

# Merry Widows of Limerick City, 1777 to 1801



The period covered is in the time of the corrupt Corporation of Limerick's reign. There was a rule that an Alderman's widow or the widow of a Burgess would be granted a pension if they were in dire financial need. The corrupt Corporation decided to pay all widows of their former colleagues a yearly pension of £8 pounds for Aldermen's widows and £5 to the widow of a Burgess. A total of 34 widows are named in the accounts book. The date that each pension was due on is also the date that the widow's husband died. 14 widows were already in receipt of their pensions when this particular book starts. The other 20 widows were added to the lists as their pensions started and the year of their husband's death can therefore be calculated. Some of the widows died prior to 1801 when these records cease and some of the pensions cease without comment as to whether this was because of remarriage or death. Some widows opted for payment yearly but others wanted paying half yearly. Some even tried payment in both options.

It would seem that those who were happy with yearly payments were not stuck for cash while the others who took their pension half yearly may have truly been in dire financial need. Contemporary available records do not give wives Christian names so each payment warrant will hopefully link the 34 wives Christian names with 34 husband's names and help to put the date of the husband's death on record.

Normally a man would be admitted to Freeman status on his 21st birthday. Apprentices, having started to serve their time at the age of 14 would be out of their time at the age of 21 also. It was however from the merchant ranks that Sheriffs were chosen, around the age of 30, after they had shown their worth in their chosen field. Immediately after stepping down the ex-Sheriff was elected a Burgess of the City of Limerick and on average, 10 years later he would be elected Mayor. Having served his year as Mayor he would then be elected an Alderman of the City. This system was unique to Limerick City. Some Burgesses and Aldermen were elected without having served as Sheriff or Mayor. Towards the later years you will see men being admitted as Freeman and appointed Sheriffs the same day.

The list, as it occurs in the account book is as follows, with the widows marked (A) for Alderman's widow and (B) for Burgess widow: -

- 1 Mrs. Dorothea Barrington. (B)
- 2 Mrs. Elizabeth Robinson. (A).
- 3 Mrs. Margaret Seymour. (B).

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*by Noel Murphy*

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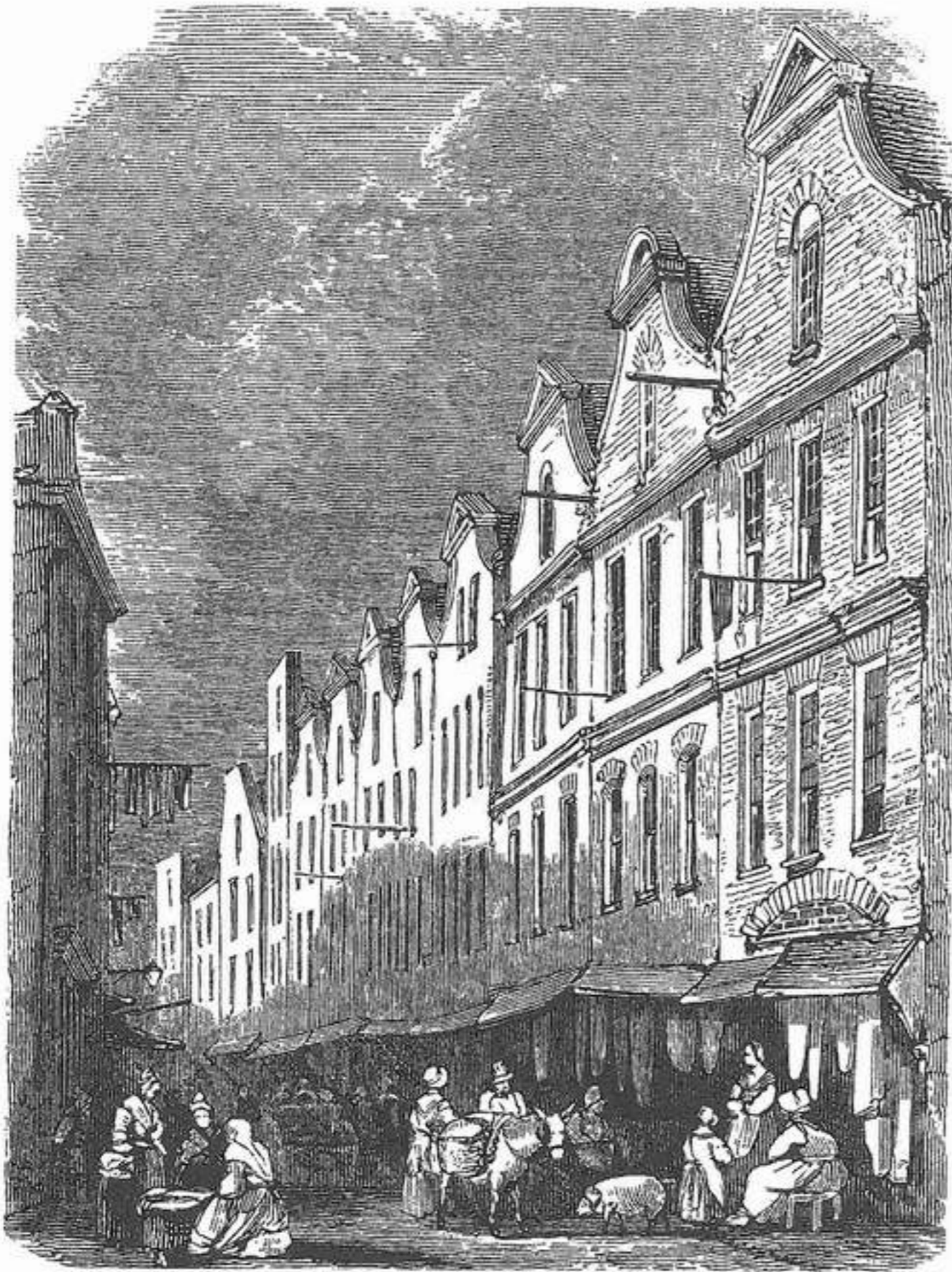
- 4 Mrs. Mary Robinson. (B).
- 5 Mrs. Ann Barrington. (B).
- 6 Mrs. Elizabeth Bridson. (B).
- 7 Mrs. Elizabeth Vokes. (B).
- 8 Mrs. Jane Monsell (B).
- 9 Mrs. Elizabeth Shepherd. (B).
- 10 Mrs. Hannah Ingram. (A).
- 11 Mrs. Ann Johns. (A).
- 12 Mrs. Elizabeth Baylee. (A).
- 13 Mrs. Dorcas Shepherd. (A).
- 14 Mrs. Ann Gubbins. (B).
- 15 Mrs. Sarah Starkey. (B).
- 16 Mrs. Jane Graves. (B).
- 17 Mrs. Mary Wakeley. (B).
- 18 Mrs. Mary Shepherd. (A).
- 19 Mrs. Mary Seymour. (B)
- 20 Mrs. Sarah James. (B)
- 21 Mrs. Margaret Vereker. (A).
- 22 Mrs. Fidelia Piercy. (B).
- 23 Mrs. Phoebe Long. (B).
- 24 Mrs. Christian Carpenter. (A).
- 25 Mrs. Susanna Lee. (B).
- 26 Mrs. Jane Vincent. (A).
- 27 Mrs. Mary Ann Franklin. (A).
- 28 Mrs. Frances Hallam. (A).
- 29 Mrs. Catherine Roche, (A).
- 30 Mrs. Deborah Harrison. (A).
- 31 Mrs. Elizabeth Vincent. (B).
- 32 Mrs. Ann Bindon. (B).
- 33 Mrs. Johanna Johns. (B).
- 34 Mrs. Jane Davis. (B).

## Widows of Aldermen

The names of the Aldermen who were married to the widows listed above should be easy to identify as one has only to check the list of Mayors of the City of Limerick.

- Number 2, Mrs. Elizabeth Robinson. Elizabeth's pension started before 1777 and ceased after March 1779. In 1743 John Robinson married Elizabeth Brown, John died in April 1753 having been Mayor in 1742.
- Number 10, Mrs. Hannah Ingram has to be the wife of Alderman John Ingram, Mayor in 1747. It would seem that John died on the 23 Jan. 1777. Hannah collected her last Pension Warrant on the 23 July 1782.
- Number 11, Mrs. Ann Johns, it would appear, was the widow of Alderman Joseph Johns, Silversmith, who was Mayor in 1773 and who seems to have died on the 1st Sept. 1775. Ann died on the 21st June 1784. Joseph Johns married Ann Hincks on the 27 Aug. 1737. This suggests a birth date for Joseph of circa 1716. The Council voted Ann a pension on the 1 Oct. 1778. This indicates Joseph dying in 1777.

- Number 12, Mrs. Elizabeth Baylee seems to be the widow of Alderman Sexton Baylee, Mayor in 1758. Sexton Baylee married Elizabeth Wight in 1747. He was baptised in St. John's on the 15th June 1719. Sexton Baylee, Gentleman was admitted a Freeman of the City of Limerick on the 7th May 1747. Sexton Baylee, son of Sexton Baylee, Burgess, was admitted on the 10th Sept. 1756. Henry Baylee, son of Alderman Sexton Baylee was admitted on the 5th May 1762. Perry Baylee. Son of Alderman Sexton Baylee was admitted on the 21st Sept. 1768. Sexton Baylee appears to have died on the 4th March but the year is not clear. Elizabeth Baylee died in 1786 when Mr. Perry Baylee collected his mother's pension on the 22 April, she being dead.
- Number 13, Mrs Dorcas Shepherd was the wife of Alderman Andrew Shepherd, Mayor in 1757. Andrew Shepherd married Dorcas Davenport in St Peter's Church, Dublin on the 8th of Dec. 1733. Dorcas Shepherd received her last pension payment on the 4th June 1779. It was due on the 1st Jan. 1779. Again, while it's clear Andrew died on the 1st of January, it's not clear which year he died. He was alive in 1764. (L/OC/4)
- Number 18, Mrs Mary Shepherd must be the widow of Alderman John Shepherd, the 1752 Mayor. He died in 1779 and the widow died on the 16th April 1792, aged 74. Mary's half yearly pension was due on the 15 of Feb. and the 15 of Nov. each year. So John Shepherd died on one of those dates.
- Number 21, Mrs Margaret Vereker. Her Pension details show that her husband died in Jan. 1783 therefore her husband was the John Vereker, Mayor in 1769, who died on the 30 Jan. 1783, aged 68. Margaret collected her last payment on the 1 Feb. 1794. John Vereker married Margaret Jessop on the 30 March 1739. *Anthologia Hibernica* 1793/4 gives Mrs Vereker, widow of Alderman Vereker dying at Limerick in May 1794.
- Number 24, Mrs Christian Carpenter was the widow of Thomas Carpenter, Mayor 1781. Thomas died on the 18 March 1786. Lt. Thomas Carpenter married Miss Kitty Sargent, daughter of Alderman Peter Sargent on 13 Sept. 1764. Christian was still drawing her pension when the current account book ended in 1801. She died eventually, in Cornwallis St. early in February 1813. (The General Advertiser of 12 Feb. 1813).
- Number 26, Mrs. Jane Vincent. It would seem that her husband died on the 3rd Sept. 1790. Exham Vincent was Mayor



An impression of Nicholas Street

From George Wilkinson's, *Practical geology and ancient architecture of Ireland*, 1845

in 1770, he attended his last Corporation meeting on the 28th of June 1790. Exham Vincent married Jane Morony on the 20 March 1771. He was born in 1733 and she was born in 1735. She collected her last pension payment on the 9 Sept. 1797.

- Number 27, Mrs. Mary Ann Franklin. Alexander Franklin was Mayor in 1783. Alexander Franklin, Gent. was admitted a Freeman on the 8 Oct. 1759. He was Sheriff in 1764. The Corporation allowed a pension for the widow of Alderman Alexander Franklin on 24 Aug. 1791. Mary Ann was still collecting her pension in 1801 when the account book ended.
- Number 28, Mrs Frances Hallam. Only one Hallam ever served as Mayor of Limerick and that was Dr. Robert Hallam who was Mayor in 1763 having been Sheriff in 1748. He also held the position of Town Clerk, at least from 1757, when his sons Robert and John were admitted Freemen, until his death. L/OC/4/1 gives 1787 as the year Robert died, as a replacement Town Clerk was elected on Robert's death that year. Frances collected her last pension payment on the 18 May 1799.
- Number 29, Mrs Catherine Roche, she received the first payment of her pension on the 25 March 1799. In her case this would seem to be an artificial date as it marked the end of the financial year but her husband must have died close to

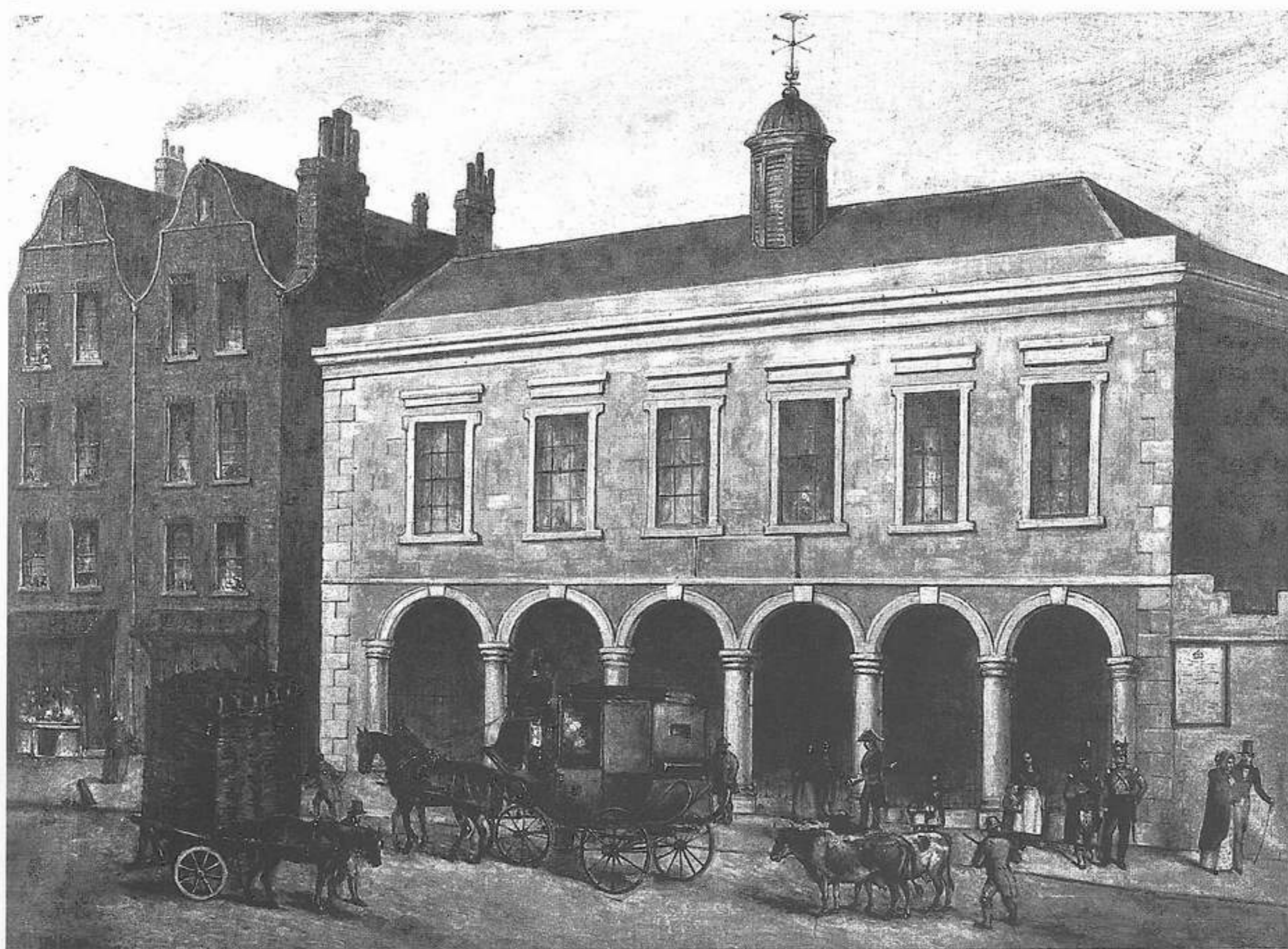
but prior to the 29 Sept. 1798. George Roche was Mayor in 1772, he was born in 1736. George married Catherine Gloster on the 4 May 1781, rather late in life but he may have been married to an earlier wife. Catherine was alive in 1801 when the account book ended and no record of her death has been found yet.

- Number 30, Mrs Deborah Harrison. She received a full years payment of £8, on the 25 March 1799 and her second 6 monthly payment of £4, on the 29 Sept. 1799. In actual fact the Mayoral List has a note that John Harrison died whilst Mayor in the beginning of April 1797. Harrison would have been elected in June 1796 to serve as Mayor from Oct. 1796 to Oct. 1797. Deborah was alive in 1801 when the account book ended.

### Widows of Burgesses

Linking the widows to their Burgess husbands is a bit more difficult. The first check of course is through the list of Sheriff's of Limerick which is complete. After that the existing Minute Books of the Council of the Corporation of Limerick can be searched for the lists of attending Burgesses at the regular meetings. However these have large gaps in them and some are not in the best condition of preservation. The fact that some of the Burgesses did not attend Council meetings very often doesn't help either.

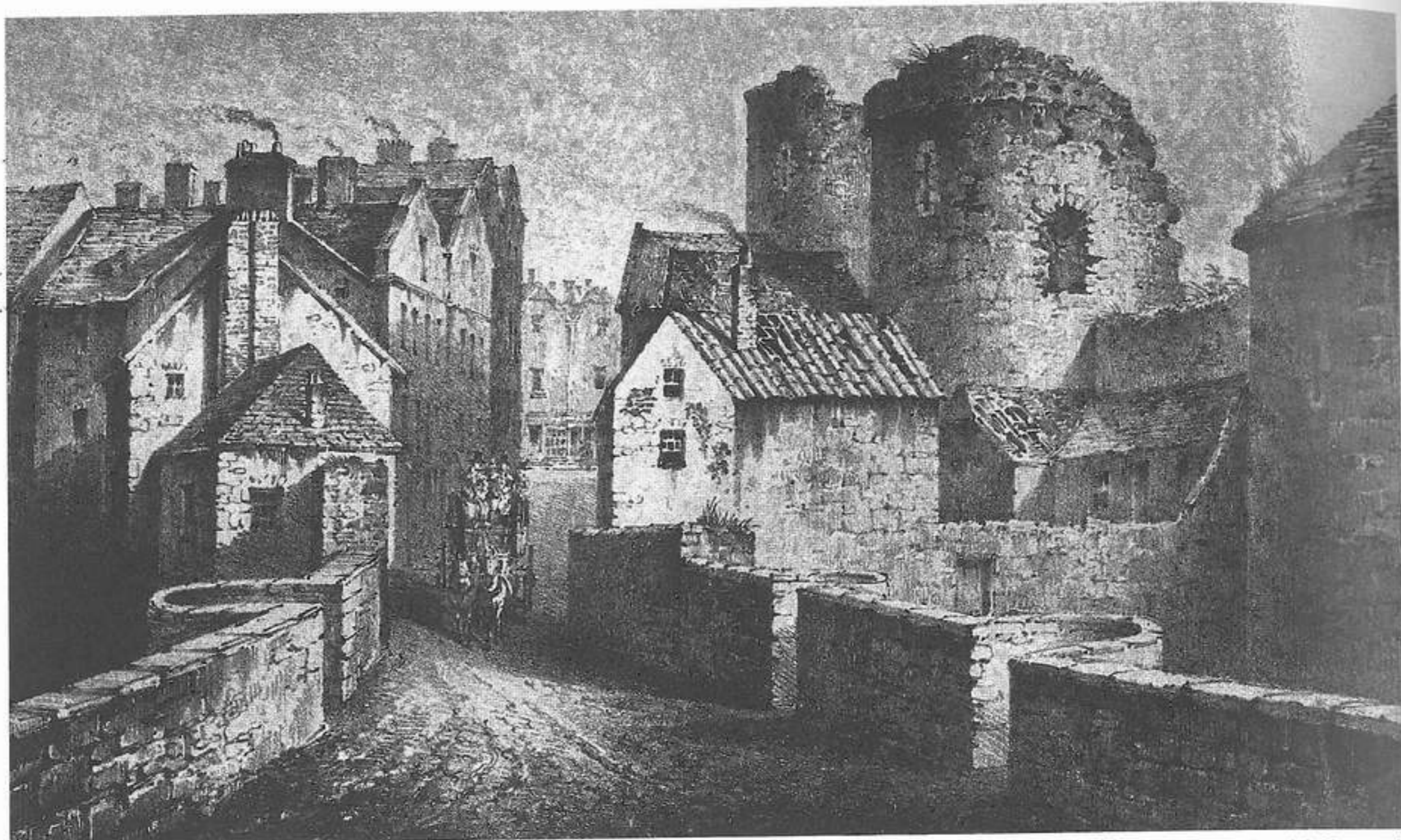
- Number 1, Mrs Dorothea Barrington. Benjamin Barrington was Sheriff in 1714. Another Benjamin was Sheriff in 1729 and Joseph Barrington was Sheriff in 1752. The only thing we know about Dorothea's husband is that he was a Burgess and that he died some time prior to 1777. Dorothea also drew her pension half yearly. Her last instalment was collected on the 27 March 1793, two days after its due date. The Waterford Herald of Tuesday 18th June 1793 gives the death 1 week earlier of Mrs Barrington the widow of Joseph Barrington Esq. So Joseph Barrington is the most likely candidate for Dorothea's husband.
- Number 3, Mrs Margaret Seymour. For some unknown reason Margaret was paid the £5 yearly pension due to her on the 10 Jan. 1777 almost 11 months late, on the 3 Nov. 1777. In 1778 she was paid in July the £5 which was due on the 10 Jan. 1778 and on the 3 Dec. 1778 she was paid £55 which was 11 years back pay. So her husband was dead at least 13 years and his death occurred about the 10 Jan. 1766. The list of Sheriffs has a James Seamor as Sheriff in 1728, he was dead by 1747 when his son James was admitted a Freeman. There was a Richard Seymour Sheriff in 1730 and a Walter Seymour Sheriff in 1742. St. Mary's Cathedral Archives have a "James Seymour and his wife Margaret" baptising their son James on the 2 July 1732. Margaret's last pension payment was made on the 22 Oct. 1784.
- Number 4, Mrs Mary Robinson. James Robinson was Sheriff in 1744 and William Robinson was Sheriff in 1736. Mary's husband may have been admitted a Burgess without having served as Sheriff. No Robinson attended a Council Meeting between 1769 and 1777. A John Robinson was married to Mary Crips in 1733 and died in 1753 but he was an Alderman so he is ruled out.
- Number 5, Mrs Ann Barrington. Her name appears only once in the account book, when she received a half years payment of £2-10-0 on the 6 Nov. 1777 which had become due a few days earlier on the 29 Sept. She was not the Anne Waltho who married Benjamin Barrington because that Anne died in 1752.
- Number 6, Mrs Elizabeth Bridson. Christopher Bridson was Sheriff in 1757 and elected a Burgess of the Common Council in 1758. He was a merchant who went into partnership with a John Stritch to manufacture earthenware. Christopher died on the 8 July 1768. Christopher was admitted a Freeman on the 21 Sept. 1753. He and his wife Elizabeth baptised their son William on the 18 July 1751 in St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick. His two sons Thomas and William were admitted as Freemen on the 26 June 1758 while Christopher was Sheriff. Note that William was only 7 years old. Elizabeth's pension, calculated as £3-6-8 for 8 months was paid to her daughter Miss Christian Bridson on the 10 April 1788, Elizabeth having died on the 8 March that year.



The Exchange, Nicholas Street. A 1900 copy, by Henry O'Shea, of an 1820 original.  
Widow Barrington lived in the second house to the left of the Exchange

(Limerick Museum)

- Number 7, Mrs Elizabeth Vokes. She was the wife of Thomas Vokes, Sheriff in 1760. She received 11 years arrears of pension on the 2 Dec 1777. Her pension was due on the 2 June each year. She received nothing in 1778 but was paid two years money in 1779. There is no record of her being paid in 1780 but £3-15-0 was paid to her heirs on the 16 Feb. 1781 being the amount due to her on the day she died being the 24 March 1780. Thomas Vokes therefore seems to have died on the 2 June 1765.
- Number 8, Mrs Jane Monsell. Jane was already on the books in 1777 and drew her pension yearly to the last payment made on the 12 Dec. 1793 being due on the 7 Dec. each year. John Monsell was Sheriff in 1761. *Anthologia Hibernica*, 1793/4, gives the death of Mrs. Monsell, widow of John Monsell, High Sheriff of Limerick 1791, recte 1761, she died in May 1794. There was no mention of the balance of her pension from the 7th of Dec. 1793 to May 1794 being paid to any Heir. There was also no Sheriff John Monsell for either Limerick City or County in 1791. Strictly speaking the term High Sheriff applies to the County Sheriff only.
- Number 9, Mrs. Elizabeth Shepherd. Her pension was due on the 12 Nov. each year from 1777 to 1800 so it's not immediately apparent when her pension started or finished. She is not the wife of Andrew or his son John because they were both Aldermen and the Rev. Thomas Shepherd was alive and serving as a Burgess on the Council in 1778. In 1766 John Shepherd Junior was Sheriff. Elizabeth could be the wife of John Junior. A John Shepherd, Snr. and his wife Alice baptized their son John Jnr. in 1739 in St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick.
- Number 14, Mrs Ann Gubbins. She was already receiving a pension in 1777. Her due dates were 2 April and 2 August. From 1782 she received her pension yearly on the 2 August, until her death in 1795 when Margaret Gubbins was paid the money due to Ann. This was paid out on the 23 Sept. 1795. A William Gubbins was Sheriff in 1758 and no doubt this was the William Gubbins, Merchant, who was admitted a Freeman on the 1 July 1754. William is not on record as attending any Council meeting in 1769 indicating an earlier date of death.
- Number 15, Mrs Sarah Starkey. Sarah opted to be paid yearly and her due date was 29 September. Her last payment was in 1784 which was paid out on the 13 October. No Starkey ever served as Sheriff of Limerick and there are no Starkeys in the list of Freemen. There is probably a link with the Starkey's of Dromoland and Co. Clare. Around this time the Starkeys were associated with Askeaton and with Grange, Co. Limerick.
- Number 16, Mrs Jane Graves. Her husband Richard Graves must have died on the 21 Jan. 1778. Richard Graves married Jane Meggs on the 21 Feb. 1745. Jane survived her husband by a little over 2 years. She was paid her pension in 1779 and 1780 and was then not listed again. Richard Graves was Sheriff in 1738. Richard attended Council meetings until late 1776.
- Number 17, Mrs Sarah Wakely. In 1781 the Corporation voted a pension for Mrs Sarah Wakely from the 24 June last. So 24 June 1780 must be the day her husband died. She was not the wife of William Wakely, Burgess, who attended Council Meetings regularly beyond that time. Her husband's name must remain unknown.
- Number 19, Mrs Mary Seymour. Mary received only one payment of her yearly pension and that was on the 20 August 1783. It was due on the 12 July so her unnamed husband died on the 12 July 1782.
- Number 20, Mrs Sarah James. L/OC/4/1 Identifies her as the widow of Rauleigh/Rawleigh James. Her half yearly pension started on the 2 Jan. 1784 so her husband must have died on the 2 July 1783. She was still alive in June 1801 when the account book ended. Raleigh James



Lithograph, *King John's Castle Limerick*, published by Samuel Brocas, 1826

(Limerick Museum)

married Sarah Johns on the 14 July 1763 in St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick.

- Number 22, Mrs Fidelia Piercy. L/OC/4/1 identifies her as the wife of Pierce Piercy. Her first year's pension was due on the 19 Aug. 1784 so her husband died on the 19 Aug 1783. She received her last payment on the 19 Aug 1799. Naval Lt. Richard Piercy and his brother Surgeon William Piercy were admitted Freemen on the 26 June 1786. Richard was appointed a Burgess on the same day. They were the sons of Fidelia and Pierce.
- Number 23, Mrs Phoebe Long. John Long was Sheriff in 1739 and L/OC/4/1 gives Phoebe's husband as John Long. A John Long, Burgess had three son, Thomas, Henry and John. Thomas and Henry were admitted Freemen in 1757 and John was admitted on the 5 Sept. 1758. Phoebe's pension was paid yearly and she got her first payment on the 2 March 1785 which means her husband died on the 2 March 1784. She was still drawing her pension in 1801 when the account book ended.
- Number 25, Mrs. Susanna Lee. L/OC/4/1 has Susanna's husband on record as Benjamin Lee. Susanna was paid yearly and her first payment was due on the 31 Jan. 1788. She received 2 years pension on the 26 July with no reason given for the delay. This suggests that Benjamin Lee died on the 31 Jan 1786. A Benjamin Lee of Merrion, near Dublin was admitted a Freeman of Limerick on the 2 Oct. 1772. He is not listed in the list of Sheriffs of the City. He must have been appointed directly to the Common Council. He seems to have been born in 1703 at Merrion in Dublin.

There was a Benjamin Lee, born 1745, who married a Susanna Smyth, born 1750 in Dublin in 1770. Could they have then moved to Limerick where Ben was admitted a Freeman in 1772 and was admitted to the Council on the 2 April 1785 (L/OC/4/1) thereby becoming a Burgess of the City. After Benjamin died Susanna returned to Dublin where she continued to collect her pension until she died on the 12 March 1801 (Freemans Journal). Her last payment was made out to Alderman P. (Philip) Smyth for £5-8-4, being 13 months pension. Ramsey's Waterford Chronicle for the 2nd February 1786 recorded the recent death of Benjamin Lee.

- Number 31, Mrs Elizabeth Vincent. She received her first payment on the 25 March 1799. The 25 March was also the end of the financial year and is therefore not safe to assume that it can be used to date the death of the husband. She opted for 6 monthly payments so that places the death of her husband, Thomas Vincent, as occurring in 1798. A Thomas Vincent was Sheriff in 1776. Thomas Vincent married Elizabeth Unthank on the 26 Aug. 1786 in St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick. He was then aged 50 and was of the Parteen family. Elizabeth was born on the 25 May 1756. She was still alive in 1801 when the records end.
- Number 32, Mrs Ann Bindon. Burton Bindon was Sheriff in 1774. A Henry William Bindon was Sheriff in 1766 and was then Recorder for Limerick until he died in 1781. Ann's pension started in Sept. 1799 so her husband died in 1798, so that rules Henry out as her husband. Both Burton and Henry Bindon were admitted as Freemen on the same day

being the 6 March 1746. Which means that they were, most likely, brothers. Burton Bindon was baptised in St. Mary's Cathedral on the 15 April 1726. Ann was still alive in 1801. It looks like Burton Bindon was the husband.

- Number 33, Mrs Johanna Johns. Her first half yearly payment was on the 24 Feb. 1800 and her second was on the 24 Aug. 1800. This suggests that her husband died on the 24 Aug. 1799. There was a Joseph Johns who was Sheriff in 1755 but he was Mayor in 1773 so that rules him out as Johanna's husband. Johanna was still alive in 1801. The husband's name will have to remain a mystery for some one else to figure out.
- Number 34, Mrs Jane Davis. A George Davis was Sheriff in 1793. A George Davis married a Jane Harman in 1785 in Co. Cork. The Davis family of Farthingville, Co. Cork, were well represented in the Freemen List of Limerick City. On the 13 Oct. 1800 Jane received a warrant for £30 being 6 years pension which was due on the 1 Aug. 1800. So it seems that her husband died on the 1 Aug. 1794. Ferrar's Directory has a George Davis, a Merchant, living at George's Quay in 1769. The Lucas Directory for 1788 has a George Davis, Apothecary, working from Mary's St. Limerick. George Davis actually died in 1794 while he was in Office as Sheriff.

**Source:**

Limerick Archives. L/OC/5. Paying Orders of the Council of Limerick Corporation. 1st Oct 1777 - 1st July 1801. L/OC/4/1. Transcript minute book of the Common Council of the Corporation of Limerick. 3 June 1769 - 10 Feb. 1796.