

TEXT OF AN ILLUSTRATED LECTURE BY MR. S. O. P. O'CEALLACHAIN TO THE RESIDENTS OF ST. JOHN'S SQUARE AREA, ON THE INVITATION OF THE NATIONAL MONUMENTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

St. John's Square

AT THE invitation of the National Monuments Advisory Committee, Mr. S. O. P. O'Ceallachain, B.Arch., FRIBA, Dip. TP (Lond.), RTPI, Consultant architect to Limerick Corporation, gave an illustrated lecture on St. John's Square, which is Limerick's project for European Architectural Heritage Year 1975. The lecture was given in St. John's Girl School during the recent Civic Week.

O'Ceallachain was introduced by the chairman of the National Monuments Advisory Committee, Mr. Jim Kenny, outlined the origins and early history and his collections of it from memory. He said that many years the south side of the square had presented a sad and forlorn appearance due to the want of people who had lived there. It had always been to him as the gateway to the city, with its narrow entrance, Grafton Street, up town Limerick.

Kenny went on to say the reconstruction of the houses which were let to the poor, and the delight to behold the new facades of houses which had survived the war had become unpoplular. They feel the need to state that they exist, and they demonstrate, strike, protest, march, etc.

Conservation

Conservation to me is part of this protest and this wish to relate, there is a growing sympathy to the down-trodden of people, places and buildings which have suffered excesses of any type—and the movement is gathering force.

I predict it will go further, because the reclamation of human values will demand buildings to human scale, working in natural surroundings consistent with the work, buildings to human scale, cities to human scale, a slowing down of the pace of life, a return to the simple values of a humph being, one will again have a name—no longer a cipher, nor known to a computer under 24 digit code number; and where one can exist in a reasonably static society free from all the inducements and economic determinants which now assault us daily.

The rebellion has found form in such legislation as the Planning Acts, An Taisce, such things as Gaeil, the Gaelic League, Hurling, football, competition, keep Ireland moving, movement, etc., etc., and the rebellion is being carried on by the conservation society which deals with nature all round us.

EAHY-75

The Council of Europe has also responded and we have European Architectural Heritage Year 1975 and this is ready when John's Square comes into the news.

The Secretary of the division of regional planning committee on monuments and sights of the Council of Europe, decided to promote co-operation between European associations of the architectural profession, to integrate measures for the preservation and rehabilitation of monuments and sights in national and regional plans and to promote public awareness of the cultural, social and economic importance of monuments groups of buildings, sights of historical and artistic value, with the co-operation of local authorities, non-governmental organisations, press, television, use and educational organisations, was agreed at the meeting which lasted from the 11th to the 13th December 1973.

Pilot projects were selected from each country and the two selected from Ireland are John's Square, Limerick, and Holy Cross Abbey, Co. Tipperary.

The existing St. John's Church was completed in 1852 and replaces a 15th century church on the same site.

Records

It would appear from the records that St. John's Church, below the city of Limerick, was in existence when Domhnall O'Brien established the canons of St. Mary's Cathedral about the year 1110. The church was named and intercalated documents and referred to as "St. John's of the Italy Cross in the Liberties of the city of Limerick."

The building of St. John's Church in the middle of the 15th century is noted in "Pevsner's History of Limerick". A sketch made in 1880 by Daniel O'Connell shows this church as being Gothic in style, with bays, two aisles, double-bell chamber on west gable, entrance door on north side and being sited in a yard with entrance from John's Street.

The church survived the Reformation and closed, and in 1603, during the clearing away of debris from the second floor, a charnel was built in wall around the churchyard.

The present building, now named Church of St. John the Baptist, is Gothic revival in style, i.e. today jumbled, and stands enclosed by presumably the same limestone and brick walls as constructed in 1603; the entrance to the churchyard is now from John's Square.

The church has been donated to Limerick Corporation to be used for cultural purposes and the interior has been converted part of one in the Irish Pilot Project for European Architectural Heritage Year 1975.

Completed tendered Tender 201, Unstamped, should be addressed to the Chief Clerk, Mid-Western Health Board, St. John's Hospital, Mungret St., Limerick, to reach him not later than Friday, May 30, 1975.

For further information contact the office of the Mid-Western Health Board, 113 O'Connell Street, Limerick.

MID-WESTERN HEALTH BOARD

ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL, LIMERICK

CLOTHING APPLICANTS AND INTENDING APPLICANTS

Please note that as from Monday next, April 21, 1975, Health Inspector for housing has changed from Dr. C. J. O'Brien, Limerick, to No. 104, Henry Street, Limerick.

Health Inspector for Housing is only available between 9.00 a.m. and 12.00 p.m.

He may be contacted by telephone at his new address as follows:

T. P. MacDIARMADA, City Manager & Town Clerk. (15-20)

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