

Hogan's bardic spirit still lives on in Brian

By EUGENE
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LIMERICK poet Brian J. Slattery is probably the nearest thing we have got at present to the Bard of Thomond, Michael Hogan.

He is a lover of Hogan's works and has written more limerick verses than perhaps anyone else alive.

A member of the Bard of Thomond Memorial Committee, he has just finished his latest effort "Here the Heart of Limerick Beats" - a tribute to Michael Hogan the Bard of Thomond.

It was written to mark the unveiling last week of the memorial to the Bard at his graveside at Mount St Lawrence cemetery.

It gives a feel of how the great Bard of Thomond might feel about the unveiling of this latest memorial to him.

Brian who works with Limerick Fire Brigade has written a fine history of the local firefighters and was a member of the now defunct Limerick Writers Group. He is currently working on a collection of limericks and composed over 100 for the Treaty 300 competition.

"Irish history, in its earliest form, consisted of unwritten lays which were medieval narrative verse composed and chanted by cards whose office - a combination of poet and historian - was hereditary," explained Brian.

In Michael Hogan's own

words "a time when the bard was the companion of the King and gold was less prized than song."

These bardic lays were followed by annals or chronicles, which were compiled in the monasteries, the later annalists often copying from earlier works or from the compositions of contemporary bards.

Last weeks unveiling ceremony was attended by no fewer than four former Limerick Mayors, Clem Casey, Jim Kemmy, Ted Russell and Jan O'Sullivan and of course the present holder of the office, Dick Sadlier performed the unveiling.

Here the Heart of Limerick Beats

*Oh, what time is this that
sees this, once mortal,
coil*

*Entombed and now re-
slabbed anew beneath
this soil*

*My chiselled features cut
in stone so fine
So friend or foe can kiss,
or jab, my eyes as they
incline.*

*For it's the way of mind
to nip and tuck
At fame or foolishness
what e'ers your luck*

*And taste of both in mea-
sured store
I've stood and cast from
my Cottage door.*

*And let the ebbing
Shannon's spangled
streams*

*Sieve and flush invalid
rancour from my
dreams.*

*Betimes the flood
returned, I watched its*

*rising swell
And felt renewed,
refreshed, I'd drunk
its well.*

*Its coursing wisdom,
sourced from pool at
Tiltinbane,
Sips recounted lines of
king and prince and
battle plan.*

*From bog and marsh
and wide expanse
Its torrent swells with
legend, deed, and cir-
cumstance.*

*I've penned it all, and
more, for your delight
In couplet verse - with
pleasure too when it
looked right.*

*For it stirred my heart
and pulsed this once
mere mortal coil
And conquered all my
waking hours and all
my midnight oil.*

*For times one know not
why or where the des-
tined arrow strikes
But only that within your
heart you feel the mar-
linspikes*

*Just like the lovers heart
when first that sight is
made
Its practised beat oft'
skips and other duties
fade.*

*And to this day the
Shannon music sings
And to you ears and
hearts new Lays and
Legends brings*

*And young and old
friends too still walk
its banks
Sharing stories of times
past and planning*

*pranks
Perhaps casting out at
Curragour falls
Or turning rocks for ell-
fry hauls*

*While overhead Johns'
Castle rampart still
retains
Its barbican oft battered
by Cromwellian, king
and Danes.*

*Where through its peep-
ing loopholes to this
day,
Shots once fired, it
watches, and takes in
what passers say*

*And on its leafy banks
and tree-lined quays
Still, young lovers kiss,
make love, and try to
please*

*As, unknown, their whis-
pered amatory slips
To the waters edge and
into its rippling grips*

*As its flowing harvest
gathers weight
Ripples silence to the
estuary gate
Except where the beds of
Curragour
Let us glimpse its happy
flower*

*As sounds of laughter
emanate
All mixed with legend,
lore, and Limericks'
fate*

*"Tis here the past and
present seats
"Tis here the heart of
Limerick beats.*

—B.J. SLATTERY