

## News

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## LITERATURE

# Limerick inspiration for Austen's romantic hero

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FITZWILLIAM D'arcy, the dashing yet aloof hero in Jane Austen's novel, 'Pride and Prejudice' was inspired by a Limerick man.

Descended from an old Huguenot family, Thomas Langlowis Lefroy was born in Limerick in 1776 and went on to become Lord Chief Justice of Ireland.

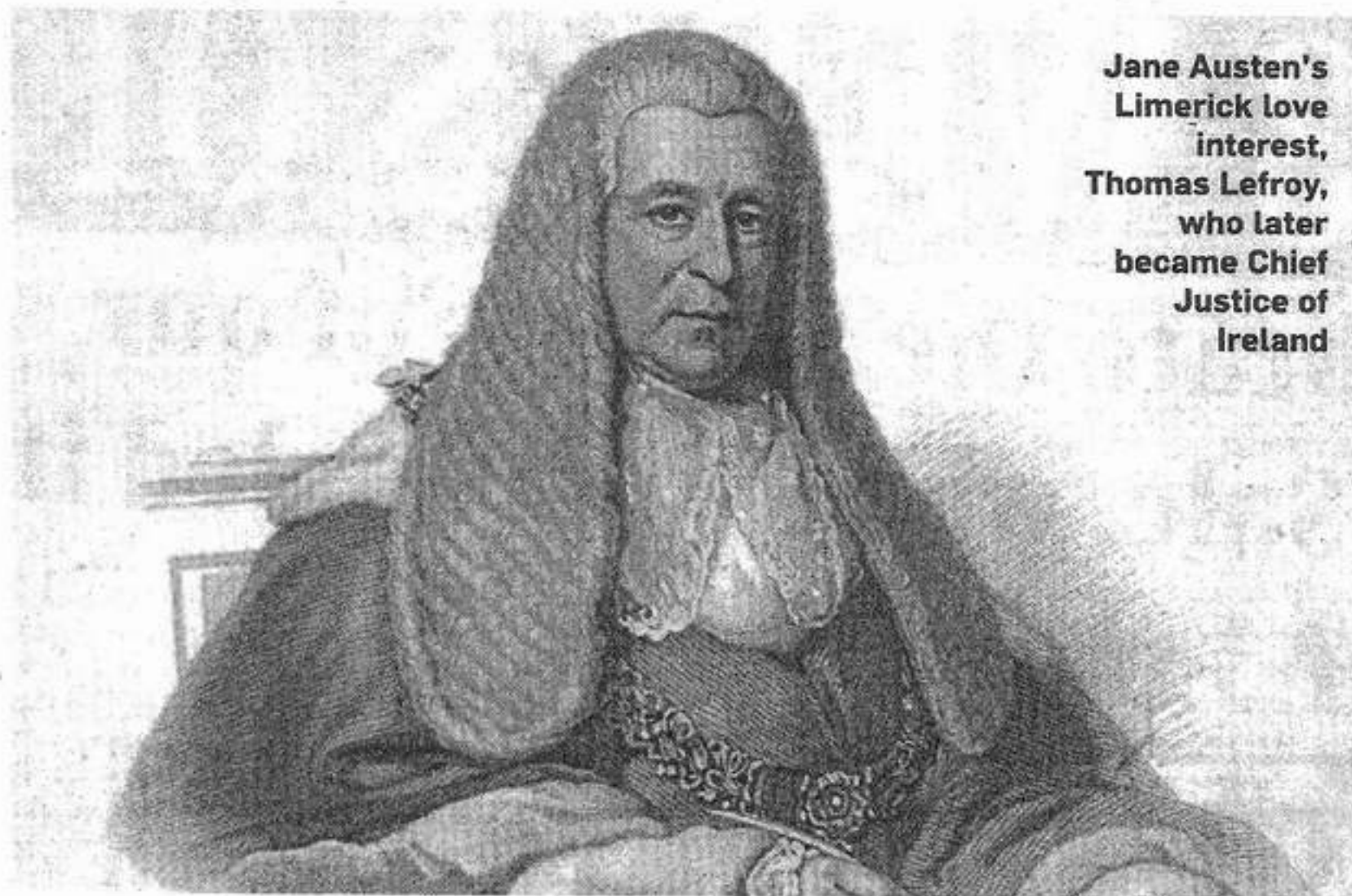
Despite his political and academic renown, Austen's 'Irish friend' is best known as the only known love interest of the iconic novelist.

In a letter dated January 1796, Austen writes: "I am almost afraid to tell you how my Irish friend and I behaved. Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together..... He is a very gentlemanlike, good-looking, pleasant young man, I assure you."

Their whirlwind romance began when the pair was introduced at a ball when Tom spent Christmas with relations in the parish where Austen's father was a rector.

However, it was a love not to be as the Austens were on the lower fringes of the English gentry. Someone of Lefroy's standing was obligated to marry a more eligible suitor.

Upon their last meeting Austen wrote to a friend: "The day is come on which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy, and when you receive



Jane Austen's Limerick love interest, Thomas Lefroy, who later became Chief Justice of Ireland

this it will be over. My tears flow as I write at the melancholy idea."

Lefroy later wed Mary Paul of County Wexford and they had seven children. When Austen died at the age of 42 in 1817, Lefroy traveled to England to pay his respects. In the

Winter of his years, he admitted to having loved the novelist, stating that it was a "boyish love". It is believed that he named his eldest daughter, Jane Christmas Lefroy, after the novelist.

He died in 1869 in Bray at the age of 93. A fictitious account of their relationship is at the centre of the 2007 hit movie 'Becoming Jane', in which Lefroy is played by Scottish actor James McAvoy.

Tragically, Austen, whose novels' biting social commentary confirmed her historical importance among scholars and critics, never found her own Mr Darcy.

However, the Limerick man's legacy lives on in arguably one of the most popular works of fiction ever written.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Tool theft

■ ROXBORO Road gardaí are seeking the public's assistance following the theft of a number of speciality tools from a car that was parked in the Mulgrave Street area. The theft occurred between the hours of 5pm and 9am on July 26 and 27. A number of valuable power tools were stolen from the locked vehicle including a black Hitachi angle grinder and a blue Hilti drill. Gardaí are reminding members of the public to exercise caution when purchasing tools from unregistered suppliers, as they believe the tools were stolen for monetary gain. Anyone with information can contact Roxboro Road gardaí on 061-212340.

## Crime text service

■ AN EAST Limerick community has launched a texting service to prevent crime against the elderly. The Oola Community texting scheme will allow residents to make direct contact with the Gardaí in Bruff if they feel their property has been targeted by burglars.

The initiative is being rolled out following the Pallasgreen Crime Prevention meeting last week. Chairman David Thompson said: "We are using modern technology to combat these criminals. This is a 24/7 initiative and we want criminals know that this area is being watched."

## Tour de Munster

■ THE Tour de Munster charity cycle will stop at the Down Syndrome Limerick Centre on Thursday August 8 at 5:15pm. To welcome the 120 cyclists who will be led by Tour de France legend Sean Kelly, the Limerick stop has a host of VIPs and celebrities lined up including some of the county's senior hurling team, with the Munster SHC trophy, and Limerick 2013 Rose, Chloe Heskin. Mayor Kathleen Leddin and the County Cathaoirleach have also been invited to attend. The beneficiaries are the Munster branches of Down Syndrome.

## The best cow

■ DAIRY breeders from Limerick are being encouraged to enter the Diageo Baileys Champion Dairy Cow Competition before Monday, August 12 with the final taking place at the Virginia Show in Cavan on Wednesday August 21. Munster farmers have won the prize for the last four years, with Limerick farmer Derek Frawley, the current title holder who says: "It's the one we all want to win...it is just the best show of its kind."

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