

in a commitment not to historical divisions and which had come to music and dance the 20th century. These examples divide musical and traditional music and dance; the popular music and dance

Internationally recognised scholars and performers now note the Irish World Music Centre as having developed an ethos which is capable of bringing the centre beyond these divisions into the new Millennium and of providing a visionary model for music and dance education worldwide.

works with Daghdha Dance company, and the Music Therapy programme works closely with a number of Health Organisations, including St. Vincent's Centre, Lisnagry. The programme in chant and ritual song is offered in association with the Benedictine Community at Glenstal Abbey. Students are attracted to the centre

and a network of performances, workshops and seminars, all of which are open to the public. Community-based musicians and dancers also work as tutors in the centre, allowing student access to music and dance traditions from Cambodia to Donegal. Much of this ethos, which has come to characterise the Irish World Music

Music Centre, under the direction of Mícheál O Súilleabháin, is determined that Limerick will be a central voice in the unfolding of this process.

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# Limerick: industrial and commercial

**By TED RUSSELL  
Freeman of  
Limerick**

OVER the past century, the city of Limerick has seen many changes but none more than in its industrial and commercial life.

When I entered business in 1929, Limerick still retained many of the characteristic of a large country town. Most of the major industries relied on the produce of the city's rich hinterland for their raw materials with the exception of grain which was imported into Limerick Docks from Canada, Australia and the United States.

Bannatynes, later Ranks, flour and provender mills, gave considerable employment both in the manufacture and distribution of their products. I still remember their mill and store in Roches Street, long since demolished and now the site of the Telephone Exchange. I remember too, Bannatynes Mill which stood at the end of the Mill Road, Corbally. It was reputed to have the largest water wheel in the country. Unusually, the wheel was in the centre of the building over the mill race. Grain was brought out from Limerick Docks in trucks, ground into flour or meal and the finished products brought back to Bannatynes's Store. Such an uneconomic process could not last and it didn't.

In my youth there were four bacon factories in Limerick. Shaws, Matternsons, O'Maras and Dennys, where thousands of pigs were killed each week. Limerick bacon was famous world wide and Limerick hams were much sought after at Christmas time. At one time, Limerick had some twelve bakeries including a small bakery in the City Home (now St. Camillus Hospital). One of the bakeries was established by my grandfather, George Russell, in 1960 in Broad Street. He represented the Irishtown Ward in the, then, Town Council until his death in 1876 at the early age of 38. I cannot say if his brief period in public life was a contributing factor in his early demise!

Before the advent of motor vans, all bread was delivered by horse drawn vans and several of the Limerick bakers sent their vans daily into Limerick and East Clare. It meant early starts and late returns to the bakeries involved. Sadly, to-day, Limericks long established flour-milling industry and nearly all family bakeries are no more. Changing tastes and the hard laws of economics have prevailed.

Another famous Limerick industry, the Limerick Clothing Factory, established by a

Scotsman, Peter Tate, in the middle of the last century, gave considerable employment, mainly to women workers. In its earlier days it specialised in army uniforms, chiefly for British forces operating overseas. It is reputed to have supplied uniforms to both sides in the American Civil War. It got into serious financial difficulties in the 1940's when it was rescued by a small group of Limerick businessmen who kept the factory going for a further period of years. Eventually it was taken over by a large British firm of clothing manufacturers who, after a few years, decided it couldn't operate on a profitable basis. Its closure was a severe blow, particularly to families in its immediate area who had worked in the factory for generations.

Another old Limerick industry, still in operation but on a much reduced scale, was Cleeves, later the Condensed Milk Company of Ireland, the building now owned by Golden Vale Co-Op Ltd. When the condensed Company was in operation it gave employment, albeit seasonal, to several hundred, mainly women and girls, living in the Thomondgate area. An associated industry, Cleeves confectionery, also gave good employment.

In days long gone, markets were an important part of the economic life of Limerick. Cattle, calf and pig markets were held regularly as also were hay, straw and grain markets in the area bounded by Cathedral Place and Mulgrave Street. Nearby was the butter market where butter was sold in the 'Lump' or in firkins, small wooden hooped casks. The butter was sometimes described as 'salt' or 'country' butter was brought to the market on carts of every description from the surrounding countryside. The butter was sold in Grocery and Provision shops and expertly cut by the shopkeepers and their assistants in half and one pound lumps to suit the customers.

Old names such as the Potato Market on Merchants Quay and the Milk Market (formerly the Cornmarket) off Mungret Street still remain to remind us of the significant role played by the sale and purchase of agricultural products in our City.

I still remember the horse fairs held, many years ago in Upper William Street and eventually forced by public opinion to transfer their dealings to the Fairgreen and Ballysimon Road.

Another Commodity sold in quite substantial quantities was vegetables, especially cabbage, grown by the market gardeners of Park. I can still recall the Park women, driving their small carts fully loaded with vegetables passing through Broad Street and

looking around with a good humoured smile for likely customers.

In pre-supermarket days, the retail trade in Limerick was carried on mainly through medium sized and small shops, the latter often referred to as 'huxters'. The exceptions were the so-called "monster houses" of Todd's, Cannocks and McBirneys. Also, there was Boyds in William street, a large and handsome brick faced building which dealt in a wide variety of products. Following a disastrous fire, Todd's was rebuilt to its present design and now carries the name of its new owners Brown Thomas. McBirneys also rebuilt after a fire, has been for some years a successful branch of Roches Stores and Cannock has surrendered its name to Penneys. Its sad to see the old names go but it is more important that the houses which carried these names continue to trade profitably and give good employment. Sadly, the same cannot be said of Cruises Hotel. Once one of the best known hotels in Ireland and now just a memory to an older and not so old generation. During its century of history, many famous Irishmen, including Charles Stewart Parnell, experienced a warm and friendly welcome from its proprietor and staff. Over the years, William Street has been a favourite shopping centre for country customers. Among its many shops that were well known 'flour and meal' firms of O'Donnells, Harris' (who in earlier years had their own flour mill on Limerick Docks), Dan O'Connor's, Roches and O'Neill's. The country people came to Limerick in their pony and traps or horses and cars which they usually parked in one of the 'yards' in the vicinity of William Street, i.e. Murnanes in Gerald Griffin Street, Downeys in Roches Street and Casey's in Denmark Street. The flour and meal shops and other shops, facilitated their customers by delivering their purchases to one or other of the 'yards'.

To-day, as I look along the shops in O'Connell Street and William Street, for generations, the business centres of Limerick. I am saddened by the disappearance of so many of the old, usually, family names. One of the survivors, if not the only one, is the long established family firm of McCarthy and Sons, furniture warehouse, originally situated opposite the George Hotel and for years, continuing its long established and successful business in William Street.

In my early days in business, many of the shops in William Street still had the 'old type' shop windows divided by timber frames into several sections. In the evening, at closing time, the shutters were placed on the windows and taken down when the shops opened for business in the mornings.

Prior to funerals, preceded by horse drawn hearses, passing up William Street on their way to Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery, it was the practice to place two or three shutters on the shop windows as a mark of respect for the deceased.

The passing, in a comparatively short period of time, of so many traditional industries had a traumatic effect on Limerick. Business declined, unemployment rose and many young citizens left the city to seek employment in England. This state of affairs continued for some years until, with the establishment of the Industrial Development authority and later the Shannon Free Airport Development Company, an all out drive was initiated to encourage foreign industries to establish in this country. Industrial sites were developed throughout the state and attractive tax incentives were offered. Under successive governments, this policy has paid rich dividends and many thousands of jobs have been provided. Limerick and its region has fared particularly well in securing the establishment of some of the worlds best known firms in the fields of technology, pharmaceuticals and communications. Industrial Estates at Shannon Airport, Raheen, Galvone, Dock road and other sites contiguous to the City provide employment for thousands of young men and women, many of whom obtained their qualifications at the University of Limerick or the Limerick Institute of Technology. With Limerick's growing reputation as a centre for highly trained and skilled young people, the outlook for continued industrial development looks most encouraging.

Limerick's expansion in the various fields of industry has been reflected in a corresponding expansion in all sectors of the services industry. New hotels, supermarkets, restaurants, shops and of course motor cars have changed the face of the city. At the same time, old parts of the city are disappearing and being replaced by new car parks and blocks of flats. Much of these developments are necessary and welcome, but care must be taken that the old and historic character of Limerick is not damaged or worse, destroyed in the name of progress.

A good indication of Limerick's industrial and commercial progress over the years can be gauged from the history of the Chamber of Commerce. Beginning in the Commercial Buildings (now the Old Town Hall) in Rutland Street, which the members built, it received its Charter from George III in 1815. In 1837 it moved to its present premises at 96 O'Connell St. In its earlier years the membership was confined

to the merchant princes of Limerick and well established businessmen. After the war, the scene changed with the establishment of new industries and an influx of younger businessmen. The Chamber became more professional with the appointment of a Chief Executive and staff to handle its affairs and promote its expansion. Over the past twelve years this policy has proved most successful with membership more than trebled to over 600 with a large representation from the new industries and other commercial developments in the City and the Mid West Region.

For more than a thousand years, Limerick Port and the Shannon Estuary have played a vital role in the development and prosperity of Limerick. Founded on the Kings Island by the Vikings in the ninth Century as a barge for their long ships, the port later developed as an open basin or dock at the site of the present Potato Market. Later, with the expansion of the City and the construction of Newtown Pery, the port moved to then new constructed Arthur's Quay, so named after one of Limerick's famous merchant families.

After some ten years, due mainly to financial difficulties, the Bridge Commissioners, established in 1823, completed the construction of Wellesley (now Sarsfield) Bridge. A swivel opening span was included in the north end of the bridge to allow ships to enter Arthur's Quay which was to become a floating dock with the building of a retaining wall between the bridge and Custom House Quay. The plan never materialised, and, ultimately, a decision was made to construct the proposed floating dock downstream at its present location. The construction of the new floating dock was the main preoccupation of the Limerick Harbour Commissioners (successors to the Bridge Commissioners in 1847). The foundation stone was laid in 1849 by the then mayor John Boyce and the work completed in 1853 (some 30 years after the project was first mooted). It was opened in the same year, with full pomp and splendour, by the Lord Lieutenant, Edward Granville, Earl of Germain. The following day, his Excellency turned the first sod on the Limerick to Foynes railway line. The line was to be a key element in the plan to establish Foynes as the transatlantic mail and packet station. However, the plan never materialised due to pressure in Great Britain to locate the packet station in Southampton.

Following completion of the floating dock, work commenced on the construction of a graving dock in a site adjacent to the floating dock. This facility was badly needed at the time to carry out

repairs to timber hulled sailing vessels, many of which suffered severe buffeting on their voyages to Limerick, mainly with cargoes of grain.

Years later, due to greatly increased trade and to facilitate the entrance of ships to the floating dock, the Commissioners decided to seek government approval and finance, to extend the dock and construct a new western entrance. The extension was completed in 1937 and the new western entrance in 1956.

Like all Irish ports, trade through Limerick port and harbour suffered greatly during the war years, although it began to pick up again some years later. In 1946 the Harbours Act became law, bringing with it considerable changes, particularly in the administration of Irish Ports. The Act provided for a board of 23 members for Limerick and the other main ports of Dublin, Cork and Waterford. General managers were appointed to each port. The new boards included representatives from the City Council, County Councils of Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary, Chamber of Commerce, Livestock trade, Trade Unions, Manufacturers and four nominees from the Minister for Industry and Commerce.

Smaller ports had a lesser number of members. Ports and harbours continued to operate under the 1946 Act until the introduction of a new Act in 1996. This provided for a number of changes from the 1946 Act including the reduction in the membership of the main ports to 12, all appointed by the Minister for the Marine. Following the 1996 Act, Limerick Harbour Commissioners became the Board of Shannon Estuary Ports which better reflected their area of control from Shannon Bridge to Limerick City to the mouth of the Shannon, excluding the port areas of Foynes and Kilrush.

From 1946 onwards, trade through Limerick Port and the Shannon Estuary, steadily expanded, although the type of cargo coming to the Port had greatly changed. Larger vessels and the expansion of containerisation, together with role-on, roll-off and lift-on, lift-off greatly favoured the ports on the East Coast of Ireland with their shorter sea journey to the U.K and the Continent. These developments had a dramatic effect on employment at Limerick Docks, where following several agreed rationalisation schemes, the number of dockers was reduced from 340 casuals in earlier years, to less than ten permanent dockers. Tonnage entering the docks showed little change with an increase in bulk cargo and the almost total loss of general cargo which was the big employer of labour.

In contract to the situation at Limerick

Docks, a new era of progress began in 1966 in the Lower Shannon with the coming on stream of a number of marine terminals and port related industries. In all, these new developments represented an investment of over £2,000 million and provided, directly and indirectly, several thousand jobs.

In 1998, tonnage through the port (including the Estuary and Limerick Docks) reached almost nine million tonnes and the largest vessel ever to enter the Estuary, the M.V. Buccleuch of 186,000 d.w.t berthed at the E.S.B terminal at Moneypoint.

Amongst other industries established in the Shannon Estuary during the past 33 years were; the oil terminal at Foynes Island for Cement Ltd; the ESB Power Station at Tarbert; the oil jetty at Shannon Airport (by the Limerick Harbour Commissioners); Aughinish Alumina plant and the ESB power station at Moneypoint.

For nearly a century, the name of Limerick was carried round the world by ships of the Limerick Steamship Company or "Limerick Steam" as it was popularly know to generations of Limerick people. For years the company operated services between Liverpool, Limerick, Galway and other West of Ireland ports. Later, with five steamers, it traded with Hamburg and other ports on the European mainland. In 1907, the Company provided passenger services to Kildysart, Tarbert and Cappa using the iron paddle steamer "Shannon" and later the paddle tug "Flying Scotsman".

In the First World War, the Company suffered the loss of four ships and the interment of one of its crews for the entire period of hostilities. During the Second World War, the Limerick Steamship Company, together with Palgrave Murphy and the Wexford Steamship Company, formed Irish Shipping Ltd, at the behest of the Government to bring essential supplies of goods and raw materials to the Country. Tragically, Irish Shipping lost five ships during the war of which four were L.S.S Company ships. In the case of three ships, the crews perished with their vessels.

The Limerick Steamship Company continued to operate until 1968 when it merged with Palgrave Murphy to form Hibernian Transport. The merger was a failure and Hibernian Transport went into liquidation and ceased to trade after 1970. The Clyde Shipping Company began a service in 1878 with direct sailings between Limerick and Glasgow, mainly for the cattle trade. This continued on a weekly basis until 1939 when the services ended. Some local people still refer to Alphonsus Street, where the company had its offices, as the "Clyde Road".