



THE IRISH TIMES

Architects to sell former church

Three architectural practices are selling the former church, called Meeting Hall, at 73 Georges Avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin, which has served as their offices for about 15 years. Robin Mandal Architects, Cathal Crimmins and Justin O'Callaghan first saw Meeting Hall when it was put up for sale by the Methodist Church in 2001.

It was marketed as having residential potential but the three practices saw the light – and its potential as a beautiful workplace. “Between April and October we rarely have to use artificial light – it is such a pleasure to be able to work in

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natural light,” says Mandal, past president of the Royal **Institute of the Architects** of Ireland.

The building was one of the first Methodist churches in Ireland, built in 1847, following a visit to Ireland by John Wesley. After the architects bought it they got planning permission for the change of use from church to office.

The light-touch conversion mainly involved conserving the fabric of the building – with its high vaulted ceilings and original stained-glass windows – and adding a raised ser-

vice floor and built-in furniture.

There was a collaborative atmosphere among the three practices in the building, says Mandal.

Recession strikes

When the 2008 recession hit, things changed and “the joint travel, barbecues and working fell by the wayside”. Having survived through to the upturn, the three practices decided, reluctantly, to give up their offices. “Times change; needs change,” said Mandal, “and there comes a time when the baton must be passed on to another generation.”

The 74.32sq m (800sq ft) Meeting Hall – on a 260sq m (2,800sq ft) site – has planning permission to convert into a two-bedroom home as well as permission to extend the commercial premises. The building, comprising the main room, kitchenette, back room and patio (known fondly as the boardroom) is being auctioned by Lisney on Wednesday, October 5th, with an AMV of €400,000.

“If I won the Lotto, I would definitely buy the building, if for no other reason than the treasured memories it contains,” said Mandal.

“I will miss the lofty ceilings, the beautiful light and the wonderful evenings sitting on the terrace reminiscing of times past and looking forward to times to come.”

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■ Meeting Hall, at 73 Georges Avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin