

Its function has been transferred to the neighbouring Sarsfield House — move celebrated by staff last Friday afternoon with a reception.

The Custom House in Patrick Street, has been in

Shannon to Limerick.

In those days, the park was a large quayside area serving the ships which used berth there, convenient to the Patrick Street/Arthur's Quay area which was, in those days,

charged duty, much as today. The revenues then, as now, went directly to Dublin, where the old Irish Parliament — known in its latter days as Grattan's Parliament — administered the whole island.

This increased the amount of paperwork, at a time when carbon copies were unknown, and documents had to be counter-signed, "a true copy".

The adjoining park marks the confluence of the Abbey

so-called "union" with Britain, up to last Friday, when the Customs and Excise Service closed the doors on over two centuries of history.

A cheese-and-wine reception was held by the forty staff after the close of business, to quietly mark the event.

The Custom House, up to last Friday evening, served not only the Limerick Region - Counties Limerick, Clare and Tipperary North Riding - but also parts of north Cork, Offaly and other peripheral areas.

It also served Shannon Airport. The customs section dealt with the usual importations as well as vehicle registration, while the excise division dealt with pub licensing, duty on

extensively renovated, with sculptures mounted throughout, and linked with the Potato Market, across the Abbey River, by a metal footbridge.

However, it was a constant battle to keep vandals away from the splendid facade of the Custom House itself, and it was repeatedly defaced by graffiti.

The facade — the Patrick Street entrance is really the rere — which faces towards the river, in keeping with its function in shipping, is regarded as one of the finest 18th century designs of custom house anywhere in the world.

The Custom House is to be extensively renovated for its future role in displaying the treasures of the Hunt Museum.

St. Michael's celebrates Fr Ryan's silver jubilee

ST. Michael's parish in Limerick will be the setting for the twenty fifth anniversary celebration for Fr. Thomas Ryan on next Sunday (June 20), at the 11.30 a.m. Mass, according to a spokesperson for the church. The purpose of the celebration is to give thanks to Almighty God for the twenty five years of his work as a priest.

The committee of the parish who are helping with the planning extend an invitation to all of Fr. Ryan's friends and acquaintances from the previous parishes in which he served, and his many lifelong friends throughout the city and County Limerick and County Clare.

The jubilarian, Thomas A Ryan was born in Lahinch, County Clare. His family moved to Limerick before he began his education. His parents were Willie and Bridie Ryan, owners of the Black Swan bar, Davis Street, in Limerick. His brother is Michael Ryan, manager of Roma Amusements, Limerick, and his sister Sally Ryan, is a business executive in Dublin. Fr. Ryan is an admirer of Clare hurling and football teams, and was among the ardent supporters of Clare senior hurlers last Sunday at Gaelic Grounds.

After his secondary education at St. Munchin's College, he pursued his philosophy and theology studies at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 16, 1968 for the diocese of Limerick at St. Mary's Church, in Rathkeale. Since ordination, Fr. Ryan has served in the following parishes: St. John's Cathedral as curate 1968-1978; Queen of Peace, Janesboro as curate, 1978-1988; St. Michael's parish as parish priest, 1988 — the present. Fr. Ryan is one of Limerick's well known personalities, and is known for his enjoyment of weddings and birthdays.

Reflecting on his twenty five years in priesthood, some of the highlights which he recalls include his ordination day, his appointment to St. John's parish and receiving responsibility for ministering to people and being appreciated by people. He also recalled his sense of satisfaction in working with youth clubs at Janesboro and St. John's, working with and travelling to venues in Europe with a boxing club, and many years of working with

scouts and girls guides. "I think that the discovery that one can be human and continue to be an effective priest has been significant for me," he said. He went on to say that "being able to be present to people in their moments of grief and their moments of joy is one of the great gifts of the priesthood."

He indicated that the considerations that prompted him to study for the priesthood were that "it provided a way of pursuing a life that is God-centred being able to serve and be available to people, and being able to preside at the celebration of Mass." He was influenced very much by his parents, who are now deceased, by a priest who was significant to him in his childhood and adolescence, the image which he had of the late Bishop Henry Murphy, and the great influence of the Dominican community in Limerick.

Speaking about the surprising or unexpected aspects of priesthood which have emerged for him over the past twenty five years, he noted that "accepting ones humanity as a means for ministry" was a great insight; and that "realising that the bedrock of the Christian Faith is the family and only secondarily the institutional church."

He spoke about some of the way in which his notion of priesthood has changed

over the past twenty five years. "It is more than the sacramental aspects such as the celebration of the Mass and sacraments," he said. "I have also come to realise that one (a priest) cannot be all things to all people — different personalities and needs have to be acknowledged. I also realise that a priest is not working as a one-person band, he must work in a team with other priests and laity." Perhaps, the most significant change for him is "the acceptance that the church, being composed of ordinary women and men is not a perfect society, as he initially considered it to be, that it is a 'pilgrim' people on their way to the kingdom of God."

Fr. Ryan has been the parish priest of St. Michael's parish since 1988. This parish is one of Limerick's oldest parishes, but it has undergone major change in recent years, with the shift from a large residential population to a commercial base, the new Cruise's Street shopping area, etc. "These have been challenging years," he said. His vision for the parish would include enabling St. Michael's parish to become a centre for worship, activity and love, where a wide variety of people assemble to have their needs met, discover their potential and develop their relationship with God."

Forging links with Germany

BY EUGENE PHELAN

LIMERICK companies were told this week that there is scope to increase their exports to Germany.

"This is true, especially in the area of industrial products and services," said Pat O'Neill, Bord Trachtala's, Mid West regional manager.

He announced that Bord Trachtala are holding a workshop on "Marketing Irish industrial products and services in Germany" in Limerick on Thursday of next week. The venue is the Castletroy Park Hotel.

"German manufactures must find ways to remain competitive and that includes developing alternative sources of supply," he explained.

Mr O'Neill said that Irish companies were well placed to provide at competitive prices a range of needed products and services.

What is probably not well known is that Germany is Ireland's second largest market after Britain and we exported £2,200 million worth of goods there last year.

The workshop at the Castletroy Park will inform local companies about current developments in Germany, the opportunities that are opening up and the conditions which must be met and how to develop sales there.

Mr O'Neill said that the workshop will be of particular benefit to companies not yet established in the German market.

Fr. Ryan wrote a book on the history of the church and community of Janesboro, and as a person who has spent practically all of his life in Limerick is well informed on the history and culture of this city. He has used travel, attendance at conferences and personal study to stay abreast of developments in the church, and in society. His personal goals for the future include a commitment to continuing personal and ministerial growth so that he can better serve the people entrusted to him.

The 11.30 a.m. Mass on June 20, will centre on his celebration. Priests from the diocese and the neighbouring County Clare are invited to concelebrate. Members of his extended family will serve as lectors and gift bearers, and Fr. Des McAuliffe will be the homilist. The music and singing will be provided by the Pallasgreen Ballad Group, who recently won the All-Ireland Scor championship in Millstreet under the direction of Michael O'Riain, N.T.

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