

cooped up inside walls. And so there were no towns in ancient Ireland, the nearest approach to a town being a cluster of earthen ring forts—or moats, as we'd call them in Limerick—or a monastery with its associated buildings.

The first Irish townships were not established until the Vikings arrived. Limerick city grew out of a Viking or Norse colony that was established about the year 922 on an island in the Shannon. The island, then known as Inis Sibhtonn, later came to be known as King's Island; and it is there you'll find the oldest of Limerick's historic buildings, including St. Mary's Cathedral and John's Castle. Dublin, Cork and Waterford are among the other Irish townships that owe their foundation to the Vikings.

Normans

The Normans came in 1169, and in the course of the next few centuries many new towns grew up around the Norman settlements. The Normans would move into a district, erect there a castle and church—or perhaps a monastery—and mark out a fairgreen. This would be the nucleus of a new town. In such a way did the Limerick towns of Kilmallock, Croom, Adare, Askeaton and Newcastle West originate.

During the Great Famine many small villages completely disappeared, their inhabitants having been decimated by hunger, disease and emigration. You can discover many of these vanished villages on the 1840 Ordnance maps. Our cities keep on expanding—Dublin to the detriment of the country as a whole—but the establishment of new towns in the countryside is almost as rare an occurrence as a blue moon. As far as I know, only two new towns have been established in Ireland in this century—Craigavon in Armagh, and Shannon in Clare. In the meantime, the makings of fifty towns have been added to that urban monstrosity called Dublin.

Having said that much, I'll now leave you to ponder William Cowper's statement that "God made the country, and man made the town".

AFTER Limerick city has been given a badly needed facelift in recent times with modern buildings and major improvements carried out to existing properties, the question now being asked is: Are we to become a city of brown/red brick facades?

This trend started some years ago and is still being adhered to. Coming into town from the Ennis Road side there is a striking example in Wellesley Court flats, and again over Sarsfield Bridge where Dunnes offer little by way of contrast.

Turning into O'Connell Street the imposing Bank of Ireland building has brown brick and the new Limerick Savings Bank in Upper William Street has similar material and colour.

Information

And it doesn't end there. The Garda Station in Henry Street, the John Gleeson Development at Catherine Street-Glentworth St. corner, the E.S.B. Development in Shannon Street, etc., are no different and our information is that the plans for McMahon's in Bedford Row once again show that brown brick is to be used.

At least one city businessman who brought this trend to our attention is seeing red. He told the Limerick Leader that in his view it was a little ridiculous to have so much red/brown brick around especially where there were a

variety of other colours available.

"I just hope they do something different when it comes to re-building on the site of the Lyric Cinema," he said.

It will be observed that most of the IDA's advanced factories have either red or brown brick fronts.

I have been told that the Planning Department at Limerick Corporation are insistent that this type of brick be used in new buildings to keep in line with Limerick's Georgian image.

I made several attempts to contact Mr. Larry Coyle, planning officer, Limerick Corporation, but he was unavailable for comment.

While accepting that a little variety might be more pleasing to the eye, we must nonetheless be grateful that business people have taken the bother to either reconstruct or improve their premises, irrespective of what colour is adopted.

Limerick was allowed to decay for far too long. As I am on the subject, it has been said to me that architects might show more imagination in their designs. There have been ample opportunities to show flair and ingenuity in the design of new buildings but

nothing really exciting has been produced. Indeed, quite a few of them look drab from the outside.

Auctions

There are many auctioneers who question the wisdom of holding auctions in depressed times.

Fuel was added to this argument last week, that is if one is to judge by three auctions which I attended on one day.

There was only one bidder on each occasion—and, not surprisingly, the properties concerned were withdrawn. In better times all three would have attracted much interest and would probably have been knocked down at auction.

My tour started at Conn Shanahan & Co. who were offering a very attractive house at No. 10 Elm Park, Ennis Road. There was only one client prepared to bid at £25,000. The reserve, I believe, was £28,000.

Next port of call was Aston Deller and Martin who had up for sale "Coolmeen," Monaleen Road, Castletroy, a truly superb modern home which enjoys private mature gardens

extending to over half an acre. I expected the place to be a buzz with excitement. Again there was only one bidder when joint auctioneer Mr. Brian Begley took the rostrum. And that bid was far short of the £75,000 expected for the property.

Then I popped across the road to Rooney's to see if Lemonfield House, Crecora, was to find a new owner. I had high expectations here because I had already been informed that at least 15 potential clients had walked the 3½ acres and inspected the charming two-storey residence.

About ten people were seated before me and when Mr. Pat Kearney asked for and received an opening offer of £50,000, I sat back in anticipation of a rush. But no. He then asked for £51,000 . . . and didn't get a nod. End of auction.

The sole bid was from Jim O'Donnell, solr., acting for an unnamed client. I understand that £60,000 would have bought this fine property.

The trouble about going to auction is that if you make a bid then you are obliged to purchase, whereas negotiating by private treaty a person has

ample time to get finances in order.

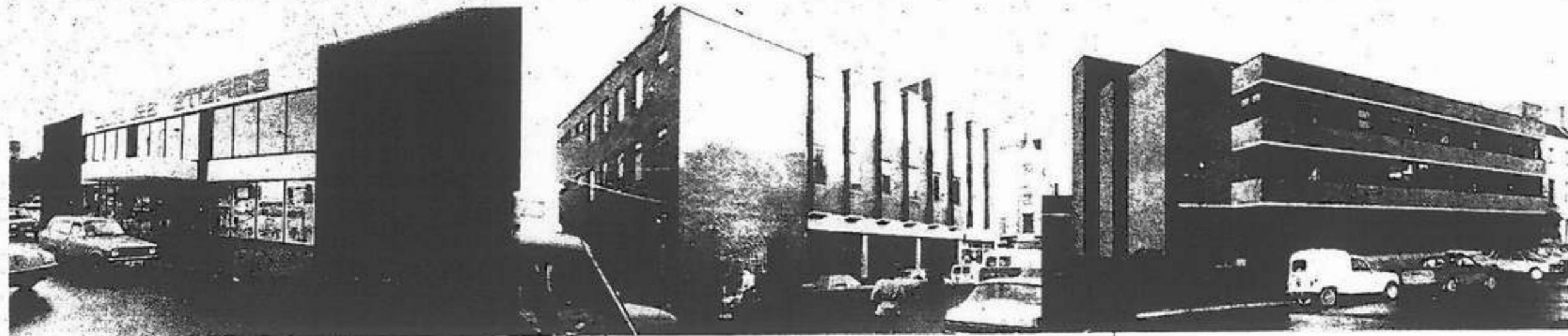
Money

Mr. Jim O'Donnell, solr., told me that from his experience people nowadays had difficulty in accumulating sums of £50,000 upwards. "Money for houses in that bracket is scarce and take my word, it will be scarcer still in the New Year."

The three properties listed above are now under negotiation with interested parties, but if they realise the reserve remains to be seen. In any case, there is a very limited market and the end result could be a stabilising of prices. And there are precious few who will raise their hands in protest.

I had a call during the week from Mr. Pat Chesser of Michael McMahon & Son, Cecil Street, to say that things were ticking over nicely with them.

They have finalised the sale of Breffni, Monaleen Road, to Mr. Michael O'Malley, solr., for £66,000. It will be recalled that Mr. O'Malley, a former Mayor of Limerick, recently disposed of his residence in



Modern Limerick: Brick, brick and more brick

Is Limerick stuck with the same look?

Castletroy for a whopping £162,000 to Dr. O'Regan.

"Brefni" is in a nice location. The vendor was Mr. Pat Murphy, Manager of the Westport Branch of the Bank of Ireland.

The house, which is two storey, has four bedrooms and stands on three quarters of an acre. It is adjacent to Padraig Connolly's new development at Monaleen Park.

McMahon's have also disposed of a stone cottage at Wood Road, Cratloe, with four acres of land, for an impressive £30,000. "The cottage is a well known landmark," said Mr. Chesser. There is planning permission on the land for one house.

The same auctioneers obtained £30,000 for a three bedroomed semi-detached house in Avonmore Road, Raheen, and expressed themselves as very satisfied with the £50,000 they got for a four bedroomed detached residence in Ashbrook. A number of residences have changed hands in this estate in the past two months.

A house in nearby Brookville Gardens was knocked down at £31,000.

Recently, McMahon's withdrew Manifolds shop in the Pennywell area when it failed to reach the reserve at auction, but we understand an early sale is now imminent.