



Nobel Prize winner Seamus Heaney, who delivered the Kate O'Brien lecture at the weekend held in honour of the famous Limerick author in the Lime Tree Theatre, Mary Immaculate, last Sunday. Picture: Press 22

'Mystery buyer' to renovate house

Alan Owens

A 'wealthy local businessman' is the mystery purchaser behind the home of famous Limerick writer Kate O'Brien. Mayor Cllr Jim Long has claimed.

And the mystery millionaire, who has business interests in the city, is set to restore the Mulgrave Street house and ensure it will "benefit the city and community culturally".

The mystery man recently purchased Boru House, which was built by Kate's grandfather, Thomas O'Brien, in 1880, for fractionally in excess of its asking price of just €85,000, but wishes to remain anonymous.

However, in a letter to the mayor, who met with purchaser last Friday, just as the 28th Kate O'Brien weekend - a literary festival held in honour of the writer - was about to begin in the city, he stated his intentions for the house.

"The conservation architect Tom Quinlan will be undertaking restoration of the house,"



Boru House on Mulgrave Street - the birthplace of Kate O'Brien, whose grandfather Thomas built it in 1880. It was sold by the family in 1919.

said the purchaser of the red-brick house, which has been a target for anti-social behaviour over the past number of years and is currently in a decrepit condition.

"Restoration work on the property's railings and all brick-work will be carried out by local craftsmen.

"As for its future use, I am certainly not going to convert it into 12 bedsits, I am currently exploring ideas, but you can rest assured that it will benefit

the city and community culturally. I am looking at perhaps a combination of a writer's museum and maybe a presence for the University of Limerick School of Architecture. These are just two ideas at the moment," he added.

The mayor welcomed the news, which was also welcomed by members of Kate O'Brien's family, who do not know who the mystery purchaser is.

"The restoration of this house is hugely im-

portant to the city," said Cllr Long.

"I was always very saddened that Limerick City Council couldn't buy it, but there was a number of impediments in our way. This man has stepped into the breach and it looks like all the impediments have been removed, and he is going to allow the public to use it.

"It is very heart warming to see that all the ambitions are now going to be realised."

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