

PROCEEDINGS OF THE OLD LIMERICK SOCIETY

From Its Foundation To End Of Season, 1943/44

(Many members have expressed a desire to possess a record of the proceedings of the Society since its foundation. It was not possible, owing to the Emergency restrictions, to produce the Journal until now, and the following records are but a first instalment. It is hoped to have the record brought up to date in future issues).

FOUNDATION COMMITTEE:

Right Worship James McQuane, Mayor of Limerick; Rev. Father M. Moloney, P.P., St. Patrick's, Limerick; Rev. R. Wyse Jackson, D.Litt., Barrington St., Limerick; J.M. Flood, B.L., D.J.; P.J. Donnellan, B.C.; James Casey, B.C., P.C.; Wm. Reaball, B. Morley Nelson, R. Herbert, Standish Stewart, James M. Keane, E.H. Bennis, John F. Walsh.

T.F. O'Sullivan, B.E., M.I.C.E.I., Chairman.
Miss M.E. Gleeson, Hon. Treasurer.
A.J. O'Halloran, Hon. Sec.

Preliminary Meeting, 4th November, 1943.

A meeting of the Foundation Committee was held to approve draft rules and to make arrangements for the public inauguration of the Society. Mr. Herbert said that he was authorised to state that the Thomond Archaeological Society would be prepared to co-operate in every possible way in assisting the new Society to

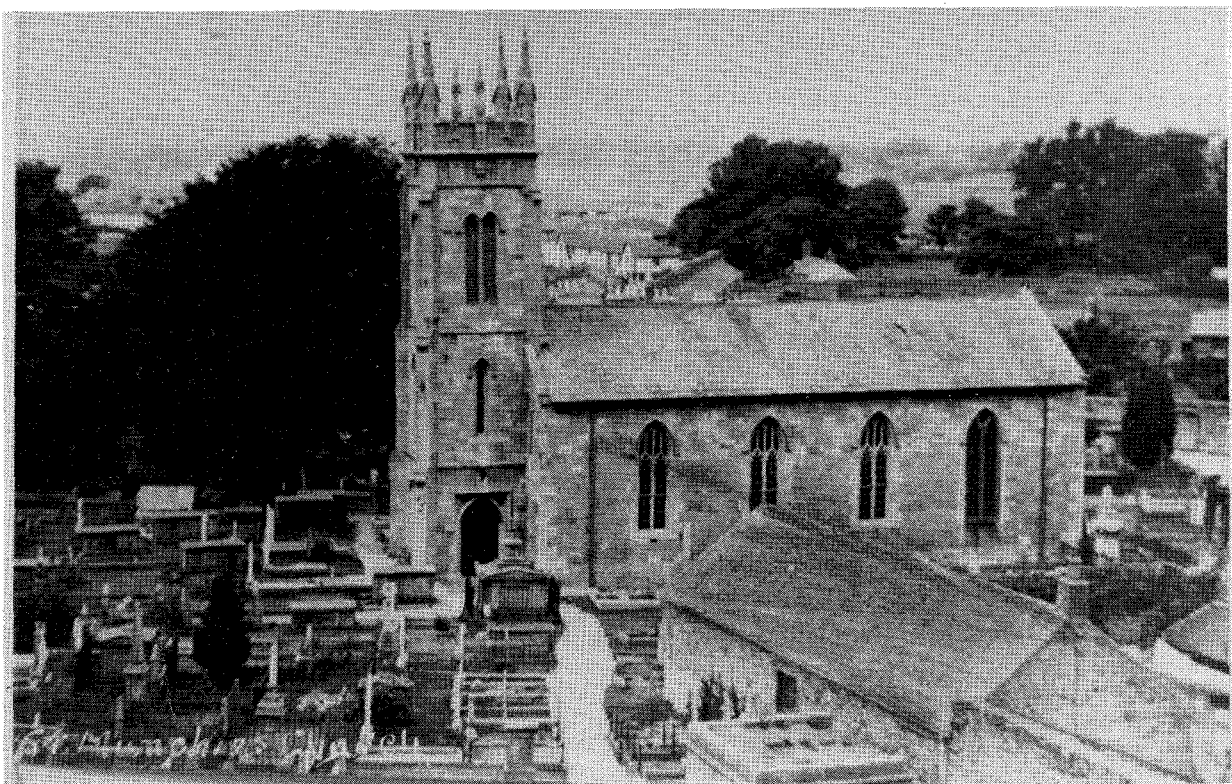
achieve its objects, and the Chairman expressed gratification of the Committee at this statement. Mr. Herbert reported that the Executive Committee of Muintir na Tire had kindly offered the use of their premises, No. 8 The Crescent, for the Society's first public meeting, at which Councillor Casey would deliver a lecture on the famous Limerick Mayoral Chains.

Inaugural Meeting, 28th November, 1943.

In view of the number of applications for membership of the Society received in advance of the opening date, the Committee had to obtain the use of a larger hall, and through the co-operation of Mr. P.V. Twomey, C.E.O., the Vocational Education Committee granted the use of the Lecture Hall of the Technical Institute for the meeting. There was a large attendance and the Mayor, Mr. James McQuane, took the Chair.

The proceedings took the form of a review of the Limerick Civic Insignia given by Councillor Casey and Mr. Robert Herbert, City Librarian.

The Insignia, which included the Great Mayoral Chain, the Sheriff's Chain and the Sword presented to the City by Queen Elizabeth, were on display as well as copies of Freeman's Certificates, Confirmation of Charters by Charles II. and Oliver Cromwell, brought from the City Museum. Mr. Herbert gave a highly interesting account of the Limerick Corporation since 1197, with particular reference to the events that led up to the Reformed Cor-



St. Munchin's Church

poration of 1840. He spoke of the fourteen Charters granted to the city by successive British Sovereigns, all of which have now disappeared with the ancient Corporation records destroyed by the Vereker clan during the Government Inquiry into the Corporation administration. Mr. Herbert traced the origin of the Maces, the Civic Sword and the Mayor's Rod, and threw many interesting sidelights on local history.

The history of the Mayoral Chain, first made to the order of the Corporation by a London firm early in the last century, was given by Mr. Casey, and his witty comments on some of the events recorded on the fifty-six gold discs added a lighter touch to the proceedings.

Proposing a vote of thanks to the lecturers, Mr. J.M. Flood, D.J., appealed to the citizens to join the Society and to assist in achieving its objects. Mr. C.V. O'Malley, seconding the vote, ably supported the appeal.

Mr. T.F. O'Sullivan returned thanks to the Mayor for presiding and read letters from the President and Secretary of the Old Dublin Society, offering assistance to the Limerick Society in any way possible.

At the close of the meeting many members of the audience sent in applications for membership.

General Meeting, Thursday, 13th January, 1944.

The first general meeting of the Society was held at the Muintir na Tire offices, The Crescent, Mr. T.F. O'Sullivan, B.E., presiding.

The Chairman opened the proceedings with a brief review of the activities of the Society since its inception, and outlined the programme proposed for the coming season. Miss Gleeson, Hon. Treasurer, submitted a financial statement, which was adopted. On the proposition of Mr. A.B. Killeen, B.E., seconded by Mr. P. Stundon, it was unanimously decided to elect as Committee and Officers for the year, the members of the Foundation Committee.

Mr. E.H. Bennis then read an interesting paper on the famous Arthur Family. He traced the story of these merchant princes from mediaeval days to the beginning of the nineteenth century, and told the story of the building of the many streets in the City which bear the names of members of the family.

Proposing a vote of thanks to the lecturer, Rev. Father M. Moloney, P.P., complimented him on his knowledge of the city and citizens. Referring to the Arthur family, Father Moloney mentioned that though it had been generally accepted that they were of Anglo-Norman origin, there was one eminent authority who held they were a Dalcassian sept.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Reabell for the use of the projector and for his services at it, which had contributed greatly to the success of the lecture.

Meeting, Friday, 4th February, 1944.

The Mayor, Mr. James McQuane, President, in the Chair.

In one of the most interesting lectures delivered in Limerick for many years past, District Justice Flood, B.L., told the story of the Sieges of Limerick in 1690 and 1691. The popular histories tell us that the women of Limerick took an active part in the fighting in the siege of 1690. They lead us to believe, in the words of Michael Hogan, "The Bard of Thomond", that:

"The women fought before the men;
Each man became a match for ten."

Mr. Flood devoted a part of his talk to the shattering of this belief and pointed out that careful research had shown it to be devoid of truth. All the authentic evidence indicated that in the siege of 1690 no fighting took place in the streets of the city. He gave detailed particulars of the composition of the opposing forces, showing that the

Williamite army contained well-trained, well-equipped and disciplined regiments not only from Britain, but from Holland, Germany and other Continental countries, while the Irish army was wretchedly equipped, badly trained, ill-fed and ill-clad.

With the aid of a large map, showing in outline both the Irish town and the English town of Limerick, the lecturer enthralled the audience with his accounts, based on despatches and reports of the period, of many of the main incidents of the fighting.

By way of conclusion, Mr. Flood retailed a few incidents in the later careers of some of the officers and men who in after years made the cry, "Remember Limerick", a dreaded call on many a European battlefield.

On the motion of Mr. P.J. Meghan, B.E., County Manager, seconded by Mr. Michael Tynan, Solicitor, a hearty vote of thanks was returned to Mr. Flood.

Meeting, Thursday, 24th February, 1944.

Mr. T.F. O'Sullivan, B.E., in the Chair.

With the aid of a splendid collection of specially-made lantern slides, Mr. William Reaball gave a most interesting talk on St. Mary's Cathedral to a very large and appreciative audience. Although the talk occupied only an hour, Mr. Reaball dealt with the history of the Cathedral very fully. The legends and traditions associated with it as well as the features that distinguish it from contemporary buildings were graphically described. Mr. Reaball referred to the fact that Willie Pearse, the insurgent leader in 1916, had in person supervised the erection of one of the latest monuments erected therein.

Proposing a vote of thanks to the lecturer, Mr. Bennis said the Society was fortunate in having as a member one who had given his audience a rare treat. Supporting the vote, Mr. J. Hayden expressed the view that the term, "The Monks' Walk", applied to the wall passages, was a misnomer, and mentioned also that, in the opinion of the O'Brien family, the mural tablet supposed to refer to Bishop Donat O'Brien, had been erected at a much later date to the memory of another member of the family.

Meeting - Thursday, 23rd March, 1944.

Mr. T.F. O'Sullivan, B.E., in the Chair.

The Chairman opened the proceedings by giving a brief resume of the work done by the Committee to date in connection with the preservation of various historical remains in and about the city.

A general discussion followed, in the course of which a number of members related various traditions and stories of Limerick's chequered past. Mr. R. Herbert, City Librarian, read "The Bard of Thomond's" poem, the "Curse of Saint Munchin", and a version of the "Voyage of the Bugaboo". In a witty and entertaining talk, Mr. E.H. Bennis dealt with some of the old Limerick schools, his graphic descriptions of masters and pupils causing much amusement. Mr. Joseph Keyes suggested that the house in which the famous singer, Catherine Hayes, was born, should be marked by a suitable tablet.

A large number of members took part in the discussion and many interesting suggestions were put forward for the consideration of the Committee.

Although it had been intended to make this the last indoor meeting of the session, it proved such a success that, at the unanimous wish of the members, it was decided to hold a similar "open" night in April.

Tour Of The City Walls - Friday, 14th April, 1944.

On this date the members of the Thomond Archaeological Society and the Old Limerick Society



Some of the Dutch-gabled houses.

joined together in an interesting outing. By courtesy of Rev. Father O'Grady, Administrator, St. John's, the members were given the privilege of examining the celebrated crozier and mitre of Cornelius O'Dea, Bishop of Limerick, 1400-1426. Mr. John Hunt outlined for those present the origin and significance of pastoral staffs from the time of St. Peter, and then described and explained in detail the exquisite ornamentation of the O'Dea crozier, which was made to the order of the Bishop in 1418 and was probably, Mr. Hunt said, the work of a Dublin craftsman.

On behalf of the members of both societies, Rev. M. Moloney, P.P., thanked Mr. Hunt for coming there at great personal inconvenience and for his kindness in giving them all a rare treat.

The party then proceeded to the grounds of St. John's Hospital, where from a suitable vantage point commanding a fine view of the surrounding district, Rev. Father Moloney delivered a most interesting talk on the subject of Limerick's fortifications. Dealing with the founding of the city, he told how the Irishtown originated, and when and why it had been incorporated with the English town and fortified. Father Moloney then proceeded to talk of events during the Sieges, in the course of which he refuted a few of what he termed the "inventions" of certain nineteenth century historians

regarding certain episodes which were said to have taken place during the siege of 1690.

At the conclusion of the tour, the Chairman of the "Old Limerick Society" expressed the thanks of the party to Father Moloney, and said that many members would look forward to similar tours in the future, which did more than most indoor meetings to make the past live again before their eyes.

Meeting - Thursday, 27th April, 1944.

The Chairman presiding.

Mr. A.B. Killeen, B.A., A.M.I.C.E. I., read a paper on the history of the Lax Weir. The Weir, which extends across the Shannon from the site of the now derelict Corbally Mill on the south shore to Parteen Protestant Church on the north shore, is approximately 1,150 feet long. Although now in a dilapidated condition, and rapidly disappearing through neglect, the original nature of the weir is still plainly discernible. It consisted of a number of piers, about 30 feet long, spaced at irregular intervals. These piers held in position the timber screens used to block the passage of the salmon up-stream, and to divert them into traps, from which they were taken by large nets. "The history of the Lax Weir Fishery", said Mr.

Killeen, "prior to 1200 A.D. is largely a matter of conjecture, but since that date it is fully documented in a series of charters and leases". He then proceeded to tell the story of the weir up to the year 1934, when it was finally abandoned as a fishing site. In his account of the weir, Mr. Killeen introduced the names of many families whose members played important parts in Limerick affairs through the centuries, and his fund of anecdotes and humorous tales enlivened his paper throughout and added greatly to the pleasure of the evening.

Mr. T. Costelloe followed with a paper on industries which had flourished in the city in former days, giving many interesting details of those for which Limerick was especially remarkable, including the manufacture of fishing-hooks and gloves, both of which enjoyed worldwide renown. He also dealt with the beginning and growth of the flour-milling and bacon-curing industries, and gave some interesting figures about industries which have disappeared from the district.

Mr. E. Hanrahan gave an impromptu talk on "forgotten" roads around Limerick, which was the more interesting as it was based on personal investigation.

Mr. A.G. Fitt read a list of societies which had existed in Limerick a hundred years ago. This list he had compiled from old records of the Savings Bank. Many members were able to contribute interesting items of information about some of these old societies or clubs and it is hoped that the list, which is reproduced elsewhere in this issue, may inspire some of these members to record their recollections and submit papers to be read at future meetings.

Second Tour - Thursday, 11th May, 1944.

Members assembled at the Castle of Limerick at 3.30 p.m., and were conducted on a tour of inspection of the building by Mr. R. Herbert, City Librarian. Mr. Herbert retold the history of the Castle from its building by the Normans. He told of the many famous incidents connected with it and, with the aid of maps, gave a graphic description of old Thomond Bridge. He spoke of the erroneous belief of some, that the old bridge occupied a different site from the present one, and was able to show how this idea originated.

The party then proceeded to St. Mary's Cathedral, where, by kind permission of the Very Rev. Dean Swain, they were enabled to spend a most interesting hour. Under the guidance of Mr. W. Reaball, who had devoted many years to the study of every stone in the venerable building, members learned much of the Cathedral's story.

In the course of his talk he mentioned that some few years ago a Dublin stoneworker who was employed on restoration work at the Cathedral, and who was something of a geologist, pointed out that certain stone therein was not to be found in the south of Ireland. This, he said, would indicate that there was some reason for the tradition that in the course of a raid on the palace of the O'Neills of Ulster, carried out by the Dalcassians in revenge for the destruction of Kincora, it had been ordered that each man should bring back a stone from the North. These stones were supposed to have been incorporated in King Donal's Palace which was later donated as a Cathedral Church for the diocese.

Meeting - Thursday, 8th June, 1944.

Mr. T.F. O'Sullivan, B.E., in the Chair.

The proceedings on this evening opened with a talk by Rev. Dr. Wyse Jackson on "The Journal of Roland Davies". The Rev. Mr. Davies, a Cork man, was with the Williamite forces at the first siege of Limerick. He kept a diary which gives a succinct but informative picture of events during the siege and a particularly good description of the destruction of the siege-train at Ballyneety. It is hoped to publish Dr. Jackson's paper in the future issue.

Mr. Eoin O'Kelly then read a paper entitled "Notes on Old Limerick Private Bankers". Many members had heard of the "Bank of Limerick", but few knew much of its story, and few too had heard of some of the other bankers of the period. All were greatly interested in Mr. O'Kelly's account of the scenes in Limerick on what he called the "Black Monday" of 1820. Proposing a vote of thanks after the paper, Rev. M. Moloney, P.P., urged that the Committee should arrange for publication as being a valuable contribution to the local history of the city. Mr. E.H. Bennis seconded Rev. Father Moloney's request, and several other speakers spoke in support. The paper appears in this issue.

Mr. John F. Walsh followed with a short paper, "Memories of the Theatre Royal", which delighted his listeners with its wealth of anecdote. His accounts of pre-queue days in Limerick, the sayings of the local "characters" who used to enliven the period of waiting for the doors to open, and the wit from the "gods" on special occasions, made many in the audience long for the good old days at the "Royal".

Several members spoke to the paper afterwards, and Messrs. P. Studon, Alma Fitt and D. Glynn recalled further amusing episodes during the last years of the theatre.



The Commanding Officer's house at the Castle Barracks.