

A Limerickman's Diary

By OBSERVER

New hope for St. John's Square

ST. JOHN'S Square may be preserved for Limerick and posterity. In the course of a discussion which followed the most interesting and informative lecture, by the Hon. Desmond Guinness, on "Irish Georgian Houses and Castles," in Cruise's Hotel last Wednesday night, it was resolved that the matter be put on the agenda of the forthcoming annual general meeting of the Limerick Branch of An Taisce (the Irish National Trust).

The visit of the Hon. Desmond Guinness served no other purpose than this awakening of the local conscience, it was indeed well worth while. But the lecture was all that might be expected of this distinguished gentleman; it was illustrated by slides in full natural colour, it was given by one who has a thorough knowledge of his subject, and it was followed with interest from start to finish by a capacity attendance.

The matter of St. John's Square was raised by Mr. Seamus O'Connell, who pointed out

that a section of this historic corner of Limerick was falling into ruin. He made a strong plea that immediate steps be taken for its preservation, and proposed that a committee be formed to take the matter in hand.

Mr. George O'Malley, President of the Chamber of Commerce, seconded the motion, and said that the services of the Regional Tourism Organisation would be available to assist the project.

Mr. Tom Pierce, Hon. Secretary, Thomond Archaeological Society, said he felt that every

cultural group in Limerick would be willing to co-operate. He suggested that the matter be put on the agenda of the Taisce A.G.M.

There were many good suggestions on the uses to which the restored houses might be put. It might be a good idea to convert one into flats for old people; a section could be used as a mini museum to relieve the congestion in the City Museum; or one could provide a meeting place for a recently formed company of Girl Guides.

But Mr. O'Connell's suggestion seemed to be the most practical of all; he said a section of the buildings might be taken over by An Oige to form its Limerick hostel. There is great need of a youth hostel in Limerick; the matter has been referred to from time to time over the years, and now perhaps the solution has been found.

HISTORY

The Square is one of Limerick's most dignified and historic residential areas. It must be preserved.

It goes back to the middle of the 18th century when, after the Williamite sieges, Limerick began to develop and expand. The Square was built by John Purdon, of Tinerana, and Edmund Sexton-Pery, and became the home of wealthy families such as the Purdons, Sexton-Perys, Vere Hunt of Curraghchase, Dicksons, Tuthills of Faha, Monells of Terroe and other county people who used the houses as town residences.

The late Ernest H. Bennis, an

authority on old Limerick, had often referred in his lectures and writings to this historic quarter and the people who lived there. Many years ago one of the houses was St. John's Rectory and the last occupier was Rev. Frederick Langbridge.

Langbridge published a number of books, plays, short stories and poems, and, with Sir Martin Harvey, collaborated in writing a very popular drama, "The Only Way," which was based on Dickens' novel, "A Tale of Two Cities." The play had a very successful run in London and was also very popular in Limerick's old Theatre Royal.

REPORT

Just over five years ago the City Architect, Mr. Plunkett O'Callaghan, produced an admirable report to the Corporation on St. John's Square.

His recommendations are well worth repeating. They were:

- (1) In view of uniqueness and of the intrinsic architectural qualities of St. John's Square, it is considered well worthy of preservation, both in the interest of Limerick and in the national interest.
- (2) St. John's Square is sufficiently small to be capable of preservation without exorbitant expenditure.
- (3) I recommend that every effort be made to preserve St. John's Square, and that favourable consideration could be given to the reconstruction of six houses in the Square to provide residential accommodation.

Do We Cater for Boating Visitors?

Boat
Unc
Foc

Under-21
benefit
ship enj
recently
to the
the City
P.K., w
promine
Limerick
was edu
National
Street C
Fairtree
watch-m
time w
O'Conne
quently
not, Th
Kilkenny
Monagh
Grafton
Louis N
A success
early ag
of the 2
team th
juvenile
defeating
final. 2
cluded 2
detective
Tom He
nor, Ber
sie Thor
(later ar
and his
neally.

CHA

Moving or
was a
that wo
hurling
Later th
with Ti
Og, Kill
1940s, he
hurling
With this
see how
reputatio
promisin
time. H
injury co
from the
age of 2
Continuing
administ
Secretary
Board C
1965, an
Road C
same ye
He was a
organisin
Sport F
'66 and
the Harp
years a
London
He has at
ban, and
has lon
pose; i
break d
disunity
at least
politics."

Talented, t
he was i
Scout T
scouts C
for three
on the
team an
was twi
long jum
door r
school d
two ope
and "Th
favourite
Vord's

