 38 | 2 April 1928 – 19 July 1928 | <p>File of letters from The Thomand Building and Joinery Works to Brian E. F. Sheehy (architect to Bedford Row Hospital) with estimates for carrying out repairs to hospital. Proposed repairs include general repairs to doors, windows, floors, external cement, plastering, roof slating, and repairs to Sanitary annex.</p> | 5 items. |
| 39 | [] June 1930                | <p>Copy of tender amounting to £461 received by Edward [] Ryan, architect from H. Leahy, builder for carrying out plastering work at Bedford Row hospital.</p>  | 1 pp     |
| 40 | 6 April 1970                | <p>Letter from John Thompson and Partners, architects and consulting engineers, 65 O'Connell street, Limerick relating to various tenders received for external painting to hospital. Also encloses copy of specifications.</p>   | 5 pp     |

**Irish Sweepstakes Fund (1930 – 1960)**

- |    |                                 |  |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 41 | 19 August 1930 – 28 August 1930 | <p>File of letters relating to correspondence with the Associated Hospitals' Sweepstake Committee discussing the eligibility of Bedford Row-Lying in Hospital to participate in the Sweep, and requesting representatives of hospital to attend meeting in Dublin.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">7 pp</p>  |
| 42 | [] 1931                         | <p>Agreement between Jervis street Charitable Infirmary, Bedford Row Lying-In hospital, and others in 1st part, and Hospital Trusts Limited in 2<sup>nd</sup> part amending the terms of the 14 October 1930 agreement for conducting a sweepstake upon the Grand National race 1931.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">4 pp</p>   |
| 43 | [] 1960                         | <p>Memorandum to Hospitals Commission from the management committee, petitioning the Commission to reconsider their decision to exclude the Bedford Row hospital from receiving Irish hospital sweepstakes funds. Memorandum gives brief outline of financial position of hospital since its foundation, and of medical staff currently employed. Includes copy of memorandum with handwritten alteration to numbers of nurses employed by hospital from 5 to 10.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">2 items.</p> |
| 44 | Undated                         | <p>Handwritten notes titled 'history of Lying-in hospital, Bedford Row, Limerick', relates mainly to financial position, services provided by the hospital, numbers of patients admitted, and request to Hospitals Commission and Board of Health for funding c.1812-1974.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">8 pp</p>  |

**Sale of Premises to Irish Cinemas Ltd (1961 – 1970)**

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|----|-----------------|--|
| 45 | Undated 1961    | Typescript letter signed by trustees of Bedford Row, Hospital consenting to sell plot of ground situated in Bedford Row, the property of the hospital in order to reduce overdraft and defray expanses of renovation.<br>1 p   |
| 46 | Undated         | Handwritten legal note relating to sale of hospital, proceeds to go to the Department of Health to build maternity block at either of regional hospitals.<br>1 p   |
| 47 | 28 January 1963 | Opinion of Counsel J. McMahon, 32 Orwell Park, Dublin, on issue of loss of light caused by construction of new building by Irish Cinemas Limited on site adjoining the hospital premises. Counsel of opinion that there was definite loss of light and that legal action should be taken if no settlement could be reached.<br>4 pp                |
| 48 | 20 January 1967 | Letter to Dr. John Holmes (management committee) from D. J. O'Malley & Co., (solicitors to hospital) relating to the use of hospital premises to lay two-inch gas pipe to the Irish Cinemas Limited building. Also encloses copy of letter received from L. Sherin, City Gas Engineer (17 January 1967) and rough sketch of proposed work.<br>3 pp |

**Medical Staff and Patients**

**Registration of Births (1904 – 1975)**

Registers of Births containing details of babies born at Bedford Row and their mothers. The entries are arranged under headings such as 'name' (of mother), 'person by whom recommended', 'place of residence', 'name of parish', 'city', 'county', 'no' 'age', 'married, single or widow', 'age at marriage'. It notes the number of children previously born to the mother, and whether male, female, alive or dead, the number of still born, and number of miscarriages. It notes the dates of admission, of delivery and of discharge from hospital. The character of labour is recorded which includes comments such as 'natural', 'forceps', 'threatened abortion', It includes also the headings 'event to mother and child, if either died state the date of death' with entries such as 'baby only lived 10 minutes' and 'both well' and 'remarks' such as 'left after 3 days' or adm[itted] with haemorrhage'. The total number of natural births per annum is also recorded.

2 volumes

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|----|--|-----------|
| 49 | 1 May 1904 – 31 December 1922<br><b>Restricted Access until 2022</b>   | c. 250 ff |
| 50 | 1 January 1923 – 29 August 1936<br>Includes list of doctors on duty and their telephone numbers.<br>Fragile, mould damage, pages stuck together<br><b>Restricted Access until 2036</b> | c. 280 ff |

Records and particulars books with details of patients filled out on 'Form No.4' sheets as required by the Registration of Maternity Homes Act 1934. Form No. 4 consists of seven sections. Under the heading 'particulars of patients to be entered on reception into the home', the name, age, address of patient, the date and her condition on reception, number of previous pregnancies, and name and occupation of her husband are recorded. Under the heading 'medical attendant (if any) of patient while in home' r name and address of attendant are recorded. Recorded under 'confinement and birth in Home' are details such as date and hour of delivery, whether delivery was normal or abnormal, if complications developed, the sex and weight of baby, whether full time or premature, alive or still born. The next sections record details of miscarriages or death in Home, and date of discharge of the mother. The final section records particulars of the person removing child, and the person to whose care child is removed.

4 volumes

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|----|--|------------|
| 51 | 22 July 1971 – 13 October 1972<br><b>Restricted Access until 2075</b>  | c. 1000 pp |
| 52 | 13 October 1972 – 28 December 1973<br><b>Restricted Access until 2075</b>  | c. 1000 pp |
| 53 | 27 December 1973 – 9 April 1975<br>Includes notes calculating total number of admissions recorded in the volume. | c. 1000 pp |

**Restricted Access until 2075**

- 54      11 April 1975 – 30 December 1975      c. 400 pp  
 Includes letters to the matron from Mid-Western  
 Health Board requesting statistics regarding  
 patients from Clare area for year ending 31  
 December 1975  
**Restricted Access until 2075**

**Visiting Medical Staff Minute Book (1884 – 1948)**

- 55      15 April 1884 – 23 August 1948      Minute book containing  
 minutes of the Visiting  
 Medical Staff meetings  
 which were held intermittently. Entries generally record date, and  
 attendance, resolutions passed, and summarises correspondence. Entries  
 relate to activities such as admission and training of pupil nurses, rules  
 for management of the hospital, patients fees, hospital extension, and  
 child welfare clinic. Entries from 8 July 1903 generally signed by  
 chairman. May be incomplete as period between entries occasionally  
 several years.  
 c. 40 pp
- 56      Undated      Handwritten notes  
 outlining the disciplinary  
 decisions of the medical  
 staff in the case of probationary Nurse Kennedy who failed to notify  
 staff nurse when patient came into labours, and when temperature of  
 patient was considerably above normal.  
 2 pp

**Sub Committee (of Limerick Child Welfare Committee) for Control of  
 Midwives (1923)**

- 57      10 August 1923 – 17 August 1923      Minutes of two meetings  
 of the Limerick Child  
 welfare sub - committee  
 for control of midwives to discuss the appointment of a qualified  
 midwife as inspector of midwives for Limerick county borough.

Committee formed as result of memorandum from CMB and letters from Ministry of Local Government and Limerick Corporation.  
Meetings held at Bedford Row hospital.

3 pp

### **Annual Medical Reports (1957 – 1960)**

- 58      31 December 1957 – 31 December 1960      File of typescript annual medical reports which contain summary information regarding number of patients admitted to hospital and babies delivered during twelve-month period. Reports arranged under various headings such as ‘abnormal presentations’, ‘operative procedures’ and ‘maternal diseases during pregnancy’ and ‘infant section.’ Includes general report reviewing the medical reports from 1957 to 1960.  
See also P5/7-25
- c. 10 pp

### **Letters to Medical Staff (1921 – 1942)**

- 59      6 December 1921 – 7 October 1942      File of miscellaneous letters received by medical staff of hospital from patients and management committee of hospital. Topics discussed include hospital building, patient fees, and staff rotations. Includes letter from Denis A. Carey (husband of patient) to matron of hospital praising the ‘long visiting hours, the reception desk courtesy and the good humoured nurses’ of Bedford Row Hospital. (undated)
- 6 items