

New website unlocks Limerick's secret history

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HISTORIANS at Mary Immaculate College have developed a new website that highlights various local historical landmarks. The website – limericklandmarks.com – is the brainchild of Dr Robert Hartigan and Dr Paul O'Brien of the college's History Department.

"The idea came from a nerdy historical discussion about some of the old eighteenth and nineteenth century big houses extant in the city and its suburbs, such as Ballinacurra House or Laurel Hill," explained Dr Hartigan. "We realised that technology had advanced to allow us reach a much wider audience than a book might."

Limerick's Landmarks "addresses a need for a concise, self-generated

walking tour of Limerick", Dr O'Brien told *Limerick Life*. "The website is aimed at locals and visitors to the city - it is not there to replace walking tours or publications but rather to add to the information already available. We decided to focus on the architecture of the cityscape and to open the doors of some of the many fine medieval to modern buildings in the city to reveal the stories of local people who previously inhabited them."

Users of the website can click on a city map and navigate their way through different routes selected by period (such as 'Medieval to Early Modern') or subject (for example, 'Manors and Houses'). Well-known local places of interest such as King John's Castle and Cleeve's factory feature on the site, alongside the location of past buildings such as



SAMPLE FROM LIMERICKSLANDMARKS.COM

"There has been a bridge here since 1174 but the construction of the first Baal's [Ball's] Bridge was completed in 1340. This 14th century bridge, which connected English Town to Irish Town, had four arches and had a row of houses incorporated into it. Sharon Slater notes that 'the old bridge was reputed to be owned by the Earl of Shannon, whose family name was Boyle. Hence the bridge could very well have been called "Boyle's Bridge", corrupted later to "Baal's Bridge" or "Ball's Bridge."

The City Brewery, an eighteenth century producer of ale and porter that was based at Newgate Lane.

"Hopefully local people can log on and learn something about streets and buildings they pass every day and it might give them a renewed appreciation for them," said Dr Hartigan, who added that there is a conservationist angle to this project.

"We are great in Limerick for rolling out plans to regenerate our city and this usually revolves around shiny new glass buildings that will look outdated in ten years. We have a lovely Georgian city that we are allowing fall down around us and to be replaced by soulless buildings."

Limerick's Landmarks' creators stressed that the project is at its pilot phase, and that feedback from users

is welcomed. The pair have spent six months researching and creating the content, which was funded by an innovation award from the National Forum for Teaching and Learning through their T1Step scheme.

Dr Hartigan and Dr O'Brien were supported in the process by Dr Anne O'Keefe, Director of Teaching and Learning, and Professor Gary O'Brien, Associate Vice President at MIC. Currently, Limerick's Landmarks exists as just a website: "The funding for this part of the project only allowed for the development of a website version. We have plans to develop this into an app with a lot more features and a lot more content, particularly focusing on Limerick's social history rather than just its buildings, but this will depend on funding," Dr Hartigan added.

From Be-Bop to the Cranberries, 50 years of Limerick Music Lingers

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A local music aficionada is on the search for good quality photographs and other pieces of memorabilia that will be part of perhaps the most wide-ranging piece of work on music in Limerick.

Opera, rock, classical, céili music and much more will all feature in the new book that author Paddy Brennan said "will be the printed history of Limerick music. It will be the history of the people who entertained the people of Limerick over the past 200 years."

Mr. Brennan, from Corbally, who in the past has compiled CDs, DVDs and much more on Limerick recording artists, has been working on the book tentatively entitled 'Limerick Music Throughout The Decades' for the past year.

His 2012 compilation CD 'Limerick On Record' featured over 60 tracks from Limerick artists over a 50-year period, and is widely considered to be the definitive collection of Limerick music.



Be Bop Mail Magazine produced by Paddy Brennan the Limerick Rock N' Roll Club

A founding member of the Limerick Rock N' Roll Club, which ran for 35 years from its foundation in 1979, Paddy has written on Limerick music in the past with his 1994 book 'The Golden Era of Irish Showbands' featuring eight pages on Limerick bands.

However, this will be his most comprehensive project to date, with him estimating that "at this stage it's going to be hundreds of



The Cranberries

pages. I will have to call a halt to it soon and start working on the editing." He added that the book probably will not hit shop shelves until 2017.

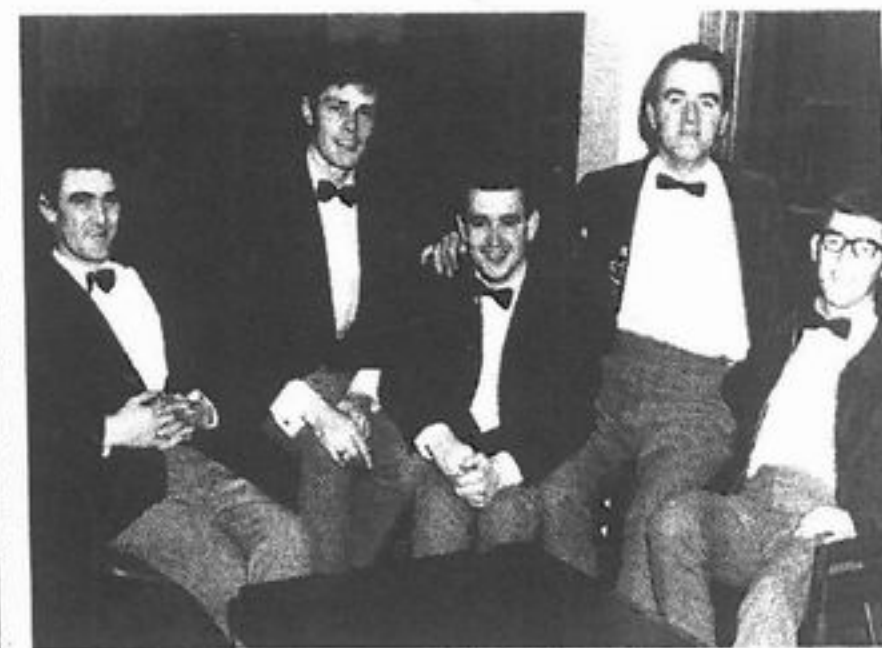
"I don't want to rush it as I will only get one shot at getting this right.

I could really do it at the moment with what I have but somebody out there might have something that I don't already have, like a

photo from the very first time The Cranberries played together for example."

He has issued an appeal for those with information they would like to provide, or with rare photographs and memorabilia to get in contact with him.

Mr. Brennan has been working off a list of singers, choirs, musicians, bands, and orchestras stretching back to the early nineteenth



Ger Cusack Quintet (Ger Cusack, Joe Browne, Christy Falahee, Aiden Darcy, Sean Comerford)

century.

"There are hundreds and hundreds of names and they're all being ticked off one-by-one. I'm not an expert on opera and classical so I'm depending on others to help me in a way. Some people have written articles for me."

Paddy was also keen to stress that this project is not just about Limerick's musical past. Name-checking contemporary bands such as

Windings and Brad Pitt Light Orchestra, he said: "This is not all an oldies thing. It is going to acknowledge the input of current bands and acknowledge that there is a recording industry still in place in Limerick."

Mr. Brennan is asking for any readers who have items that may be of interest for this book to contact him at 087 2837141 as soon as possible.