

Clarke chests lost to city in bid war

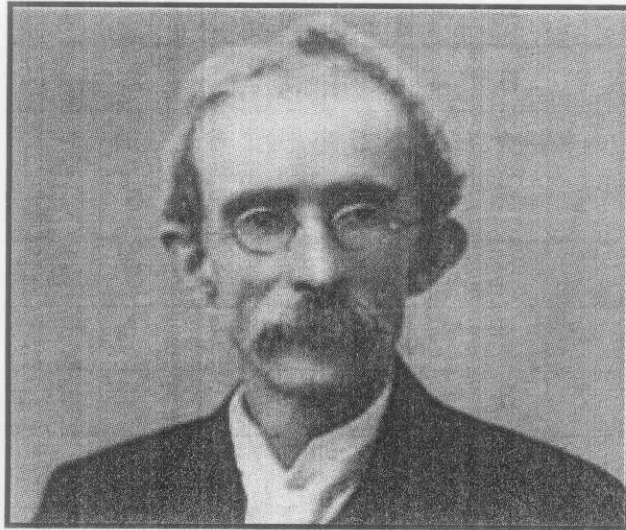
By MIKE DWANE

LIMERICK City Council has failed in a bid to acquire a pair of ornate wooden chests presented by the Council to 1916 proclamation signatory Tom Clarke and his Limerick-born wife Kathleen when they were granted the Freedom of the City.

The precious artefacts were sold off at last Wednesday's mammoth Independence sale by Mealy's and Adam's auctioneers in Dublin. One political source said City Hall had a budget of some €40,000 with which to make bids but this could not be confirmed by officials.

But curator of the Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum, Larry Walsh, confirmed that he dropped out of the bidding at four or five times the asking price in respect of each item.

The Tom Clarke chest realised €65,000 for the sellers, over eight times the maximum guide price.



Thomas Clarke

The chest presented to his wife, meanwhile, fetched €30,000 where the guide price was €4,000 to €5,000.

"I got the impression very early on," said Mr Walsh, "that the person who eventually acquired them was very determined to have them and money was no object."

The City Council dropped out of the bidding for Tom Clarke's chest at €30,000 and a telephone or

internet bidder battled it out with the eventual victor until the princely sum of €65,000 was reached.

Tom Clarke's chest was presented to him in 1899 when Kathleen's uncle Mayor John Daly awarded him the Freedom of Limerick. Fashioned from oak from the roof of St Mary's Cathedral and engraved with images of serpents and King John's Castle, the item was one



Kathleen Clarke

Mr Walsh said he was disappointed not to be able to acquire for the museum.

But the fact that the winning bidder was at the showroom "indicates that the chest will stay in Ireland," he said.

Mr Walsh said the museum already had some of the items relating to the Irish fight for freedom that went on sale last week, including a postcard of Clarke, Seán MacDiar-

mada and John Daly that fetched €100, an amount he described as "enormous" for a mere postcard.

National Museum director Dr Pat Wallace said before the auction that the leaders of the 1916 Rising would not have wanted memorabilia to be sold at auction, adding that the State should not have to pay "unreasonable amounts of money" for historical items.

CHRONICLE BRIEFS

Bungee Jump

AS part of Riverfest 2006, over the May Bank Holiday Weekend, a bungee jump is to take place at Clancy Strand from 10am to 5pm on Sunday, April 30. Other river attractions planned for the day include a freestyle kayaking contest and the final of the Zap Cat powerboat race.

Adult education

REGISTRATION for adult education classes at Limerick Resource Centre for the Unemployed takes place at the centre at Hunt's Lane, Dominic Street, on Wednesday, April 19 from 11am to 5pm. French, Spanish, Art, Aromatherapy/Reflexology, Computers all available.

1916 event

THE Labour Party in Limerick is holding a public meeting called "1916—A Time to Commemorate" at Halla Ide, Thomas Street this Thursday at 8pm. Chaired by Deputy Jan O'Sullivan, speakers will include former Mayor of Limerick Frank Prendergast, Prof. John A. Murphy and Liam Cahill.