



who received the freedom of Limerick, with his two Limerick aunts, Sr Florence and Sr (CI)



Mayor John Ryan, JP McManus, who received the freedom of Limerick, and city manager Brendan Keating with the rugby ball that was used when Munster beat the All Blacks at Thomond Park (CI)



Bill Whelan's daughters Nessa and Fiona (CI)

# Freedom of the city for Bill and JP

By IAIN DEMPSEY

THE mood was jovial at the special ceremony in City Hall as financier and racehorse owner JP McManus and Riverdance supremo Bill Whelan were bestowed with the freedom of the city by Mayor John Ryan.

And as he was conferred with the freedom of the city, Riverdance composer Bill Whelan joked that he could now park his car on a double yellow line, right beside JP McManus' chopper.

Shy millionaire Mr McManus, originally from Ballysheedy, was awarded the honour for his unprecedented charity work.

He raised over £15m for local charities from last year's Pro-Am golf tournament which brought stars such as Tiger Woods, Alex Ferguson and F1 team owner Eddie Jordan to Limerick.

Mr Whelan, originally from Barrington Street, was honoured for making Riverdance such a worldwide success.

Mr Whelan commented: "Limerick has had mixed media through the years and sometimes I have found myself in strange places around the world defending it. Limerick is a different city now. Angela's Ashes is a Limerick that's no longer there. I am proud it's my home city."

Mr McManus said he was "surprised and humbled" by the honour.

"Looking back at the

list of previous recipients, I feel very humbled to be included among so many famous people. I am conscious of the honour and am curious as to the benefits. I'm going to go out and park my car wherever I wish, stay in the pub after hours and not pay the wheelybin charges," joked Mr McManus.

He went on to praise the work of volunteers in the city, describing them as "the real heroes".

Mayor Ryan, who presented both men with freedom scrolls, said: "In their different ways they have made enormous contributions to Limerick city and its people and it is timely that they should be acknowledged while they are both in their prime. Too often in the past we have waited until people were of advanced years before honouring them."

Mr Whelan and Mr McManus became the 57th and 58th people to be bestowed with the freedom of Limerick, joining such figures as Pope John Paul II, John F Kennedy, Eamon de Valera and former US president Bill Clinton.



Bishop Donal Murray with Bill Whelan and his wife Denise (CI)

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