

Harris bronze unveiled on Bedford Row

By CLODAGH O'LEARY

ONE of Limerick's best loved sons was immortalised in the city at the weekend when a bronze sculpture dedicated to Richard Harris was unveiled in front of the late actor's family and friends.

Onlookers basked in the September sunshine on Friday morning as the bronze statue on Bedford Row, which captures the famous Limerick man in one of his most well-known roles, King Arthur from the musical Camelot, was unveiled.

Richard Harris' brothers Ivan and Noel, his former wife Elizabeth and three sons Jared, Damian and Jamie, all travelled to Limerick to

attend the unveiling ceremony.

Noel Harris, speaking on behalf of the family, thanked Limerick City Council and said it was an "emotional experience" for the family.

"If Dickie were alive he would be greatly honoured. He told me that he always hoped that his native city would at one time acknowledge his contribution to the performing arts. Well, I'm sure he is looking down on us now and is delighted. Now, Dickie can truly rest in peace," said Mr Harris.

The statue, made by sculptor Jim Connolly cost €150,000. The Limerick Leader reported last week that Cllr Pat Kennedy's name was allegedly taken off the bronze panel on the sculpture against the wishes of Noel Harris, a claim which the Council

refutes.

At the ceremony, Mr Harris commented: "I would like to personally thank two people, first Cllr Pat Kennedy who was the main inspiration and driving force behind this product, and secondly, artist Jim Connolly whose search for perfection was never-ending," said Mr Harris.

The twice Oscar-nominated actor passed away in 2002 from Hodgkinson's Disease aged 72.

His son Jared revealed for the first time publicly, to the great amusement of the large crowd, how his father secured the part of King Arthur in Camelot.

"Richard Burton turned down the role and there became a bit of a scramble. But the studio heads didn't want Dad so he started campaigning, sending telegrams and

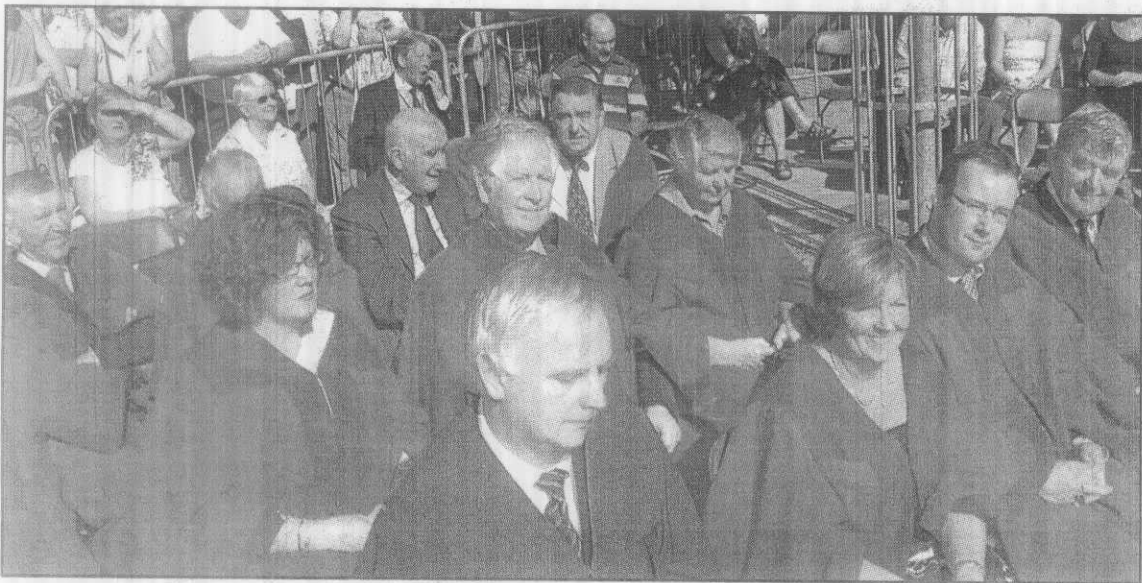
basically bombarding the studio to get the part. He finally found out where Jack Warner was going to be that weekend, in Palm Springs at a dinner party. So he went along and paid the waiter to swap clothes with him. At the table they were talking about who should play King Arthur and as dad was serving Jack Warner he said: "There really is only one man for the job—Richard Harris" Jack Warner said to dad "Will you ever just leave me alone?" and dad said he would if he agreed to giving him a screen test, which he did."

Close family friend Bill O'Reilly travelled from Philadelphia to attend Friday's unveiling.

"The sculpture is very fitting. The King of Ireland has returned," he declared.



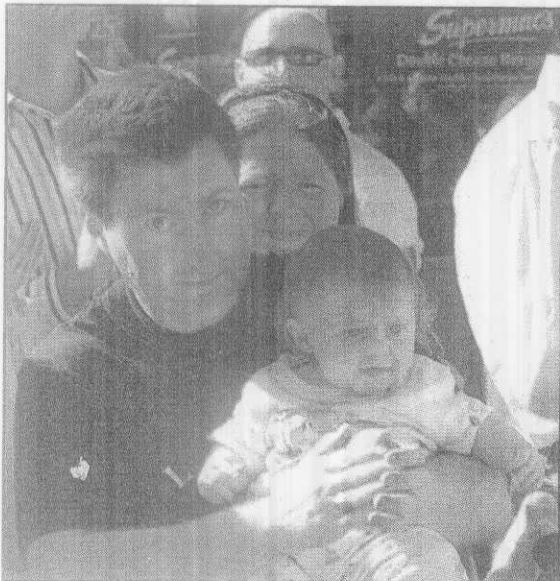
The Mayor of Limerick Cllr Ger Fahy congratulates sculptor Jim Connolly on his Richard Harris Statue (LL)



Members of the City Council at the unveiling of the Richard Harris Statue at Bedford Row (LL)



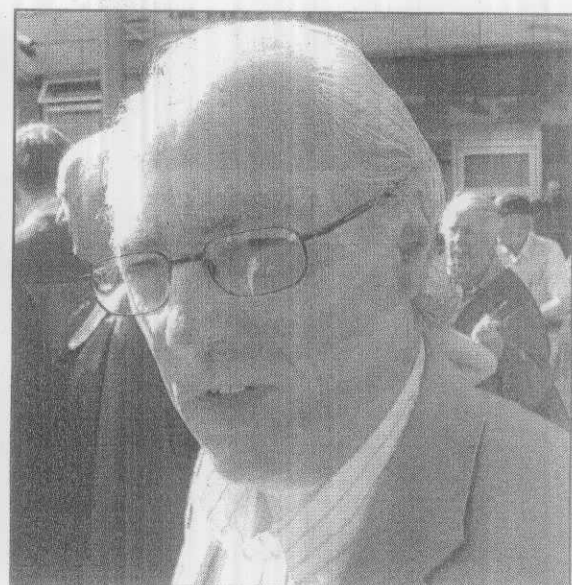
Richard Harris's former wife Elizabeth looking at the newly unveiled statue of Richard Harris (LL)



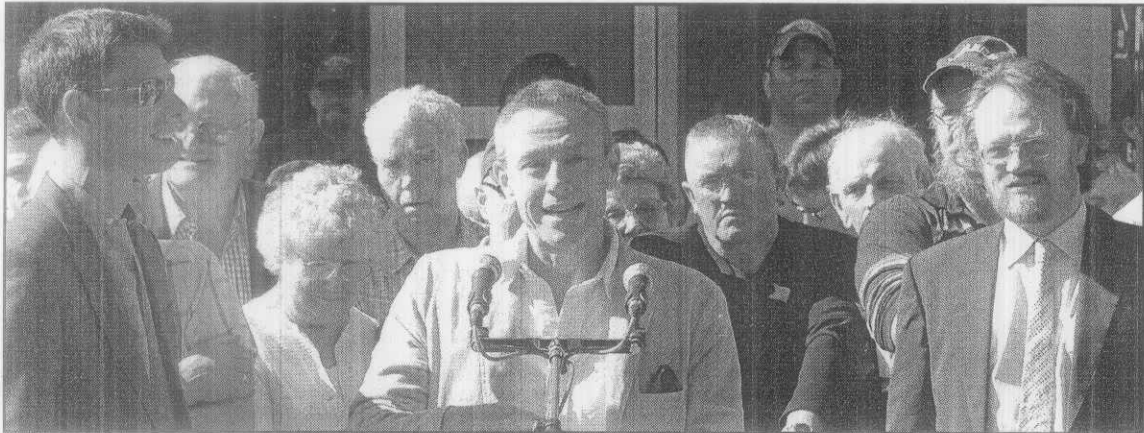
Conrad Ryan and Aine Carr, Limerick



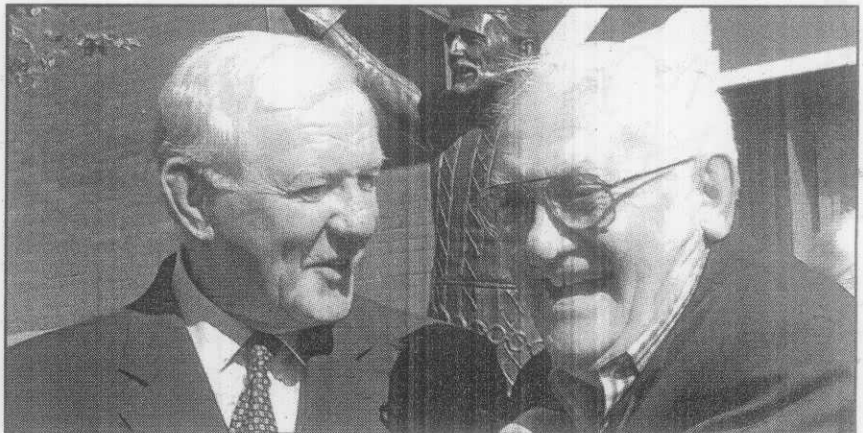
Some members of the Harris Family at the unveiling



Richard Harris's nephew, Hayman Harris Corbally



Jamie, Damien and Jared Harris at the unveiling



Noel Harris shares a joke with Joe Gilligan, Peter's Cell



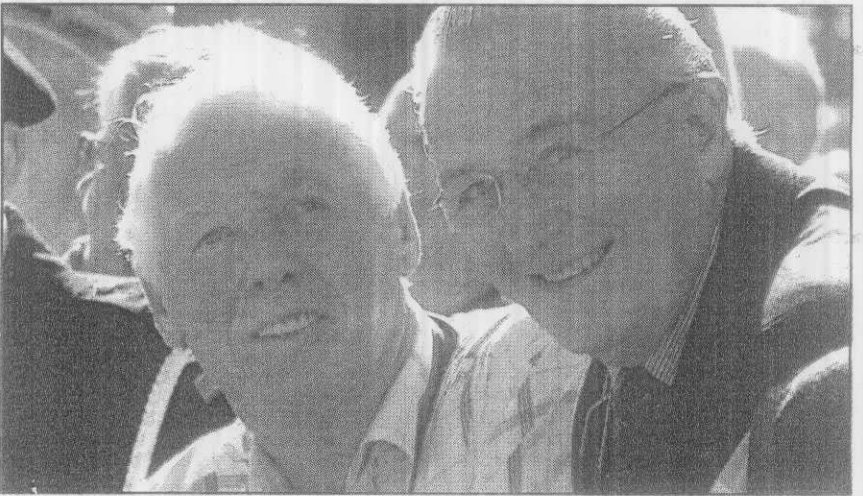
Noreen McGurke, St Patrick's Road with Pa Buckley, The Belltable (LL)



The Harris Family at the unveiling of the Richard Harris Camelot Statue on bedford Row



Pat Dowling, director of services, Limerick City Council speaking at the unveiling of the Richard Harris Statue Bedford Row, with Cllr Ger Fahy, Mayor of Limerick and Tom Mackey, City manager (LL)



Billy Grehan, Ganville Park with former Councillor Jack Bourke