

Restoration: Ambitious heritage projects are in the pipeline

Civic Trust has grand designs for the city

Anne Sheridan

TWENTY-FIVE projects for its 25th year – that is the goal of Limerick Civic Trust in 2008. A 30-foot high obelisk in the Peoples' Park, enclosed with a time capsule of the events in 2008, and a bench in the shape of a gandalow are among the projects in the pipeline.

This weekend will see the completion of one project, as the new gates to the Peoples' Park, opposite the train station, will be opened by the Countess of Limerick, Sylvia Pery, and her son, the 7th Earl of Limerick, Edmond Pery.

However, Denis Leonard of Limerick Civic Trust told the Limerick Leader that the gates could be only one addition to the improved park.

An outline design of the 30 foot high obelisk has been sketched by the renowned Limerick artist Tom Ryan and the Trust has exchanged a number of ideas with Limerick City Council on this project.

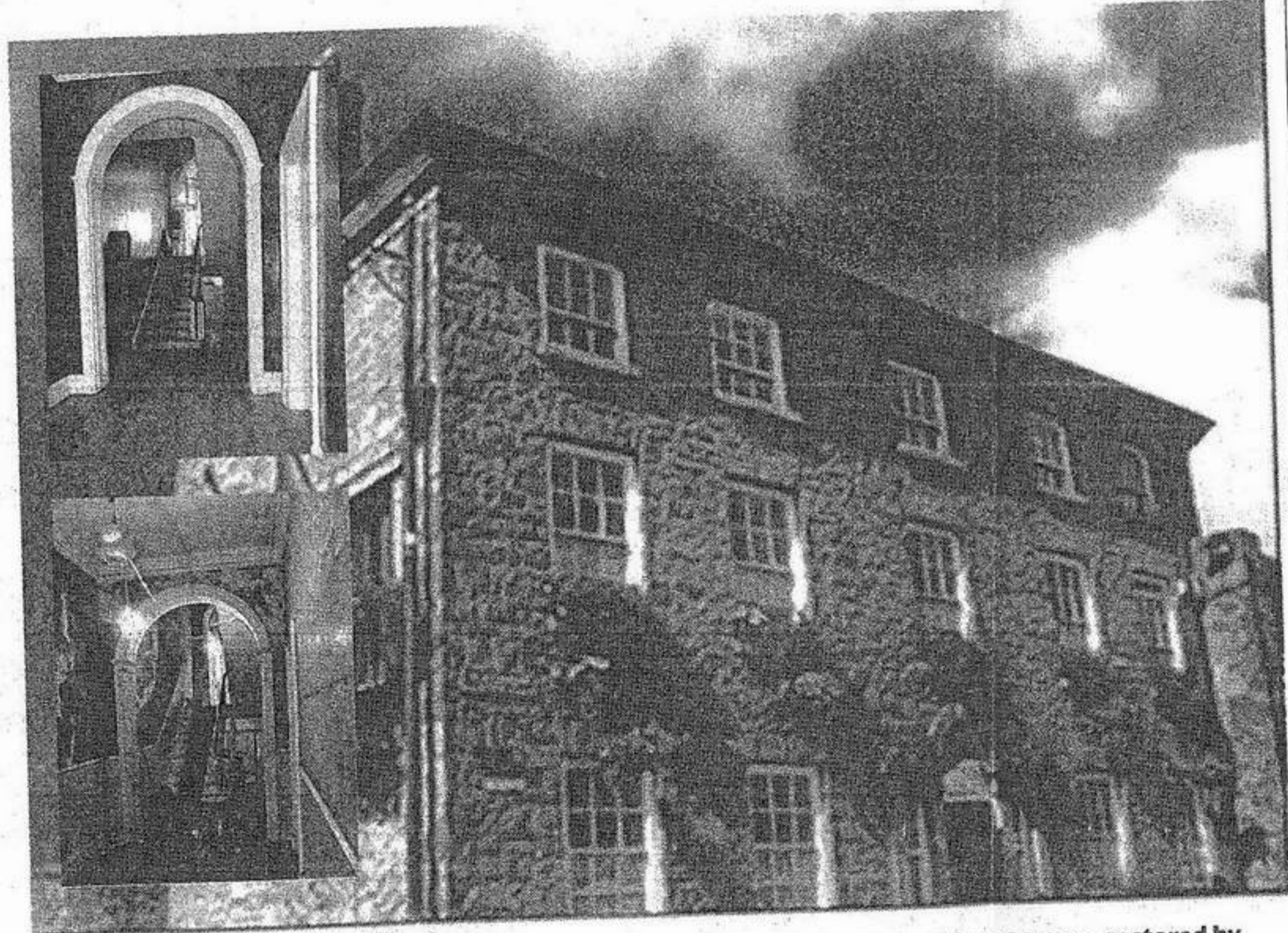
The obelisk would detail 1,000 years of Limerick's history and according to Mr Leonard will create a strong impression on visitors of Limerick's rich heritage.

"It will be a classical monument and we really need a string visual in that area. It will really pick up the elegance of the Spring Rice memorial in the background. The gates themselves will provide a very strong feature as you look out from the station and there hasn't been an entrance to the part of the park since the 1960s," said Mr Leonard.

Meanwhile, the kiosk in the park has been restored and when it opens this Sunday a plaque detailing the history of kiosks in Limerick will hang inside the small building.

The gates, which have cost in the region of €100,000 and were constructed within six weeks, were funded by the Trust, with the assistance of the city council, the National Disability Fund, and the Park Trustees.

Chairman of Limerick Civic Trust, Martin Bourke, will also be present at the ceremony this Sun-



Before and after: inset, pictures from inside the magnificent Georgian House, Pery Square, restored by Limerick Civic Trust at a cost of £1.2million

A CITY IN TRANSITION: UPCOMING WORKS

Civil weddings at the Georgian House: the Georgian House is not currently on the register for civil marriages. However, Limerick Civic Trust is hoping that couples will nominate the house as somewhere they would like to take their vows, and consequently be placed on the list.

Celebration Concert: the Trust is organising a spectacular concert featuring Bill Whelan in the Georgian House this September. The event has yet

to be officially confirmed. This fundraising event would be tied in with the Catherine Hayes project.

Limerick Memorial Sculpture: Limerick Civic Trust has bought a circular bench which it proposes to erect around a tree in the People's Park. It has also acquired a circular feature bench to be erected at a prominent location near the drinking fountain.

A Civic Medal for the Building of the Year: one high quality medal

will be presented each year to a building over a five-year cycle as there will be five different categories. It is hoped that the competition will begin this year.

Made in Limerick Volume 3: this will be the third and final book in the series, which will be published this autumn. The Trust has also recorded over 300 pieces of art in Limerick's streets and is planning to publish a booklet and map on this subject.

Another forthcoming project is the construction of a bench in the shape of a gandalow bow, in memory of their former chairman

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year and is reliant on donations from the private sector, as well as individuals wishing to volunteer as members.

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Chairman of Limerick Civic Trust, Martin Bourke, will also be present at the ceremony this Sunday, February 17, at 2pm, while the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band will provide musical entertainment.

Another major project this year will be the restoration of the Catherine Hayes house on Patrick Street, as part of the development of the Opera Centre commercial centre.

The Trust plans to set up a bursary for singers and musicians in honour of the 19th-century soprano, who became the first Irish woman to sing at La Scala in Milan and at The Royal Opera House. The restoration is due to start this March and is estimated to cost in the region of €2million to complete.

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But the Civic Trust have more than one reason to celebrate this week. On Sunday, it will also be celebrating the 25th anniversary of its formal public inauguration meeting, which was held at Mary Immaculate College on February 17 1983.

To commemorate the occasion,

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Mr Leonard, Trust director, has documented the history of the organisation in a book titled Limerick Civic Trust - The First Twenty Years. This personal account contains over 300 illustrations and has been produced through the patronage of Shannon Development.

Minister for Defence Willie O'Dea will launch the book on Saturday, February 16, at 7.30pm in City Hall. The 96 page full-colour book is priced at €25 and is available to buy from O'Mahony's bookshop.

Limerick Civic Trust was Ireland's first civic trust and is a self-funding conservation society, and a registered charity. To date, it has spent €15m on 134 restoration, civic and research projects in Limerick. However, the Trust had a mere turnover of 1.3million last

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The Trust has been awarded eight honours, including the RIAI Award in 2002 for its restoration of the Georgian House, Pery Square, which cost in the region of £1.2million to restore.

Their headquarters at Bishop's Palace, which was restored in 1990, won the Best Old Building Category in the City Neighbourhood 2005 Awards.

Mr Leonard said its "biggest and best project would be the Georgian House by far, but my favourite project is actually the Bishop's Palace".

If you'd like to get involved with Limerick Civic Trust please log on to www.limerickcivictrust.ie or call 061 313399.