

A permanent TSB bank withdrawal

By ANNE SHERIDAN

AFTER nearly 170 years as one of Limerick's most iconic buildings, the Permanent TSB bank on Glentworth Street will close its doors on September 8.

And the fate of the preserved building, known to the people of Limerick as the Stone Jug or Penny Bank, remains unknown. "We really aren't sure what is going to happen. The bank hasn't made a decision yet about the sale of the premises," said Geraldine Creamer, acting manager of the branch.

Sean Crowley, now retired, was manager of the bank for the past 15 years.

"It was always a much loved bank and will be a sad day for all the staff here. We are all leaving the old world behind and moving on to the new. Up until the 1970s we didn't even have telephones in the bank. It has come a long way and Limerick has grown with it," said Ms Creamer.

To mark the momentous occasion the bank will be giving out champagne and chocolates to all their customers on the day as a thank you for their business throughout the years. And the bank has chosen one special customer to receive a gift as their last customer.

Among its clients during the last century were the Young Irelanders, Fenians, Parnellites, but 77 year-old Willie Grimes



Michaela Hurley, Permanent TSB Bank, Glentworth Street, with some of the historical items (LL)

of Sexton Street, has long been a favourite with staff. Ms Creamer noted that the late Limerick politician Jim Kemmy was a proud member of the bank throughout his life.

"It really was a work-

ing man's bank as there was a ceiling for how much you could lodge in one year," she said. The rules of 1869 laid down that the bank could not receive from a depositor "any sum or sums exceeding thirty pounds a year,

with a ceiling of £150 in any one account."

Former Mayor of Limerick, Cllr Diarmuid Scully hopes the premises will be used for cultural purposes rather than commercial ventures. He suggests the viability of a

sports museum or new library as much needed projects to enhance the city. "I think we need to examine that possibility because it is such a beautiful building and it's a superb location. Obviously, a commercial enterprise is more likely but we have no shortage of restaurants, bars or nightclubs in the city," said Cllr Scully.

Originally built as the Cork and Limerick Savings Bank, after a series of bank amalgamations it became the Permanent TSB Bank. It is noted as being one of the finest small buildings in Ireland in a neo-classical style. The façade with four Doric columns with fluted shafts presents an austere sense of solidity—an essential in a bank.

It was commissioned in 1839 from W.H. Owen although it was built by Sir Thomas Deane and an identical building was built in Wales around the same time.

The staff will move to a new branch in Dooradoyle due to the changing business patterns and the attractiveness to customers of having plenty of parking spaces at the new premises.

In November 1991, an article in the Limerick Chronicle appeared on the history of the building. The author, Kevin Hannon, concluded with this comment: "Long may the building remain as a link with the bank's chequered past and long may it continue to serve the people of Limerick."

Historic artefacts to be preserved

THE history of the Permanent TSB Bank on Glentworth Street will be preserved thanks to several historic finds by the staff during a massive clear out last week, writes Anne Sheridan.

In the midst of throwing out old files, staff discovered ledgers dating back to 1847 and silver spoons in an old damp safe in the basement. "When we picked them up they started to disintegrate.

Amazingly, ledgers from the 1960s and 1970s

fell part, while one of the oldest ledgers remained intact," revealed acting manager Geraldine Creamer.

"The ledgers reveal all the occupations of clients and their quaint titles. It's part of the history of Limerick. It's something to be cherished as it gives a picture of what life was like at the time and the kind of people that lived in the city," she said. The library at Mary Immaculate College hopes to secure the ledgers for their archives.

"The ledgers from the Trustee Savings Bank are an invaluable source for

local history. Mary Immaculate College is very please to be offered these records. We will be looking at the best way of preserving them and making them available for history scholars and the people of Limerick," said Geraldine Moloney, librarian with the college.

Ms Creamer said the ledgers are a fascinating read and was amazed at their discovery. "They are all the more important when you consider that a lot of Limerick's census figures for that period would have been burned in the Four Courts in

Dublin," she said.

The seven Dublin silver spoons, engraved with Limerick Savings Bank, were believed to have been used by trustees when having boiled eggs during their meetings. The Hunt museum, which examined various historic items found in the bank, is interested in displaying them. "Essentially we are hoping to exhibit some of the pieces for a major exhibition of Limerick silver in September 2007," said Virginia Teehan, director of the museum.

The bank also contains five painting by Limerick

artist Roger McCarthy. "We're very happy to say that those paintings are staying in the Limerick branches of Permanent TSB, because they're of beautiful Limerick scenes," she said.

A Wallace clock was also found, which Ms Creamer admitted they originally had no interest in keeping. The piece which is believed to date back to the turn of the century, is now estimated to have a value of approximately €1,500.

"We're very determined to keep that piece of culture," said Ms Creamer.



Linda Hilton, Permanent TSB Bank, Glentworth Street looking through some of the old ledgers (LL)