

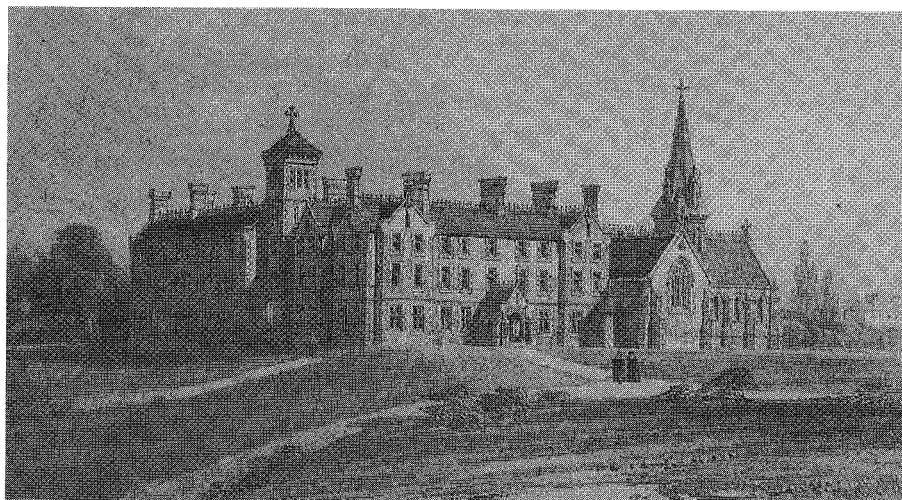
# More Urban Townlands- Mount Kennett, Courtbrack and Corcanree

## Courtbrack

**T**he townland of Courtbrack comprises an area of 156 acres stretching from the Dock Road to the South Circular Road and from the "Long Avenue" to the Redemptorist church<sup>1</sup>. The name Courtbrack means speckled court or house, and the house was reputed to have been a residence of the Earls of Desmond<sup>2</sup>. Corcanree is also said to have taken its name from the Earl as it means King's Corcass. The corcass or marsh extended from the Arthur's Quay area to Loughmore near Mungret. It was only with the development of the embankment on the southern bank of the River Shannon that the Dock Road began to be developed. In the 1950s the only buildings on the southern side of the road after Rank's flour mill were Magner's Mineral Waters (makers of Tango orange). The building stands out in a new development and is occupied by a car engine company. It is across the road from the Irish Wire Company, known locally as 'The Nut and Bolt', and the Shell Oil Depot.

## The Long Avenue

The South Circular Road and Ballinacurra are joined by the "Long Avenue", which ironically comprises the two avenues, Courtbrack Avenue and Ashbourne Avenue. This roadway predates the development of the Dock Road and it originally led to Ashbourne House, a three-storey mansion which was built in 1829<sup>3</sup>. It was owned by Eliza Hurley and was later occupied by Richard Wilson of Mullock & Co, who had a chandler shop on Howley's Quay. He married Elizabeth Mullock in 1881 and became a silent partner in the firm and the sole male Mullock relative<sup>4</sup>. It was later occupied by Edward J. Synan MP, a county magistrate and deputy lieutenant in the 1880s, and by John Richard Baker of the National Bank in the early years of the 20th century<sup>5</sup>. The last occupiers of the house were Thomas Loughrey and his wife, Mary, a daughter of James McMahon's first marriage. At the time of their marriage in March 1905, he was chief clerk of the Great Southern and Western Railway. He joined James McMahon Ltd. and became its chairman.



Mt. St. Vincent Orphanage, John Neville, architect.

Print by Day & Son, London, c. 1870.

Limerick Museum.

## by Tony Browne Part Two

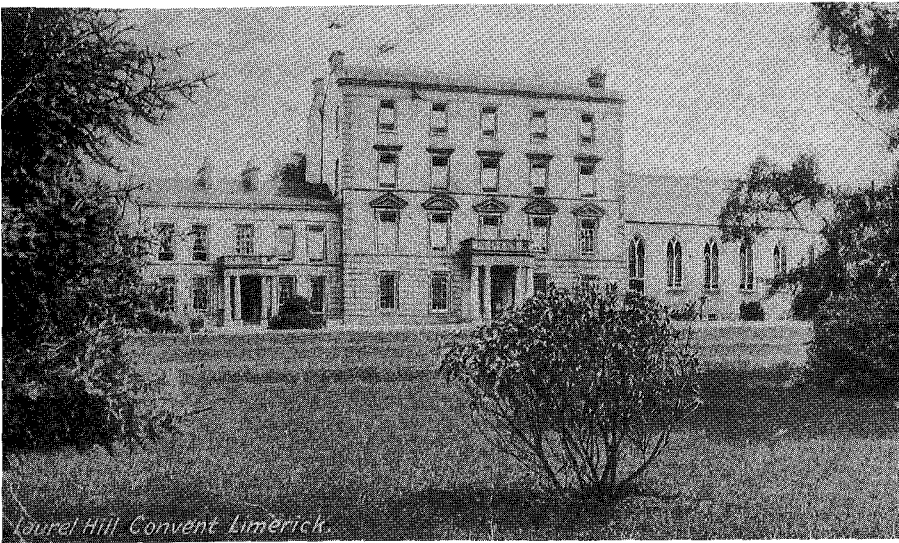
The house is demolished and a few mature trees that surrounded it are the only reminder of its existence. It stood on the north-eastern corner of the avenue which bears its name. On the other corner stands Courtbrack House, now in ruins. The roadway originally wound past the entrance to Courtbrack House and a row of cottages. The first of these cottages was the home of Guard Dennehy, a school

attendance officer who found fame through Frank McCourt's accounts of his patrols in *Angela's Ashes*<sup>6</sup>. Another was occupied by Johnny Sheehan, who owned a butcher stall in Gerard Street for many years. Further along the road on the same side is Westbourne House, now the convent of the Sisters of Mercy nuns. This was the home of the Goodbody family for many years. The family had strong connections with Ranks and they owned the sack factory on Parnell Street, across from the railway station. The factory moved to the Ennis Road in the 1960s, to a



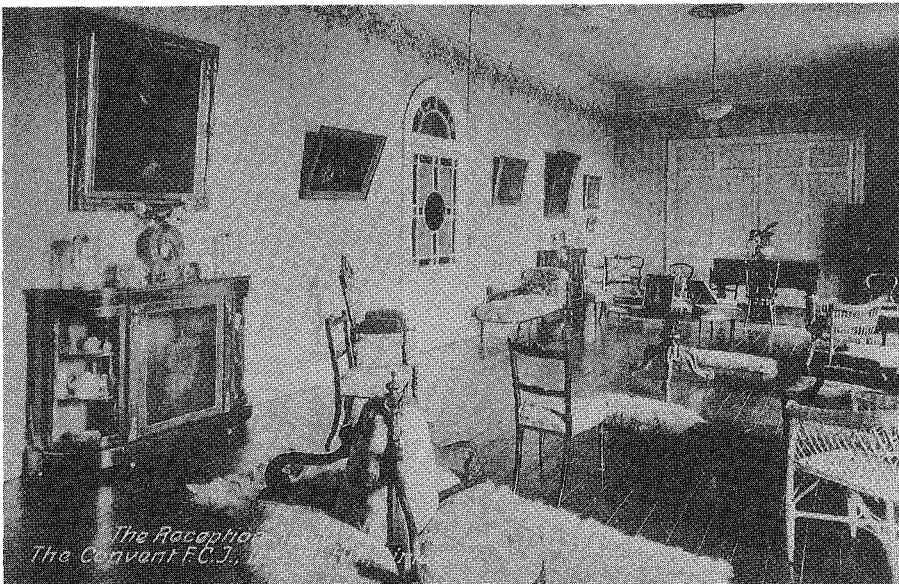
Postcard, Mary Immaculate College lecture room, c. 1910.

Limerick Museum.



Postcard of Laurel Hill Convent, 1906.

Limerick Museum.



Postcard, Laurel Hill Convent reception room, 1926. Limerick Museum.

building which is now part of the Jetland Centre. The lodge to Westbourne House was demolished recently when the road was widened. There is a school in the grounds of the house named in honour of Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy order.

Richmond House was the family home of the Fisher<sup>7</sup> and Revington<sup>8</sup> families. In October 1920 the Salesian Sisters came to Ireland at the invitation of Dr Hallinan, RC Bishop of Limerick. Their first convent was at 17 Thomas Street, now the offices of Conradh na Gaeilge. In November that year, Richmond House was acquired with the intention of opening a domestic economy school there. It was, however, used as a private day school until October 1922, when it was closed. On 1 September 1924, Fernbank, the property of Frederick Cleeve and near Cleeve's factory, was acquired and occupied by the Salesian Sisters<sup>9</sup>. Richmond House was also occupied by Spillanes, tobacco merchants, and it overlooked their tower, known as the 'Snuff Box', on the bank of the Shannon. The house is now divided and occupied by the Fennelly family, who retain the name Richmond House, and the

McNamara family, who have named their portion of the house Hillsboro.

On the western side of the 'Long Avenue' the only remaining memento to Fitt's Yard is the thoughtless and erroneous name, Fitzhaven, given to a new housing development. Rutland House, the home of the Russells, once stood on this site. The gate lodge at the entrance to Fitt's Yard on the South Circular Road was also demolished as part of the recent development.

At the top of the 'Long Avenue', on the corner opposite Fennessy's Pub, is a plaque marking the boundary of the city borough as it existed in the 1870s.

### South Circular Road

Moving down the South Circular Road towards the city centre, the Junior School of the 'Mount' is on the right. The Sisters of Mercy came to Limerick in 1838, and in 1850 they founded Mount St Vincent Orphanage, which also housed an industrial school (borstal) for girls and was used as a fever hospital during outbreaks of cholera in the city<sup>10</sup>. Further down the road on the same side is St

Philomena's School, which was founded by a Mr Scanlan as a private school. It was taken over by Laurel Hill as a junior school because of a ban imposed on the Model School by the RC clergy<sup>11</sup> and it has now reverted to its private status.

On the left side of the road is Mary Immaculate College, which is part of the University of Limerick since 1991. The college was commenced in 1898 on land provided by the Limerick Sisters of Mercy and is built on the site of Prospect House (or Prospect Hill). The house was owned by Rev Joseph Gabbett in 1850<sup>12</sup> and it had its entrance on Summerville Avenue, known locally as the 'Short Avenue', as opposed to the 'Long Avenue'. This roadway led to Summerville, which was owned by the Harveys<sup>13</sup>, and Little Summerville, owned by the Fishers<sup>14</sup>, which is sadly gone.

Further along the road stands Victoria Terrace, which has had connections with naval officers and river pilots. In 1844, when Madame d'Houet came to found a convent for the Faithful Companions of Jesus nuns, she went to live at no. 9, Victoria Terrace<sup>15</sup>. The house was one of several on the terrace owned by William Newsom<sup>16</sup>. The first school was opened by the order at the corner of the Crescent and Hartstonge Street in 1845. Later that year, having failed to purchase Ashbourne House, the present house, Laurel Hill, was bought from the Newsom family. Maryville has also become part of the Laurel Hill complex.

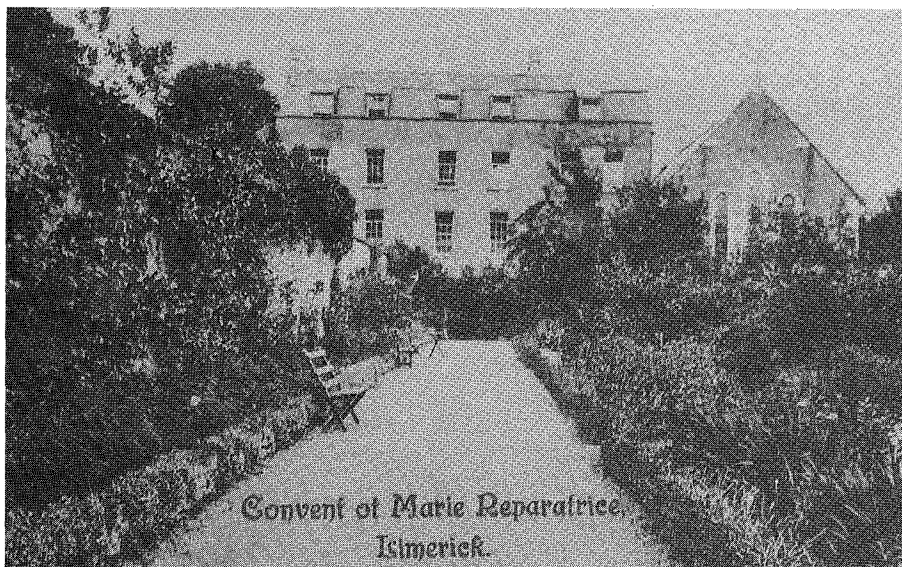
John Bernal, of French origin, who had auction rooms at 9, Thomas Street and was a city councillor for Dock Ward, built Albert Lodge on Laurel Hill Avenue in French style<sup>17</sup>. It was subsequently owned by the Walker family, who sold it to the convent, and it became Maryville<sup>18</sup>.

Clare View House, which is opposite the entrance to Laurel Hill Avenue, was also used by the school prior to extending their own premises. The late Victorian house, which has its entrance on O'Connell Avenue, dates from a time when it had a clear view of the Clare Hills, and hence its name. It was occupied by Captain Daniel Hall in 1877<sup>19</sup>, by Major N. Powlett, adjutant to Limerick City Artillery, 4th Brigade, in 1886<sup>20</sup>, and by Peter A. Grant, a commercial traveller, in 1913<sup>21</sup>.

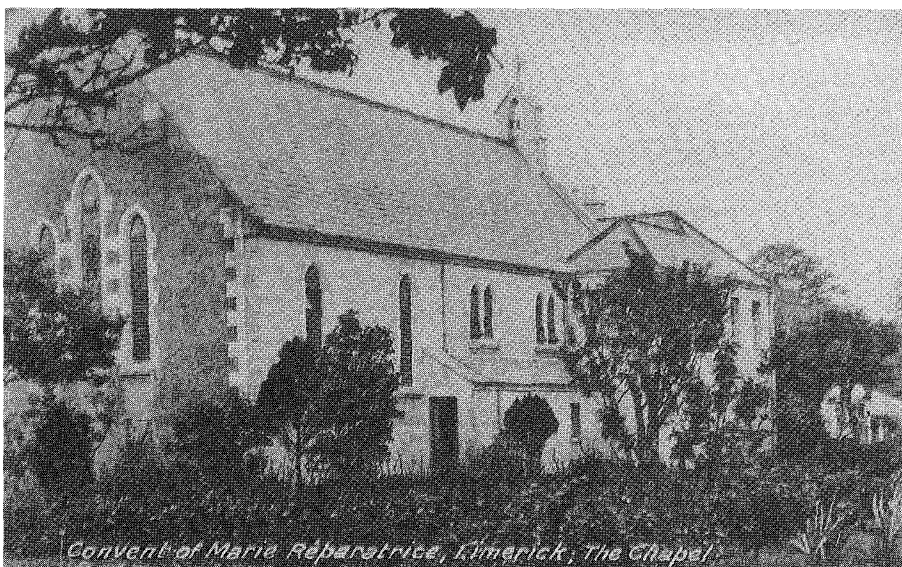
Tucked away in a cul de sac of Laurel Hill Avenue is the convent of the Sisters of Marie Reparatrice, known locally as the Reparation Convent. The order was founded in 1856 by a Belgian widow, Emily d'Oultremont. Patrick McNamara provided the order with two houses to establish their community in Limerick and its little chapel is an important retreat for local residents. The community supplies hosts for the sacrament of holy communion to most of the Roman Catholic churches in the city<sup>22</sup>.

### The Redemptorists and the Confraternity

The Redemptorists or 'the Fathers', as they are locally known, founded their first



Postcard, Convent of Marie Reparatrice, c. 1925. *Limerick Museum.*



Postcard, Chapel of Marie Reparatrice Convent, c. 1925. *Limerick Museum.*

house in Limerick and Ireland in 1853 at 8, Bank Place, where they converted the largest room in the house to a chapel. In 1854 they moved to Courtbrack and occupied two cottages on the site they purchased. A temporary church was erected while Mount St Alphonsus church was being built. It was finally completed in August 1862<sup>23</sup>.

In 1884 a boarding school was opened to educate boys who wished to become Redemptorists. In 1976 the boarding school of 100 boys became an open day school known as St Clement's College and is now staffed almost entirely by lay people. The street leading to the entrance of the church is named in honour of John Quin, who donated the tower and peal of bells when they were added to the church<sup>24</sup>.

In 1844 a Dutchman, Captain Belltable, founded the confraternity "for laymen to help each other win eternal life". He invited the Redemptorists to direct the confraternity. In 1868 a branch of the confraternity was formed in Limerick<sup>25</sup> and the fervour with which it was run led to its name becoming synonymous with that of the city for many years.

Looking down over the townland of Courtbrack, it is hard to imagine that over a third of its area was covered in woodland and waste ground only 150 years ago<sup>26</sup>. The other two thirds was open countryside, a retreat for the gentry and merchant class of that time from the hustle and bustle of city life.

#### SOURCES

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3. Richard Griffith, *op. cit.*
4. John Dundon, *pers. comm.*
5. Kelly's *Limerick Directory*, 1906; Guy's *Limerick Directory*, 1913
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9. *Limerick, A Handbook of Local History*, Treaty Press, Limerick, no date
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11. Maurice Lenihan: *History of Limerick*, 1866
12. Richard Griffith: *op. cit.*
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20. Guy's *Limerick Directory*, 1886
21. *ibid.*, 1913
22. Personal memory of writer's mother collecting hosts for use in the Augustinian Church.
23. *Handbook of Local History: op. cit.*
24. Margaret M. Lyddy: *op. cit.*
25. *Handbook of Local History: op. cit.*
26. Richard Griffith: *op. cit.*



Replica of John's Gate made by J. Sheahan on the occasion of the diamond jubilee of the Archconfraternity, 1928.

*Limerick Museum.*