

LIMERICK CHRONICLE

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DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH THE COUNTRY'S OLDEST TITLE

A stay in 19th Century Limerick

From the Limerick Chronicle: Tuesday, May 28, 1996

DURING the 1870s, almost all visitors to the city arrived by train, there being only a very poor road transport journey.

A number of small hotels were established on the route from the railway station to the city centre, mainly in Queen Street (now Davis Street) and Baker Palace; obviously with the view to enticing weary travellers to accept the first refuge available.

It was thirty after the Dublin/Limerick rail link was established before Patrick Kenna, a substantial building contractor, purchased two Georgian houses in Glentworth Street, No's 15 and 16, and remodelled them to serve as a splendid hotel, which he named in honour of the Bishop of Limerick, William Cecil Pery (1704-1834), who had been raised to the peerage with the title: Earl Glentworth of Mallow.

This hotel, which was well situated on the main route from the station to the city centre, prospered from the beginning. It was also close to important features: the Savings Bank, Dominican Church, Trinity Church and the Presbyterian Church (afterwards Mckern's Print-works).

In 1882, the name of the hotel was changed by the citizens at large to the "Gallows Hotel", a name that stuck to it even into the present century.

This strange title, though unofficial and unwanted, arose from circumstances arising from a sad and historic incident - the last hanging in Limerick.

With the passing of the older generation the real name reasserted itself, and the "Gallows Hotel" faded away, though I did hear old people using the name in the 1930s

building contractor, Mr Kenna was given the unenviable task of building the scaffold inside the gate of the county Gaol in Mulgrave Street on which the condemned man, Francie Hynes, was to die.

With the passing of the older generation the real name reasserted itself, and the "Gallows Hotel" faded away, though I did hear old people using the name in the 1930s.

The press notice announced the opening of the hotel was quite a sensation in its time:

"The Glentworth Hotel will be opened as a first-class family hotel on Monday, December 16. The Hotel has been prepared with great care and at considerable expense for the accommodation of county gentlemen and their families visiting Limerick on special days.

The commercial room has been fitted with every requisite for ease and comfort. The ladies coffee room is a perfect gem in its arrangements and appointments.

The gentlemen's coffee room will stand comparison with any of its kind in Ireland.

The Glentworth, in short, will claim the support of the general public for the superiority of its ac-



The
Glentworth Hotel

'A Jewel in Limerick's Crown'

THE ODD COUPLE

THE ODD COUPLE



The Gallows, The Glentworth and now Pery's Hotel, the establishment has had a long history in Limerick. Pictured above is the Glentworth Hotel as it looked at the turn of the 20th Century; an ad feature from the early 1990s, and a fashion show at the hotel in 1976

commodation in every department, including sitting room, bedrooms, bathrooms with hot and cold water, etc, etc.

P Kenna, Proprietor, 15 and 16, Glentworth Street, Limerick"

Kenna, after a trip to London where he made a study of the first class hotels, introduced refinements in the Glentworth unknown or unheard of in any local hotel, the

most revolutionary of which was hot water on tap.

This extraordinary novelty was the talk of the town at the time, especially among the thousands who had never enjoyed the pleasure of cold water on tap and who had to fetch water from a commercial source.

The business continued to prosper and in due course the hotel

was enlarged by the inclusion of the adjoining house, No 17, the former home of James Pain, the famous architect of the nineteenth century.

Patrick Kenna would be well pleased if he could see the grand result of the steady development of his enterprise of more than a century ago.

Today Limerick can be proud of the Glentworth.