



It has been a long and winding road for the Dominicans in their bid to build a Biblical Centre in Limerick. After a three year delay, the 5m centre has finally been built, but technical glitches are holding up its official opening. **MAIREAD NI CHAOIMH** took a sneak peek inside the brand new premises

Bible centre reaches its apocalypse after a long genesis

IT may not yet be fully up and running, and the grand opening unfortunately a long way off, but the Dominicans' Biblical Centre is set to attract big church names to Limerick in the coming months.

It was confirmed this week that the Bishop of Bobbio and Piacenza in Italy, Mons Luciano Monari, and the Bishop of Galway, Martin Drennan, are to give talks at the new facility in November.

"It's a miracle we have come this far," said the director of the centre, Fr Tom Brodie.

The Dominicans had to fight a battle with An Taisce for over three years before they even got planning permission for the building originally.

The controversy centred around two Georgian houses on Cecil Street. An Taisce objected to their demolition, but eventually the Dominicans got planning permission to bulldoze them.

And now that the impressive facility is built, the Dominicans must deal with a host of



Fr Dermot Brennan, Dominican Prior (LL)

building glitches, which they are calling "teething problems" or "birth pangs".

Technical problems, such as the electrical and computer systems and the library catalogueing still need to be ironed out.

Fr Brodie said: "We are at that in-between stage now, the point where you are having your house built and making it liveable."

In spite of the delays, which have tested the patience of the centre's

three staff—Fr Brodie, Peig McGrath and Fr Brendan Clifford—they have been greatly encouraged by the success of the centre's first two official events.

World famous scholar Fr Jerome Murphy O'Connor, OP, gave a talk in February which attracted 300 listeners while Fr Brodie's opening lecture drew over 170 people.

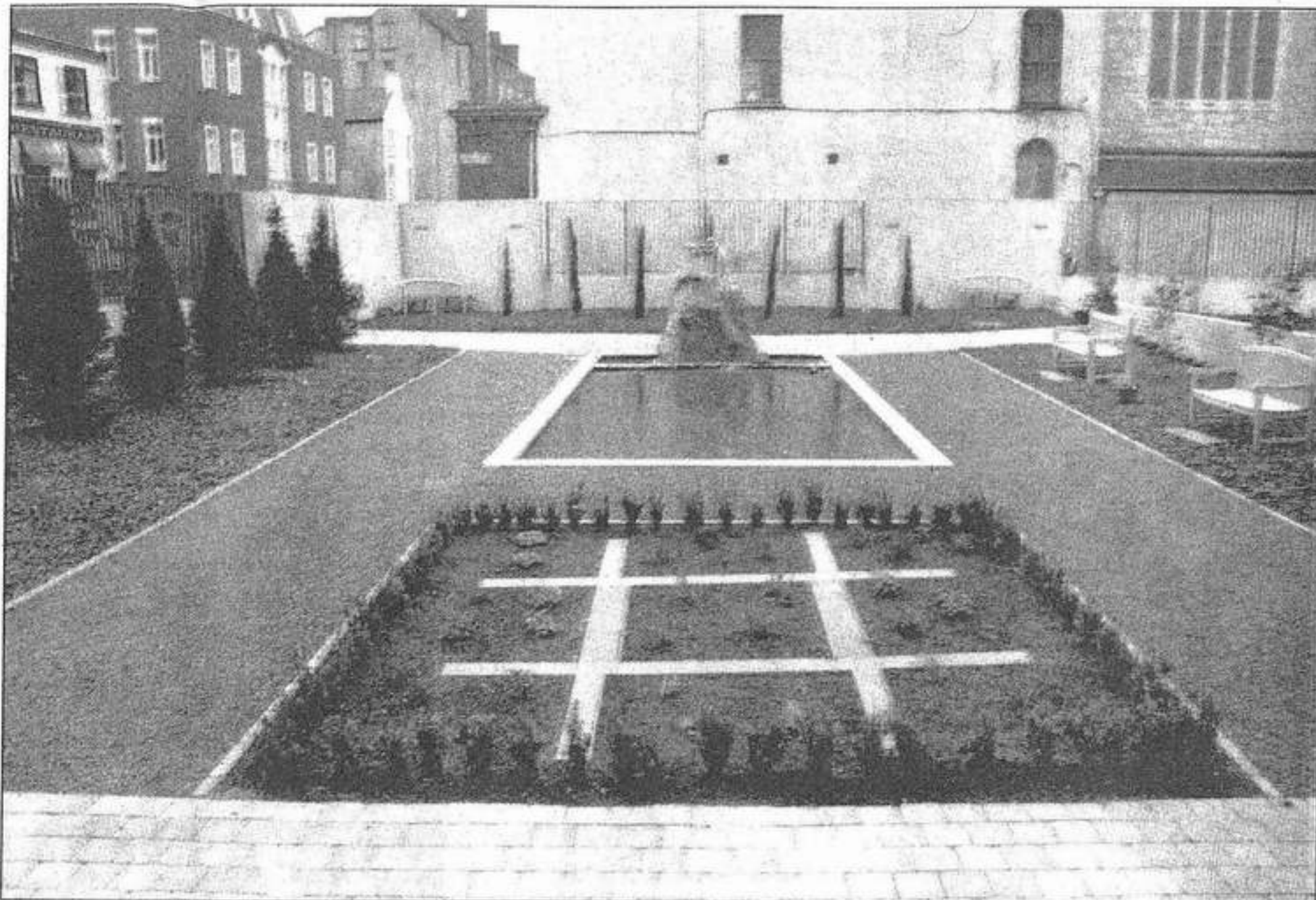
The main idea behind the new centre at the junction of Cecil and Dominick streets is to encourage Catholics to study the Bible and to put Limerick on the map as a major centre for original Bible research.

In addition to catering for scholars, the centre is also intended to be a focal point for the general public.

Exhibitions are planned for the main hall that are designed to entice passers-by.

"We want to open the door to the people, and allow them to wander in and out. We want to reach out to the ordinary people," said Fr Brodie, who is originally from Crusheen in Clare.

Meanwhile Fr Clifford aims to help people "make sense of life" through reading the Bible.



Oasis of peace: the garden at the front of the Dominicans' Biblical Centre in Dominick Street

(LL)

He is to give a course on meditating and praying with the Bible during May and June.

Twelve students will be able to study in the library area, and 300 people can fit into the main hall, which will also double up as an exhibition space. A café is also to be part of the development.

Passers-by may already have noticed the landscaped garden as part of the development from Dominick Street.

The themed garden, which is protected by high security railings, contains a rock, symbolising God's steadfast rock-like nature, a fountain and a water feature.

Ms McGrath said that the plants and herbs in the garden had special biblical significance.

"We chose castor oil plants, as Jonah is said to have taken shelter under them. And herbs such as rosemary and thyme were chosen

because they are mentioned in the Bible," she said.

The site was provided by the Limerick Dominicans and the funds came from the Dominican Province in Dublin.

From the Cecil Street side the first three words of the New Testament, In the Beginning, are carved into the stonework above the main door in six languages.

Fr Dermot Brennan, Dominican Prior, is "terribly excited" about the entire project, which has been a long time coming. "This is like an egg waiting to hatch," he said.

He said that a local group of volunteers, mainly professionals, gave them advice on what direction the centre should take.

It is expected the official opening will not take place for at least another year.



Tom Brodie, director; Peg McGrath, manager, and Fr Brendan Clifford, teacher of biblical meditation