

Introduction

Remembering Limerick is written in celebration of the 800th anniversary of the granting of the first charter to the city by Prince John, an event which set in train a long line of provosts and mayors from 1197 to the present day. Its contributors include established local historians, prominent citizens and young first-time writers.

Published by Limerick Civic Trust, with the financial support of FÁS, the book owes its existence to the vision and enthusiasm of these bodies who put in place the Mayoral History Project allowing the book to proceed. The value of such a project was of tremendous importance to the young people involved, as it enhanced their research, writing and communication skills, and allowed many of them to see their work published. Indeed, the writings of these young people, some of whom are university graduates, are of an exceptionally high standard. Not all those involved in the project have actually written articles, but their contribution in terms of research work, secretarial skills and enthusiasm for the task has been invaluable.

In this collection of articles and essays, encapsulating the life and times of the city and its people from the coming of the Vikings up to the present day, the reader is presented with a glimpse of times past and the role played by the mayor in the life of the city. Naturally, it was not possible to give a pen-picture of each mayor, but we are confident that the articles included will do much to enlighten and inform on the triumphs and tribulations of that civic office. In *Remembering Limerick* we have endeavoured to give a broad, all-embracing view, rather than cover every single important event and personality.

Readers will notice that large areas of Limerick's history are not included in this book, for instance the Williamite Sieges of 1690/91 which have well documented in previous writings. The Georgian era is not covered in any great detail either, but this gap will be filled by the second volume of *Georgian Limerick*, which is due for publication by Limerick Civic Trust towards the end of 1997. It will include articles dealing with the 'Corrupt Corporation' and the politics of the city during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There are, however, a number of focal points in the book, including an extensive analysis of Limerick's first Charter of 1197 and the antique myth that Limerick was granted the mayoralty by Prince John is well and truly exploded. Particularly interesting is that section of the book entitled 'Foundation Wars', which deals with the History of Limerick from 1914-'23. We have also given extensive coverage to the traditions, customs and civic regalia of the Limerick mayoralty.

As *Remembering Limerick* is a collection of articles in celebration of the 800th Anniversary of the Charter, and not a history of the mayoralty *per se*, I have allowed some of the students the freedom to write essays on topics not specifically related to the Mayoralty of Limerick, but which nonetheless make a valuable contribution to the book.

Limerick is particularly fortunate in having a ready market for works of historical interest, the seeds of which were sown in recent times by local historians such as Ald. Jim Kemmy, T.D., and the late Kevin Hannan. As a tribute to Kevin's memory we have included one of his finest pieces of writing, an article on Sir Peter Tait who was Mayor of Limerick three times between 1866 and 1868. This account of Peter Tait's life was originally written for the 1994 Winter Edition of the *Old Limerick Journal*.

We are greatly indebted to all the historians and writers who so readily gave of their time and energy to complete their articles in time for publication. Limerick is particularly fortunate in having so many articulate, well-informed local politicians who have written for this publication. These include: Councillor Frank Prendergast, Ted Russell, Senator Jan O'Sullivan, and Alderman Jim Kemmy, all of them former mayors.

While it is always difficult to single out individual names I have to thank both Denis Leonard, Director of Limerick Civic Trust, and Michael Collins, FÁS for their total support and encouragement. Thanks also to Bob Kelly, Limerick Civic Trust, who typeset the entire book, to Cian O'Carroll who advised on the design of the cover, and to Liam Irwin for his assistance with factual content. Special thanks to Anne Yeoman, my assistant project leader on the Mayoral Project, whose support was invaluable.

David Lee
Editor