

Community Leader

Local Notes and news from where YOU live

Prominent family's city crypt finally restored to former glory

AFTER almost five years of painstaking work, a crypt housing the remains of one of Limerick's best known families has been restored to its former glory, writes Clodagh O'Leary.

The Unthank Crypt located at the boundary wall at St John's cemetery, near St John's Hospital, records the names of family members buried there between 1814 and 1837.

The Unthinks, originally from Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, settled in Limerick in the 1700s and rose to prominence in business and in the medical profession. The family was also involved in social and commercial activities and was prominent in the Limerick Savings Bank, The Pery & Jubilee Loan Fund and other institutions.

Three streets in the city were named after the family: Joss's Lane off Mungret Street, Catherine Street and Thomas Street. It is said that members of the Unthank family were first buried in St. John's Cemetery in the early 1700s.

The crypt formed part of the boundary wall fronting St. John's Hospital. Over the years, the boundary wall of the graveyard along with the east facing wall of the crypt destabilised because of their close proximity to the road and traffic caused a considerable amount of structural damage to both the wall and the crypt.

In late 2004 the Unthank crypt was deemed to be a dangerous structure and Limerick Civic Trust was asked to undertake work to rectify matters. Each piece of stone was carefully numbered and recorded before removal for safe storage and the east wall was rebuilt.

Deputy Mayor Ger Fahy wel-

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comed the completion of the work this week: "The crypt is a very prominent and fitting monument of the marvellous contribution that this family made to the medical, business, commercial and social life of Limerick City during the 18th and 19th centuries."

Also this week, Limerick Civic Trust unveiled a plaque marking the newly-restored St John's Parish drinking fountain. The fountain was erected in 1865 by the Limerick Pery and Jubilee Loan Society at the suggestion of Isaac Unthank and Limerick Corporation agreed to grant a free supply of water for the fountain for use by the residents of St John's Parish. The fountain fell into disrepair and Limerick Civic Trust and Limerick City Council engaged the services of Stone Developments who specialise in conservation work, to fully restore the limestone structure and marble feature pieces.

Mayor John Gilligan praised the City Council, Limerick Civic Trust and the restorers on saving this fountain for its antiquity and social history values and as a reminder of the talented 19th century craftsmen who constructed it.



Cllr Ger Fahy unveiling a plaque at the restored Unthank Crypt in John's Square in the presence of Gabriel Wallace, chairman of Limerick Civic Trust. The crypt was restored as part of a joint environmental project between, Limerick City Council, Limerick Civic Trust and Fás, during the mayoralty of Mayor Ger Fahy in 2007

PICTURE: DAVE GAYNOR

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