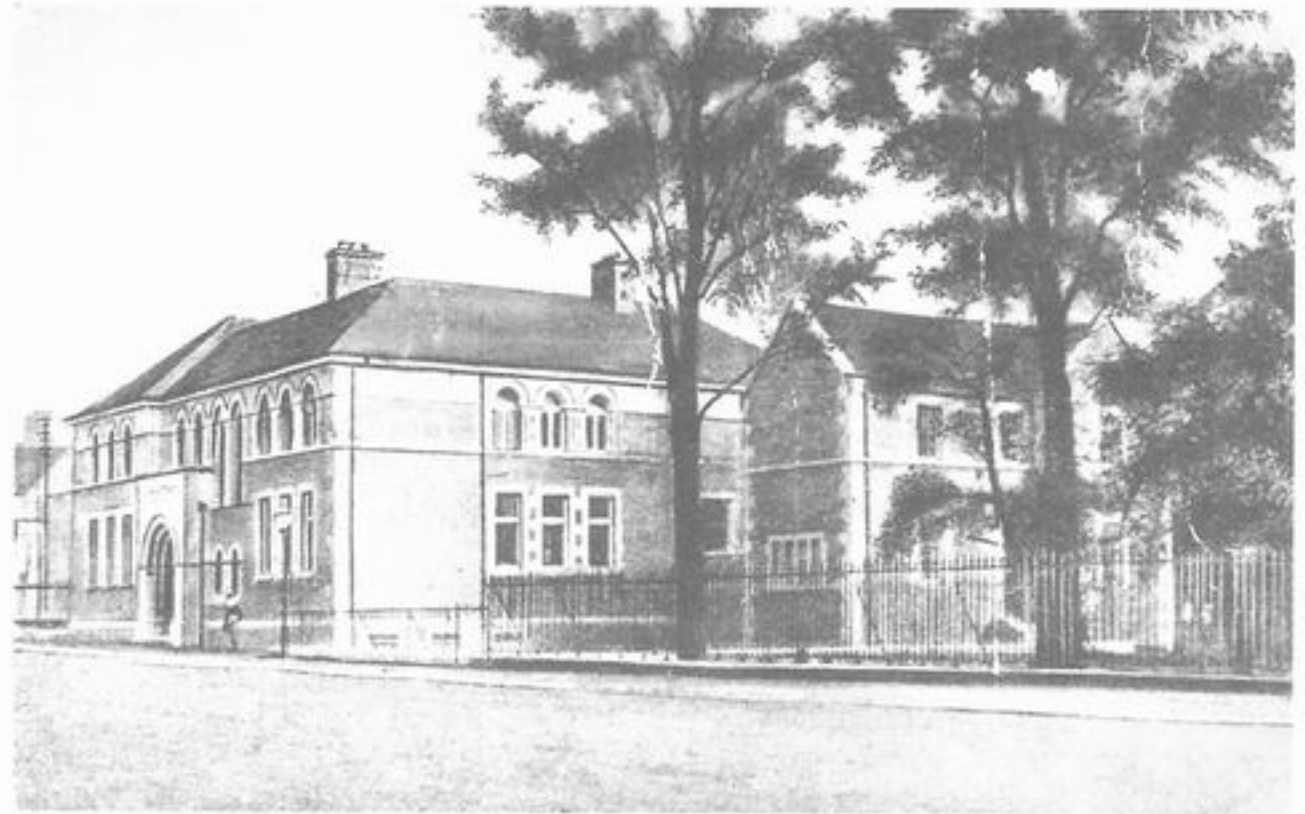


# Another showcase event in Limerick in 1916

by Brian Hodkinson

**I**n 5 October 1916, without any fanfare, Limerick Museum opened its doors to the public<sup>1</sup>. It had appeared as an item on the rates in 1906 and spent the intervening years in building up its collection. It was located on the upper floor of the Carnegie Library building in Pery Square, now The Limerick City Gallery of Art (LCGA), and was open Thursdays from 3-5 p.m. and Saturdays 2-6 p.m. The librarian of the day acted as curator.

Limerick Museum was not the first public museum in the city; the short lived Limerick Philosophical Society (1840-45) opened a museum in 1842 at its premises in Glentworth Street (later Havergal Hall, then the Lyric Cinema). Among its collections were the head of a tattooed Burmese warrior, a bronze spear embedded in a human skull, from the vicinity of Glin Castle, and an enormous shark taken off the west coast of Clare<sup>2</sup>. In 1847 the Literary Society successfully reopened the museum but



Carnegie Library, Pery Square, Limerick. (Courtesy of Limerick Museum)

it too failed in 1849 and the collection was dispersed.

The original collection of Limerick Museum was more an eclectic mixture of curiosities than illustrative of the

city's history. Among the items donated in 1916 were coins of George II and III, a gun-money shilling, a 15 shilling note from Pennsylvania, a specimen of a porcupine fish, the pen Bishop O'Dwyer used to sign the Freeman's



Study of two boys in youthful wonder at Limerick Museum. (Courtesy of Limerick Museum)



Roll of Limerick, a collection of finds from excavations at Adare, and an oar from the Lusitania<sup>3</sup>. Other items in the early collection include specimens of mahseer (Asian carp) and duck billed platypus, a collection of Pacific island spears, Aboriginal items from Australia, Roman lamps and a false leg<sup>4</sup>. The acquisition policy of the museum is now restricted to items of Limerick interest. At present there are just over 55,000 items in the collection and the museum is the only local authority museum in the country with its whole collection accessible online<sup>5</sup>.

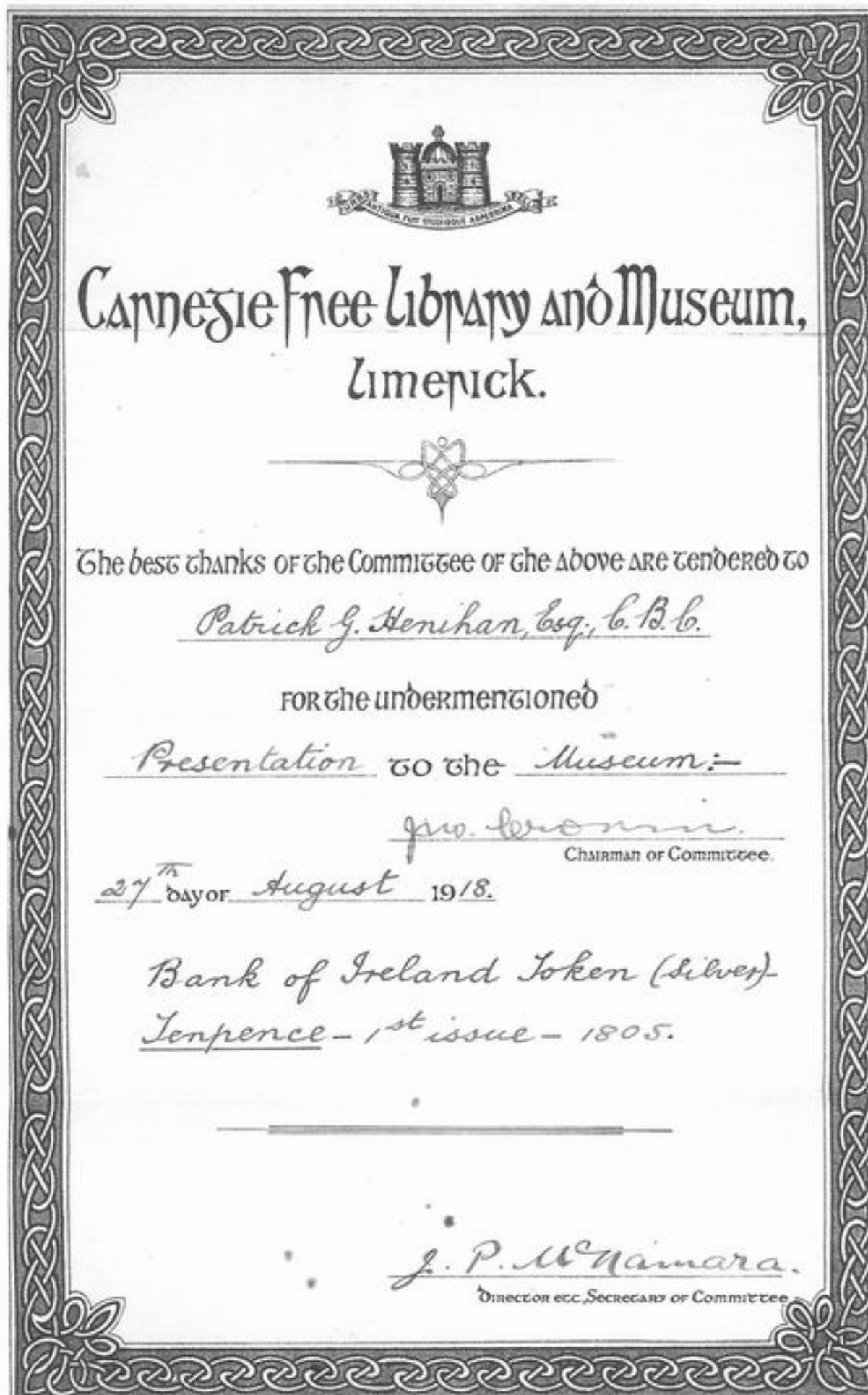
The Museum remained in the Library building in Pery Square until 1974, when the collection was put into

storage. In 1977 the former editor of this journal, Larry Walsh, was appointed the museum's first dedicated curator, and in 1979 the museum reopened in new premises in John's Square, where it remained until 1999. It then moved again to Castle Lane adjacent to King John's Castle but had to move again when the Castle was redeveloped in 2012. The visitor centre of the Castle now occupies the former museum space. From October 2012 the museum has been in a temporary home in Istabraq Hall inside City Hall on Merchants Quay. At the time of writing (January 2016) the plan is for the museum to move to a new home in the Franciscan Friary in Henry Street where it will open later this year. For

exhibition purposes the museum works in partnership with Limerick Archives under the logo LM&A.

(Endnotes)

1. *Limerick Chronicle*, 26 September 1916.
2. *Limerick Chronicle*, 27 April, 7 May, 13 July and 15 October, 1842.
3. *Limerick Chronicle*, 26 January, 26 September and 15 October, 1926.
4. See museum catalogue online. The web address for the catalogue is museum.limerick.ie. Other sections of the website, available through the museum section of www.limerick.ie, include research aids for historians and a number of lists for genealogical research.
5. *Ibid.*



Certificate acknowledging a donation to the museum. (Courtesy of Limerick Museum)