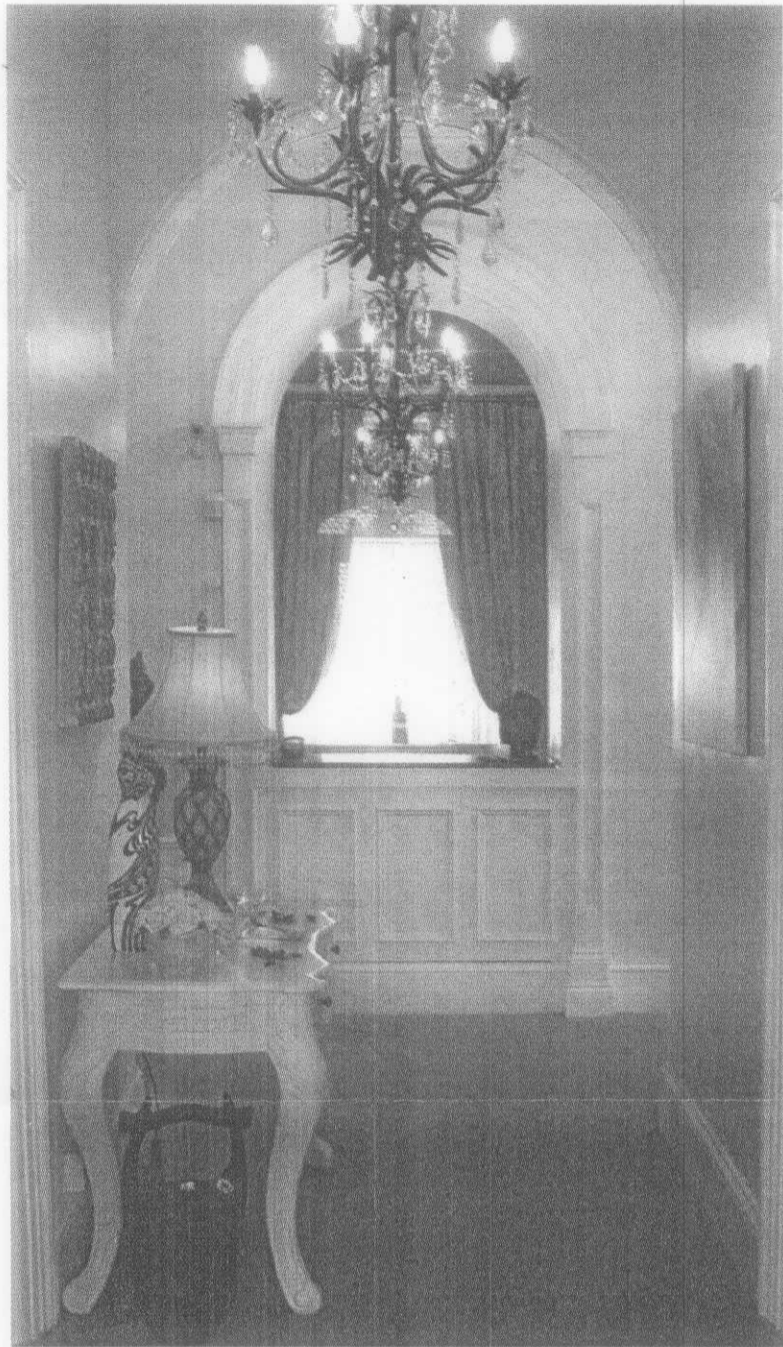


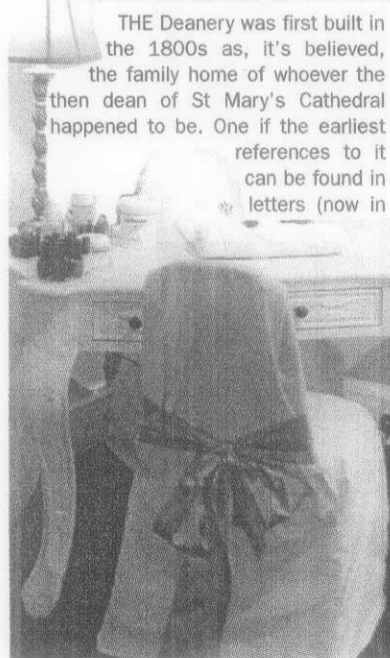
Home & living

The Deanery restored and revitalised

And Yummy Mummies can expect a similar overhaul as the ironically named beauty spa Seventh Heaven moves into the the former Church of Ireland Deanery



CLAIRE Connolly Doyle takes a look at the changing fortunes of The Deanery, the 200 year old red brick "upside down" house on the Ennis Road and asks the wife of the former Archbishop of Dublin, Very Rev Walton Empey, what she thinks of the irony of a beauty salon sporting the name Seventh Heaven occupying what was once her bustling family home.



THE Deanery was first built in the 1800s as, it's believed, the family home of whoever the then dean of St Mary's Cathedral happened to be. One of the earliest references to it can be found in letters (now in storage at the city museum) sent by A L Kirwin in 1860 to the architect in charge of the 19th century restoration of the cathedral, Robert O'Brien, demanding that the removed stalls and benches be reinstated and the cathedral be open for Christmas services that year.

From 1954 to 1971, it was home to the Dean Maurice Talbot, and from 1971 to 1981 the home of Dean Walton Empey.

Its role dramatically changed in 1981 however when it passed out of Church of Ireland ownership and was divided up into a warren of offices.

Its tennis court and gardens were sold off and it became obscured from the Ennis Road as the Oakdale apartments and the Waterville estate sprang up around it.

But its fortunes changed once again recently when Shirley Hanrahan (nee Slattery) took it over and restored the first floor to far more than its former glory.

Now home to Seventh Heaven, a tranquil haven of cosmetic and holistic wizardry, the luxurious rooms look like they've come to life from the pages of a Farrow and Ball catalogue.

Walls have been replastered and painted in earthy heritage shades, imposing marble fireplaces are polished to a high sheen, intricate original stucco work has been repaired and highlighted in vivid white and 12 ft windows are dressed as they originally would have been in heavy brocade drapes and tasselled and beaded period blinds.

Romantic chandeliers are everywhere, their sparkle reflecting on the dark walnut floors. Huge gilt mirrors and pale French furniture combine with soft rugs underfoot for the ultimate in elegance and comfort.

Yummy Mummies of the Ennis Road are flocking to what can only be called a sumptuous sanctuary where fluffy white dressing gowns and padded slippers are neatly folded beneath Italian treatment beds scattered with rose petals.

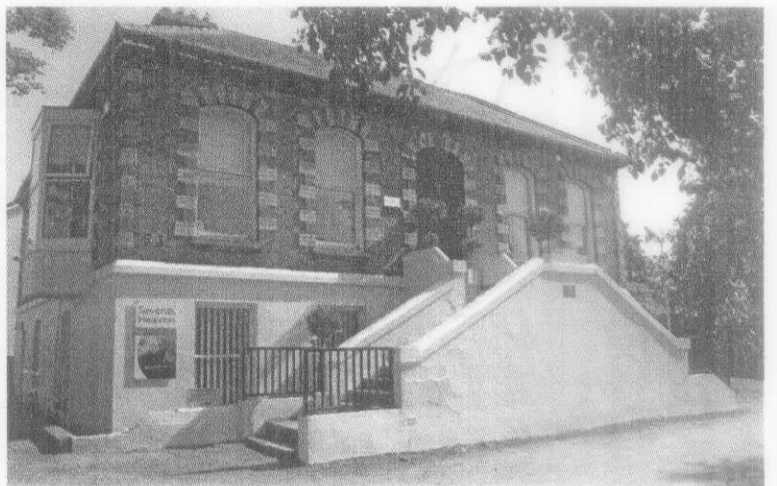
Mrs Louie Empey, wife of the now retired Archbishop of Dublin, Very Rev Walton Empey, was strolling around Limerick recently and decided to pop by her one-time home where her four children grew up and who say to this day, spent some of the happiest days of their childhoods.

Describing herself stunned by what she saw, Mrs Empey said; "The house lends itself to the chandeliers and the paint colours. But all of the original features are the same as when we were there."

Smiling at the irony of the beauty salon being called Seventh Heaven, she adds; "We had three small boys when we moved in there first in 1971 and our youngest, Sheila, was born that year. It was far from seventh heaven though I can assure you. Our boys, Patrick (then 10), Karl (8) and Kevin (4) were very boisterous and the house was always full of the sounds of children's laughter... and tears."

Remembering that the house was "very hard work" to run as it was so big, Mrs Empey explained that the large front room which is now the salon's relaxation room, was originally her husband's study.

"It was much darker then. We had one huge mahogany bookcase that ran the length of one wall. I remember we bought it for the fantastic sum, at the time, of £45. I remember we sold it when we left



for a lot more. It was a wonderful bookcase and it was always packed with books."

She said it was captivating to see that despite the fact that the room still had its dominating fireplace, generous bay window and high ceilings, being furnished now only with four Italian beds for resting ladies following their pampering, the difference was remarkable.

It is the provision of this room as a dedicated relaxation area incidentally, that allows the salon to call itself a "spa". "I always feel really bad,"



explains salon owner Shirley, "having to move people after a treatment because we need the room for the next client. I understand how after a facial or a massage that people want to sleep for a little while and that's why I wanted to include it in this salon where I have the space."

Other alterations to the original house, include the division of what was once the drawing room into three treatment rooms - two dominated by floor to ceiling windows,

the other by the original fireplace. To the rear of the house, which originally housed the family's three bedrooms, are now two further treatment rooms (only one is missing the hallmark sweep of brocade curtain as it's in here that the spray tan is applied and Shirley doesn't think they'd stand up too well to stray sprays).

Downstairs, which used to house a collection of large rooms including an enormous kitchen, remains as offices at present.

"It was a wonderfully happy home," remembers Mrs Empey whose family has now grown up and flown the coup leaving herself and her husband in peaceful retirement near Tullow in County Carlow.

"The children were always flying about, they really loved that house and still talk about it. There was a magnificent walled garden and of course the children just loved the tennis court and all their friends wanted to come around and play there. And of course that suited me fine because I always knew where my children were."

Looking back on its warm history, Shirley is glad that she has done the building justice.

"It was very hard work, but it's all coming together now," she's grateful to be able to say at last. "Everyone is asking me who I got to do the interior design but it was just me and my husband with some help from Vivienne Hanrahan. I just wanted to make it very comfortable, very inviting, somewhere that someone can pop into just for an eye brow tint or to really pamper themselves for an afternoon."

Following Bishop Empey's appointment as Bishop of Limerick in 1971, the family moved to the Bishop's Residence (also coincidentally currently being restored), on the North Circular Road. After five years in that role, they moved to Leixlip and then Maynooth before embarking on the six year term as Archbishop of Dublin.

"My husband was born in Dublin, but as the son of a Church of Ireland rector himself, he moved around all the time too. He called himself an itinerant," Mrs Empey remembers fondly.

Using Dermalogica skin products, Seventh Heaven beauty salon and spa offers a wide range of facial and body treatments but all, at the same costs that one can expect to pay at any salon with far less impressive surrounds.

The present Dean of St Mary's, Dean Maurice Surr, lives in the new Deanery for Limerick in Castletroy.