



The 80-strong choir of Presentation Secondary School, Sexton Street, Limerick, recent winners of the 3-part choral singing competition at Feile Luimni. The choir is drawn from students from 1st year to Leaving Certificate and is trained and conducted by Gabrielle Lee-Casey, music teacher at the school.

New book on the Hunt Collection treasures

AT A reception at the University of Limerick yesterday evening, Nicholas Robinson launched a new book entitled "50 Treasures from the Hunt Collection," and inaugurated the Friends of the Hunt Museum, a body to promote interest in Irish antiquities and European decorative and fine arts.

The Hunt Collection is one of the great private collections put together in this century. Embracing some 3,000 art objects ranging from Neolithic and Irish Bronze Age to medieval figure sculpture and works by Picasso, Renoir, Gauguin and Yeats, it was assembled by John and Gertrude Hunt. The collection has been donated to Ireland by their family, and the University of Limerick has been

appointed its custodian in perpetuity.

John Hunt, whose family came from Limerick and Clare, was an eminent authority on medieval art and was adviser to, among others, the British Museum, The Cloisters, New York, and Sir William Burrell, whose collection is exhibited outside (Glasgow). Mr. Hunt is survived by his widow, a native of Mannheim, in Germany, who recently celebrated her 90th birthday at her home in Dublin.

Together, they built their collection largely between 1930 and 1950, and always wanted it to stay in the Limerick-Clare region.

A new museum to provide a permanent home for the Hunt Collection is now being created in the old Custom House, fronting the Curraghower Falls on the

River Shannon in the heart of Limerick city. One of Limerick's finest cut-stone buildings, the Custom House was designed by Davis Dukart, an Italian canal builder, and constructed in 1769 at a cost of £8,000. It is being restored under a joint design team from Limerick Corporation and the Office of Public Works.

The new book on the Hunt Collection was researched and written by Prof. Patrick Doran, Dean of the College of Humanities at the University of Limerick. It is richly illustrated with 50 selected works ranging from an early Egyptian sculpture to a Jack B. Yeats' painting. The book was designed by Mr. Richard Ruth and printed by Treaty Press, Limerick. It is priced at £35 and pro-

ceeds from its sale will go towards funding the Hunt Museum.

Speaking at yesterday's reception, Mr. Robinson spoke of the necessity to break down the barriers of strangeness between museums and the general public.

"This task is particularly important today," he said, "since museums must serve a public bombarded with information presented in entertaining ways through television, film, video and radio.

"Some may view the strict, severe and forbidding silence of the traditional museum as antiquated. An effective way of breaking down these barriers is through the enthusiasm and vigour that an active Friends organisation brings to a museum."

Mr. Robinson added: "The launch of the Friends

of the Hunt Museum and the publication of Prof. Doran's fine volume represent two significant steps in the realisation of John and Gertrude Hunt's wish that their collection should be enjoyed by the people of Ireland and that through it would develop an appreciation of our past as Irish people and as Europeans."

Dr. Tony Ryan, chairman of the Hunt Museum executive, said: "The Hunt collection would be the most important collection to be permanently exhibited outside Dublin. It was particularly appropriate that it should be housed in the old Limerick Custom House.

"Few cities in Europe are as fortunate as Limerick in having as great a river as the Shannon running through their centres. The Custom House is one of Ireland's few fine commer-

cial buildings to have survived the 18th century and it is to be hoped that its sensitive restoration by the Office of Public Works will lead to a renaissance of Limerick's waterfront."

Dr. Ryan said that Hunt Museum was scheduled to open to the public in June, 1994, and would add a priceless cultural dimension to the city.

Ms. Mairead Dunleavy, director of the Hunt Museum, said that "the unique focus and heart of the Hunt Collection is on the standards of design and craftsmanship of art objects produced as early as 3,000 years before Christ and as recently as this. The collection is profoundly important," she said, "in that it puts the quality of design and workmanship of Irish medieval artifacts into a European context."

