The origins of the Association lie with a small group of Occupational Therapists way back in 1961. There was only a handful of qualified therapists practicing in the country at the time, probably about 10...lack of recognition, isolation, difficulties obtaining equipment and a great variation in working conditions and salaries were predominantly discussed

(Doreen Fleming, “Twenty One years of AOTI”, 1986, OT Ireland)

As the majority of this small group of Ireland based OT’s had trained in Britain, they wrote to the Association of Occupational Therapy in Britain (AOT) asking if they could form an AOT Regional group (as the Scottish OT’s had previously done). However, due to the fact that ‘Southern Ireland’ was not part of the United Kingdom, as required by AOT’s Articles of Association, AOT were obligated to decline this request. In a responding letter to AOT, dated 1st May 1964, the Irish OT’s declared their intention to form an Irish Association of Occupational Therapists. AOT offered their full support.

In December 1964, the first committee meeting was held and officers elected as follows:

Chair – Anna King
Vice-Chair – Ann Beckett
Hon.Secretary – Sr. Eugene
Hon.Treasurer – Mary Johnston

A year of hard work ensued. The Rules & Constitution of the association was developed with the kind assistance Mr.E.McCarron (Solicitor, 18 Hume Street) and a year later on the 13th December 1965, the Irish Association of Occupational Therapists was inaugurated.

(Letter from Sr. Eugene to Mr. Malone, Chairman of the National Organisation for Rehabilitation, 14th December 1965)

In 1967, in their attempts to join the World Federation of Occupational Therapy, the Irish OT Council sent their legal advisor on a mission to form a limited liability company. This gentleman returned to Council with the unexpected news that there was ALREADY a company registered as the ‘Irish Association of OT’s’. Upon further (discreet!) investigation it was discovered that a group of psychiatric nurses who were working in various departments had previously registered themselves in the early 60’s as the “Irish Association of Occupational Therapists”. This caused consternation among the qualified OT’s and the World Federation of OT’s were approached for advice. Unsurprisingly, the WFOT secretary, Ms.Spackman informed Council in a gravely toned letter that she “.....had never met with such a problem previously”! In the attached letter sent to the British Association in 1968, our Secretary, Mary O’Donnell, describes the Irish solution to this Irish problem.

(Information taken from the Secretary’s minutes, AGM, 1968)