



Hartstonge Street

# James' painstaking work is a monument to city's heritage

LIMERICK has a physical heritage about which, unfortunately, little is known to the general public. MARTIN BYRNES examines some of the people who made the city what it is, and their extraordinary lives and passions.

HE WAS 97 when he died in 1877, having lived most of his life in one of the houses which were later incorporated to become what is now the Glentworth Hotel. And Limerick has every reason to be extremely grateful. Because he had presided over a period of urban development of the city the likes of

which has not been until the present frenzy of downtown development more than 100 years later.

His name was James Pain, an architect, and he revolutionised the city.

An Englishman by birth he, along with his brother, George, were apprenticed to the eminent English

architect, John Nash. He dispatched the brothers to Ireland to supervise the construction of a Galway mansion which he had designed. They were never to live in England again.

James Pain settled in Limerick; George went to Cork. They worked on some projects together; others were designed and executed separately.

The delightful little St Munchin's Church at King's Island, now the headquarters of Island Theatre Company, was theirs, as is the lofty St Michael's at Pery Square - sinking or not.

Also on King's Island, James created the charming Villiers Alms Houses. These were completed in 1830 at a cost of £4,000 to house Protestant widows, as per the instructions of the will of Mrs Hannah Villiers of Kilpeacon.

They designed the magnificent Dromoland Castle for Lord Inchiquin, little thinking that it was later to become one of the great hotels of Europe.

James Pain redesigned the city's bridges too. The great stone strides of Athlunkard Bridge and Thomond Bridge contrasts with the single-span neatness of Baal's Bridge, all of which were replaced to Pain's instructions.

Another architect to influence the city was Francis Bindon - more widely known, perhaps, as a portrait painter. It was he who redesigned the Bishop's Palace, the magnificent Palladian-style house just beyond King John's Castle, which is now the headquarters of the Civic Trust. This building was the residence of the Church of Ireland bishop from its rebuilding in the early 1700s to 1784, whereafter it became a tenement, finally ending in total ruin, until rescued by the Civic Trust as one of their earliest major projects.

The people of St Mary's Parish need not be told how to cherish their heritage, as a glance at the fine refurbishment of their parish and heritage centre will show. Built of cut stone, the building known as St Mary's Town House was previously the parish presbytery. It was built about 1710 by the brewer John Ingram, and it stood, at the time, outside the walls of the city. It later served as a residence for the Arthur and Carr families.

And where did we get St John's Hospital from? And why was it built so close to the mediæval walls of Limerick?

The answer is that it started off *inside* the walls of Limerick.

St John's began as a fever hospital, established within the guardhouse of the old Citadel by Lady



The Bishop's Palace

Hartstonge, in response to a serious outbreak of disease in the city. The hospital developed from there.

And why is Arthur's Quay the shape it is - a triangle - rather than any other shape? The answer is that Patrick Arthur built it to resemble the letter 'A' of his name. And names of other Arthurs are recalled in Patrick, Francis and Ellen streets.

The Hartstonges have two places named after them Hartstonge Street, of course, but also Sir Harry's Mall, which Sir Henry Hartstonge built before 1800.

And the Barringtons made a huge contribution, and members of the family lived in the street named in their honour. The hospital was built at their expense in 1829 for £10,000, and they also constructed Barrington's Pier a year later.

(Research done by Limerick Civil Trust is appreciated.)

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