

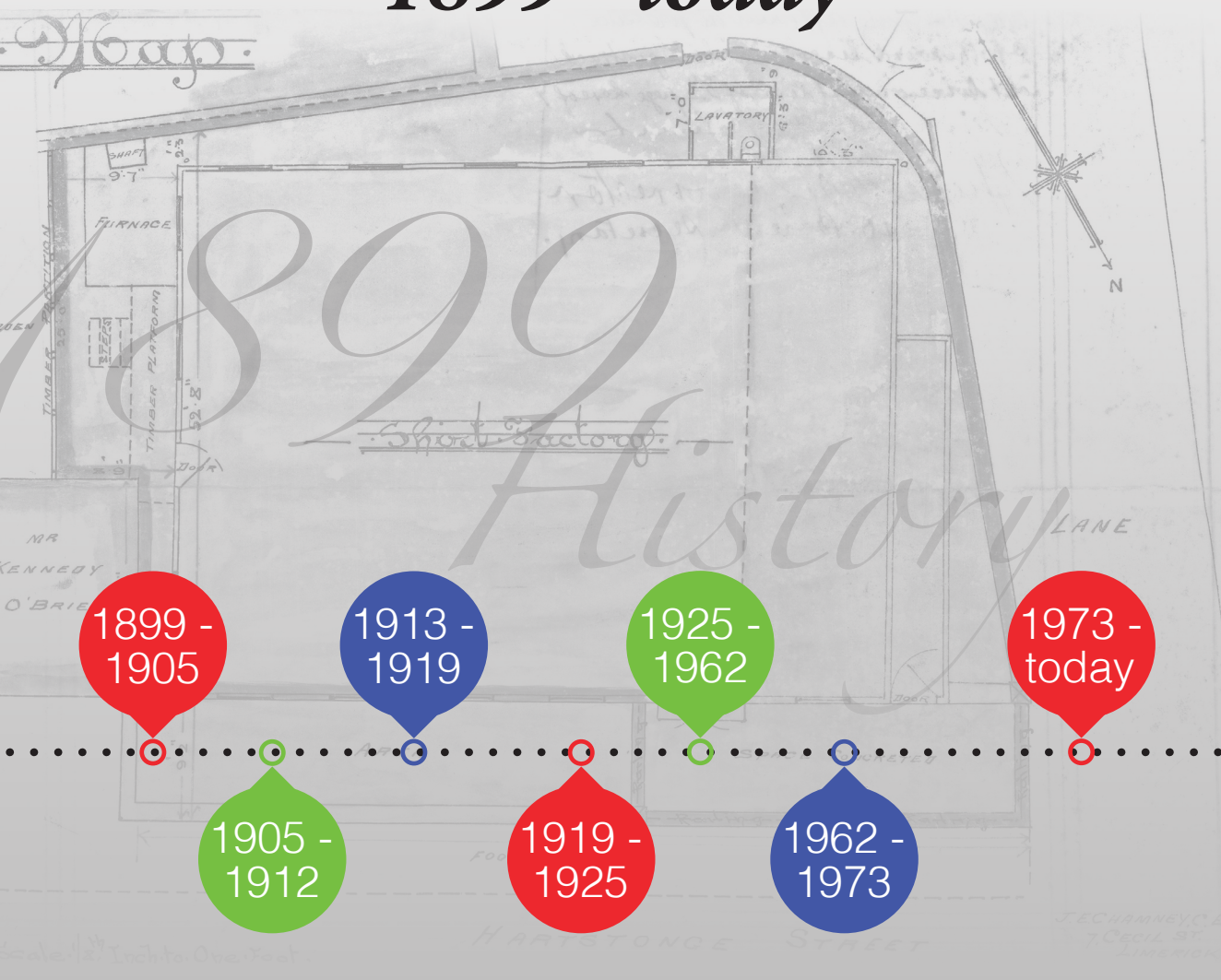


This Indenture

Made the eighth day of November one thousand nine hundred and eleven Between Kennedy O'Brien of Hartstone street in the city of Limerick Merchant (hereinafter called the Lessor) of the one part and The Limerick Shirt Factory (Limited) of the other part

The History of MUNSTER HALL

1899 - today



1899 - 1905

1913 - 1919

1925 - 1962

1973 - today

1905 - 1912

1919 - 1925

1962 - 1973

George's Street (now O'Connell Street), Limerick, 1900



Preface

One of the great things about working in an old building like ours (apart from the drafty corners) are the stories that we hear everyday across the counter. And so, a couple of years ago, we decided to find out as much as possible about one of Limerick's old Halls.

The street

We get asked all the time 'where does the street name come from' as it's difficult both to spell and pronounce if you have not heard it before. In 1760, Limerick was proclaimed an open city and the demolition of the medieval walls began. Around this time the building of the Georgian town commenced. The main leaders connected with the movement to create Newtown Pery were Edmund Sexton Pery, who owned most of the land, his brother-in-law, Sir Henry Hartstonge, the Russells and the Arthurs. Hartstonge Street is named after Bruff born Henry, a Irish politician, and his wife Lady Lucy Hartstonge, who was renowned for her charitable work in Limerick including the founding of St. John's Hospital.

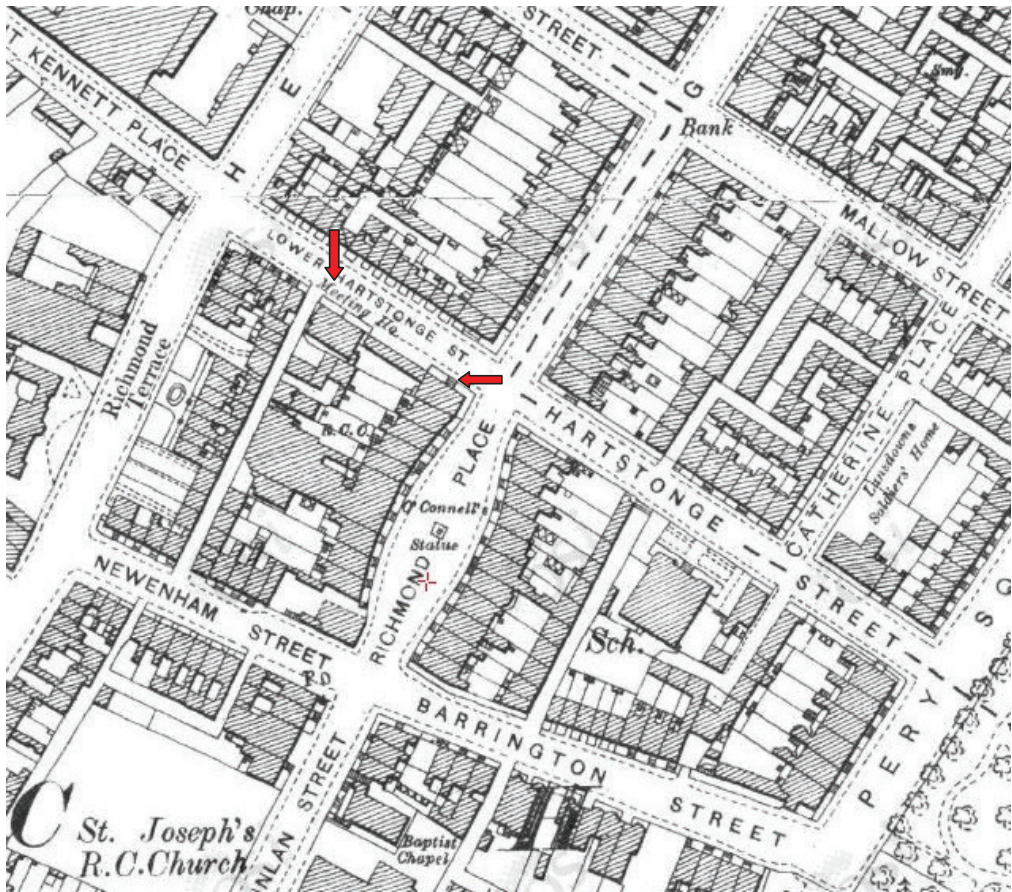
The streetscape

Pre 1850, there was no definition between Upper and Lower - it was simply called Hartstonge Street. Upper Hartstonge Street, like Barrington Street and Upper Mallow Street, housed the wealthier families. Lower Hartstonge Street, which was sandwiched between Newtown Pery and the river, presented more a modest housing arrangement.

There were families living here as well as boarding houses for unmarried workers and trades people. By the turn of the century, Alexander Bannatyne had an office in number 11 and there was a bakery in number 24. Number 2 was a grocery and pub and number 3 was a butcher. To top it off (no pun intended) there was a milliner in number 16.

It was a bustling little streetscape with cart men and their wagons bringing goods from the docks up to the railway station. Carriages and traps would also have used this road bringing people around the city. The street sound would have been of pedestrians talking, horses hooves, carriage bells and cart wheels on the rutted mud road. The butcher would have had a coloured awning to protect their wares against sunlight. And you can just imagine the smell of the freshly baked bread in the bakery.

Pre 1860, the laneway to the side of the building was known as Stable Lane as it gave access to the coach houses belonging to the fine houses on The Crescent. With the construction of the Sacred Heart Church on The Crescent, the laneway was named 'Jesuit Lane'. During the 1940's and 50's, the lane was known locally as 'Barry's Lane' after the butcher CS Barry (shop in number 3 next door) who had a slaughterhouse to the rear. The old arch and laneway opposite GBM provided access to the stables and coach house to the rear of James and Francis Spaight's houses on O'Connell Street and to block it or obstruct access was a criminal offence.



This map from approx 1903 shows Munster Hall (noted as a Meeting House) on 4/6, Lower Hartstonge Street.

Number 1, Lower Hartstonge Street no longer exists as an address but there are references to it in this chronology so we are illustrating where the entrance was. The arrow shows Number 1, Lower Hartstonge Street as a single corner building. This was later segmented; allowing a door to each street. This corner building was demolished in the early 1970's and the new building has only one front door at 20, The Crescent where the New Ireland Insurance company are.

To give an idea of Munster Hall's age in relation to other prominent Limerick buildings...

It is 4 years older than Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road

It is 5 years older than St. Joseph's RC Church, O'Connell Avenue

It is 6 years older than Shannon Rowing Club House, Sarsfield Bridge

It is 7 years older than The Carnegie Library, Pery Square (now the Limerick City Art Gallery)

The building

The original building was corrugated iron sheeting over a timber frame with a stone foundation which is still exposed to the street. Similar buildings still exist in parts of Scotland where large factories were producing these structures for local use and for export to New Zealand, Australia and African colonies in the 1880's. They were used as fisherman's halls, shooting lodges, churches, hospitals, houses and village halls.



The original building had an ornamental timber bargeboard similar to the one shown in this photograph (painted red).

It was common to decorate these buildings in a 'Gothic' style by using finials, iron bellcotes, spires and decorative ventilators.

We don't know where the sheeting was manufactured, but possible companies were The English Scotch and Irish Galvanized Metal Company of Southwark in London or Francis Morton & Co. of Liverpool.

As the building had been used primarily for recreational purposes over the years, the corrugated sheeting had deteriorated and it was necessary to reclad in 2004. This difficult job was project managed by Mr. Pierce McGann. At that time, the engineers noted that the 100 year old original wooden frame was still in perfect condition. Underneath the new cladding, the building is practically unchanged since 1899.

To untangle the threads of ownership, leaseholders, lease consignees, landlords, numerous rents and rent collectors was a job in itself; and so the only building that we could really investigate with any degree of thoroughness was our own.

This is story of 'Munster Hall', one of the last occupied buildings of its kind in Limerick.

Site at 4/6 Lower Hartstonge Street

There is evidence of a forge / smithy operating on a portion of the ground now occupied by the Hall. William Russell 1860 (Limerick Chronicle 25.2.1860)

'The Munster Hall', The Y.M.C.A., 1899 - 1905

The Young Men's Christian Association signed a 35 year lease on 1 Hartstonge Street on 26th September, 1882 and the first recorded * meeting was 2nd April, 1891. (YMCA A123).

Later, a 15 year lease was signed in 1897 between Kennedy O'Brien (the lessor) and John Norris Russell (the lessee) on behalf of the Y.M.C.A. for the plot on which 'The Munster Hall', 4/6 Lower Hartstonge Street, was built.

The Hall (noted on the Map as a Meeting House) was built in 1899 at the suggestion of Mr. Robert McCann of Belfast, travelling Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. Ireland at an estimated outlay of £1,500. It was fitted out with a stage and seating for 300 people. Charles Conyers Massey Baker, Lismacue, Bansha, was one of the Y.M.C.A. supporters and spoke frequently at Munster Hall. Located on Lower Hartstonge Street, it would have made a great stop off for people on their way to and from work. Clerks, trades men and labourers would have been coming to and from the docks, the large mills on the river banks and the nearby cloth and meat factories. It was intended as a hall for social gatherings by all religious groups. In the days before television and wifi, sports and social clubs were very popular and, in the promotion of health and temperance, young men were encouraged to participate.

By March 1904 however the Association printed a letter of appeal forewarning of their departure.

"Five years ago, the committee of the Y.M.C.A. in Limerick determined to complete their building scheme by erecting the Munster Hall, trusting the sufficient support would be forthcoming from friends to defray all expenses. In this their hopes have not been realised, and a debt of £460 still remains. The Munster Hall is the only hall in Limerick which is open to all evangelical bodies, and it is a centre for gospel and interdenominational work." (YMCA A130)

On the 30th June, 1905, the Association were forced to sell in the face of debt.

On Wednesday 11th October 1905 at 2pm Lot 1 and 2, including the stage, furniture and fittings, went under the hammer of Wm. B. Fitt Auctioneers. (see appendix 1 & 2)

Lot 1 - Number 1, Lower Hartstonge Street

Lot 2 - 'The Munster Hall', Lower Hartstonge Street

St. Munchin's Band of Hope

Fourth Annual Reunion in the Munster Hall

on Thursday March 16th, 1905

Temperance Songs, Recitations and Dialogues etc by Members

Tea, 7 o'clock. Entertainment, 8 o'clock

Tickets 6D each

Limerick Chronicle, March 13th, 1905

The Limerick Shirt Factory (St. Ita's) Ltd., 1905-1912

Some time previously, Fr. Cregan of St. Michael's Parish, had established a shirt factory as an adjunct to St. Ita's House for Young Women (St. Ita's Hall) on Thomas Street (now the Cumann na Gael building), and their facilities for domestic training. Following their success at The Limerick Exhibition of Industry in 1904, the business flourished and The Limerick Shirt Factory Ltd. was formed.



St. Patrick's Day Procession, 1906

In 1911, the original 15 year lease between the Kennedy O'Brien (lessor) and John Norris Russell, Y.M.C.A. (lessee) on the hall had expired and a new 99 year lease was signed with The Limerick Shirt Factory Ltd. (lessee). Floor plans from 1911 (see appendix) indicate that the building was a single storey structure. A single toilet at the back of the building. Furnace room with shaft to the side. Front door with inside porch. Lean-to to the right of the front door with second door for side access. Concrete area to the front with iron railings (two sections of which still exist).

In the early 1900's Derry was the principal seat of the shirt industry in the British Isles and exported it's products throughout the world. They employed more workers in the city than all of the other industries put together. Tillie and Henderson's, built in 1857, was, by the turn of the last century, one of the largest shirt factories in the world. By 1926, Derry, whose population at the time was 45,000, had 44 shirt factories employing 8,000 full time workers and thousands more in cottage type industries.

Newspaper Article from Ulster Herald, 29 June, 1906

To Encourage Local Trade ; Example to Ulster Merchants & People

The formal opening took place of the Limerick Shirt Factory on Thursday. The directors, who consist of the Rev. J.M. Cregan, Adm (the founder), Alderman S. O'Mara, Messrs Hugh Coyle and J.H. Scanlan were present as were also Mr. S.F. Ebrill, Secretary; and Mr. J. O'Kane, Manager, late of Omagh. The factory, says the "Limerick Leader", was taken over some time ago owing to the success of the shirt making industry carried on at St. Ita's House.

Fr. Cregan said he started after consultation with business men. They paid £50 for machinery and started with £48. Some months afterwards however, a generous citizen, whose purse is ever open to the call of Faith and Fatherland, gave him unasked £50 to help make the little industry a success. With regard to the raising of the necessary capital of £2,000, which was advertised in £1 shares, they got the money voluntarily and had not been put to the necessity of soliciting and single penny. This he considered was one of the strongest proofs of the public spirit of the people of Limerick in the Irish revenue to

help the local industries (hear, hear). The girls engaged belonged to respectable families in the city, and there are 35 of them employed at present. They had secured in Mr O'Kane, the services of one of the most competent men in the shirt trade as their manager - a man who had made every place where he was employed a success, and who put them in touch with large firms in England - for some of whom they had already executed orders. The work turned out of the factory had given such satisfaction that at the present moment they were promised orders from 60 to 80 dozen a week from England for this one firm.

It is trusted that everyone would feel it in their interest to help in giving employment in this line locally, and so assist in stemming the tide of emigration. He was confident the public would appreciate the action of the directors who had joined in the company and whose only anxiety was to secure employment for the working girls of Limerick, and that the citizens would carry their appreciation so far as to demand local made shirts when purchasing those articles.

At its height, the shirt factory gave employment to 50 women with an expected workforce of 100 women.

However, due to lack of ongoing trade, The Limerick Shirt Factory closed after 7 years. A shareholders meeting was held on 29th October 1912 where it was unanimously decided to wind up the company.

On the 6th November 1912, The Limerick Shirt Factory (St. Ita's) Ltd. was liquidated and the Hall went up for sale on the 8th November.

The Limerick Clothing Factory Ltd., 1913-1919

In 1913, the lease on the Hall was assigned to Mr. Thomas Archibald Ferguson on behalf of The Limerick (Tait) Clothing Factory Ltd., Lord Edward Street.

By 1890, Sir Peter Tait had retired and soon after the Factory's (then called the Auxiliary Forces Clothing and Equipment Company Ltd.) took a downturn. Finances were so poor that it looked like the factory might close. The directors appointed a Mr. E. Taylor to investigate possible options to save the factory. Taylor worked a marketing plan and, with finance and support from Mr. James Bannatyne, Mr. Octavius Wallace, Mr. Stephen O'Mara and Mr. Thomas A. Ferguson, the factory flourished once again employing upwards of 1,000 people. The name of the factory reverted to The Limerick Clothing Factory Ltd. and the new board had as its members Mr E. Taylor and the above mentioned business men. Stephen O'Mara had also been a director of the Limerick Shirt Factory.

Mr. Thomas Ferguson died 15/04/1919 aged 81 years at 80 George's St. Limerick. (Now Frances Twomey Solicitors). Born in 1838 he went to work at the age of 17 in Bannatyne's Mills and rose to become Managing Director. In addition to The Limerick Clothing Factory, he was a director of George McKerns & Sons and the Fergus Reclamation Syndicate.

We can find no evidence indicating whether or not the Hall was used as a clothing factory during this time. However, in light of the success of the main premises, it may have been used for production.



During WW1, 4,000 men of the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers were based in Limerick. Seen here marching with their mascot, a long horned goat, by South's Bar on Quinlan Street. At just 100 meters long, Quinlan Street is the shortest street in Limerick City.

'Memorial Hall', Royal Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades, 1919-1925

On the 28th March 1919, the Royal Munster Fusiliers Memorial Club for the Comrades of the Great War was established. They rented the hall from the Limerick Clothing Factory Ltd. and renamed it 'Memorial Hall'.

Royal Munster Fusiliers Memorial Club

Fundraising for this project was by public subscription and had been going on since Spring 1917. Monies were raised through a wide range of endeavours from the 'sale of waste papers' to garden fetes held by the Earl of Dunraven, KP CMG, Hon Colonel, 5th Regiment Royal Munster Fusiliers.

Limerick Leader, 28th March, 1919

'It is proposed by their many relatives and friends to perpetuate the memory of those gallant officers and men of the above Regiment who have made the great sacrifice during the war now so gloriously won by the Allies. This memorial is to be of the nature of a Club at Limerick for Sailors and Soldiers, serving or demobilised, recruited for ANY Regiment in the Counties of Limerick, Clare, Kerry or Cork and, for all men recruited ANYWHERE, who serve, or have served, with the Royal Munster Fusiliers at any time, past, present or future. Further, that the Sub-Committee of Management may, on recommendation by a member, elect as Honorary Members, Sailors or Soldiers of any other Regiment wishing to enjoy the privileges thereof.

The Club is to be non-sectarian and non-political.

This Club will fill a long felt want. The Earl of Dunraven has expressed his sympathy with the scheme, and has agreed to act as President of a strong Committee of Gentlemen of the County Limerick and a few Officers. Already the following have agreed to officiate :-

Sir Charles Barrington, V. Lieutenant for County Limerick

Arthur White Esq, High Sherriff for County Limerick

James H. Roche, High Sherriff for the City of Limerick

It is estimated that some £5,000 will be required to start the work of the Club on a sound basis, after which it should be self supporting. Already £2,000 has been practically guaranteed by the Royal Munster Fusiliers. It is hoped that the remainder of the money required will be readily forthcoming by free gifts from those who owe their present immunity from the German Kaiser, and the well being of their own selves, wives, and children to the gallantry of the soldier who is now dependent upon them.'

The Earl of Dunraven wrote the introduction to 'The Story of The Munsters at Etreux, Festubert, Rue du Bois and Hulloch' written by Mrs. Victor Rickard.

Jessica Louisa Moore, an Irish literary novelist, married Lieut. Colonel Victor Rickard, a professional officer of the 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers who featured on horseback behind Fr. Gleeson in The Last Absolution of the Munsters by the war artist Matania. Mrs Rickard commissioned the painting.

The Last General Absolution of the Munsters at Rue du Bois, The Western Front

Cited by the Irish Times as "one of the most famous paintings of the first World War, and one of the most culturally significant Irish paintings of the 20th century", prints of "The Absolution of the Munsters" were issued by The Sphere magazine. Copies hung in Irish houses across the country during the early war years. The conflict was just nine months old when the 2nd battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers marched out to battle on the evening of May 8th, 1915 near Aubers Ridge. The battalion had already been decimated twice, once at Étreux on August 27th and then at nearby Festubert before Christmas 1914.

Extract from Irish Times, August 28th, 2014

FRANCIS Gleeson was one of the thousands of Irishmen who served in the First World War. But he did not go to fight. He provided spiritual and physical comfort to the second battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. He was their chaplain, a role iconically portrayed in the painting, *The Last General Absolution of the Munsters at Rue du Bois*, by Fortunino Matania.

"The scenes of enthusiasm are extraordinary," Fr. Gleeson wrote on May 8, 1915, the eve of the Battle of Aubers Ridge. "I ride on my horse. Give absolution to [the] battalion during rest in [the] road...The men all sing hymns, 'Hail Glorious St Patrick'. I go further up — near the trenches, and bid goodbye to all. So sad."

"Many of the men, recruited from Kerry, Cork, Limerick, and Clare, were killed. The roll call was described as "the saddest imaginable" by Fr. Gleeson in his diary, which, along with his correspondences, is housed at the Dublin Diocesan Archives. "Some had lost brothers, others cousins, but all had lost good and faithful comrades."

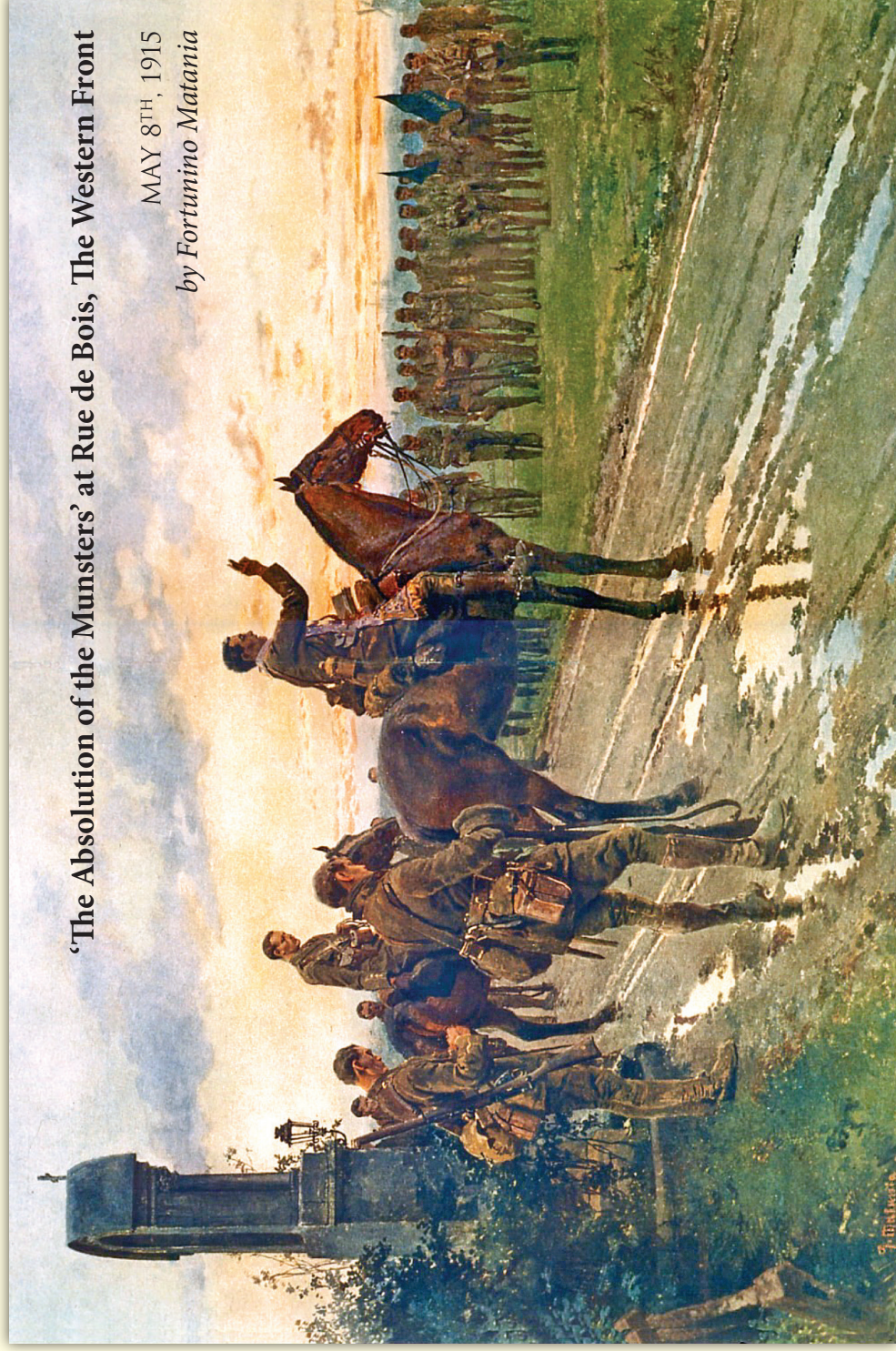
"What a day for all the Munsters," he wrote in his diary on May 9. "We lose at least 350 men, between killed and wounded and missing. Spent all night trying to console, aid, and remove the wounded. It was ghastly to see them lying there in the cold, cheerless outhouses, on bare stretchers with no blankets to cover their freezing limbs ... Hundreds lying out in cold air all night at Windy Corner. No ambulances coming. They came at last — at daylight."

"Fr. Gleeson did not just provide comfort. According to the book 'The Irish at the Front', published during the war, the chaplain was not afraid to put himself in danger. During a bombardment of the trenches, "Fr. Gleeson stuck to his post, attending to the dying Munsters... Indeed, if anyone has earned the V.C., Fr Gleeson has. He is a credit to the country he hails from, and brought luck to the Munsters since he joined them."

His passing was recorded in the Annual Report of the Old Comrades Association of the Royal Munster Fusiliers: 'A canon when he died. A saint when next we all meet'.

'The Absolution of the Munsters' at Rue de Bois, The Western Front

MAY 8TH, 1915
by Fortunino Matania



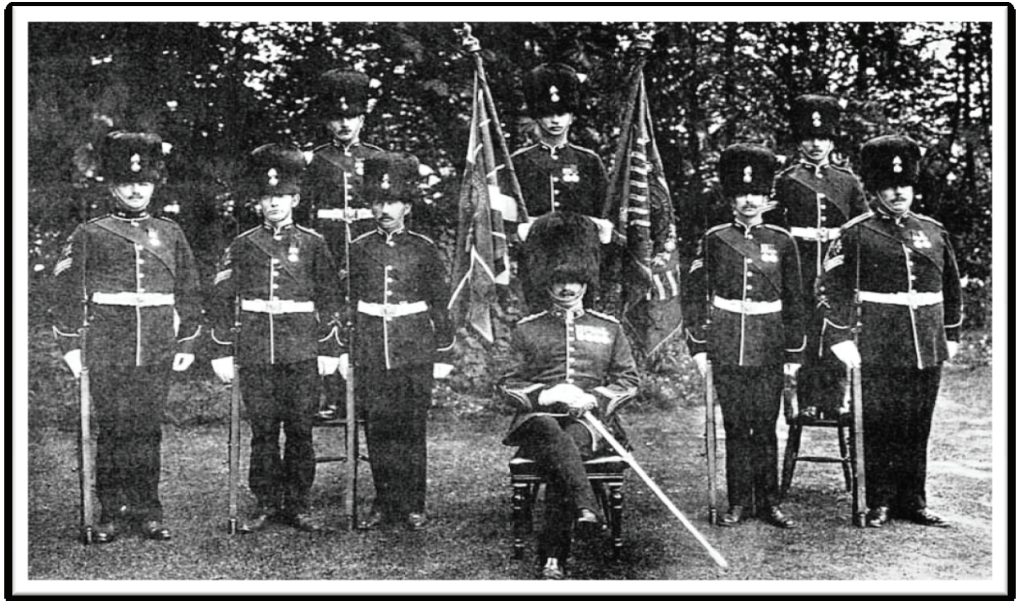
One of the survivors of this battle - and the Great War - was DCM John Ring, Limerick. He is seen on the far right of *The Absolution* painting, standing to the fore of the lines. Fr. Francis Gleeson is seen giving the men absolution. Colonel V. Rickard is on horseback to his left.

A brief history of the Royal Munster Fusiliers.

There were 11 Battalions (with 1,000 men in each) raised by the Royal Munster Fusiliers in Clare, Cork, Kerry and Limerick over the course of the war.

The Munsters saw conflict in Sulva Bay, Gallipoli 1915, Serbia, Greece, Palestine, the capture of Jerusalem 1917 and the Western Front. The share of the 2nd battalion in the campaign on the Western Front is in many respects unique. Landing with the British Expeditionary Force, it was never out of earshot of the front line during the fifty-one months the war lasted. Thirteen times in the campaign it went into battle up to strength, or nearly so; ten times it came out of action with less than 6 officers and 300 men all ranks. On five occasions it was surrounded by the enemy and cut off from all support; on four of these it cut its way through and joined up again; on the fifth it engaged an entire Army Corps of the enemy for over twelve hours. On seven different occasions it captured the objectives of adjacent units, as well as its own.

DSM John Ring MC DCM, Royal Munster Fusiliers



DSM John Ring MC DCM was born in Bandon, Co. Cork in 1876 and joined the Regiment on 6th April 1897. He served in the Boer War and was awarded the QSA & KSA for his services. In the 1911 census at Tidworth he was Colour Sergeant (*in photograph on the far left*) and sailed with the Battalion for France in August 1914. He was promoted to RSM on the death of QM Sgt Fitzmaurice on 12th November 1914 and held this rank until the Regiment was disbanded in 1922. He survived five consecutive years of fighting in France, refusing promotion time after time rather than leave the Battalion with which he had served for so many years. He was highly respected by Officers and men. John Ring was awarded the DCM in April 1915, MC in 1916 and Bar to DCM in 1918. He also received the LSGC Medal. After the war he settled in Limerick and represented the Limerick Branch of the British Legion and Old Comrades Association until his death on the 17th April 1960. He is buried in Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery, Limerick.

The Committee Comrades of the Great War - Limerick Branch 1920

All of the regiments had their own 'Old Comrades' Associations and, although Limerick membership was predominantly from the Royal Munster Fusiliers Regiments, other regiments that joined under the committee were the Seaforth Highlanders, the Leinster Regiment, the Irish Guards, Royal Army Medical Corps, the Navy, the South Irish Horse, the Royal Flying Corps, the Royal Irish Regiment, the 10th Division & the 16th Division.



Back Row - P. Brown D. Ronan * A. Kerr J. Hardaker D. Murphy, M.C. *

Centre Row - J. Duhan * J. Hayes P. Slattery C. Gumley W. Sydenham M. Hallissey * J. Corcoran *

Vice-Comdt., 1921-22

Sec. & Organiser

Front Row - A.P. Connolly * J.B. Barrington * T.H. Guerin *

Hon. Treasurer

Commandant

Vice-Commandant, 1920-21

* Founders & Organisers of the Branch

The Regiments were disbanded in 1922 under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust commenced building houses for ex-servicemen country wide - and Limerick City & County received fair share. Those in the city were built in Rosbrien and Blackboy Road (later called Bengal Terrace after the Bengal Tiger in the RMF cap badge). Captain John Murphy MC DCM+Bar, who was renowned for his bravery in the Great War, lived there.

'Legion Hall', British Legion, 1925-1962

In 1925, the Old Comrades Associations across Ireland voted to unite under the administration of the British Legion ex-servicemen's charity. The British Legion was founded in 1921 with the aim of supporting the survivors, and their families, who had fought in World War One and required assistance once the war had ended.

The War Memorial

A notice in the Limerick Chronicle, 2nd November, 1929

A Memorial is being erected in Pery Square to the memory of the 3,000 men of Limerick City and County who fell in the Great War. It will be in the form of the 'Cross of Sacrifice' which stands in nearly every War Graves Cemetery throughout the world. A Roll of Honour will be compiled in a bound volume, giving name, rank, unit, where killed and date. Will the relatives of the fallen please send these particulars to the Hon. Sec., Legion Club.

The Subscription List is now open, and donations, no matter how small, will be gratefully received by any of the following :-

Capt. D.M. Tidmarsh, M.C. (Hon. Sec.),
189 O'Connell Street, Limerick.

Capt. E.R. Shaw, M.C., 9 Eden Terrace,
Limerick

Capt. T.D. Lyons, J. P., Croom House, Croom
Mr. J. Ward, Hon. Sec. Legion Club,
Hartstonge Street

Mr. G. Waterhouse, Legion Club,
Hartstonge Street

The War Memorial was unveiled on Sunday 10th November 1929 in Pery Square with over a 1,000 people in attendance from both Protestant and Catholic faiths.

Due to the generosity of the people of Limerick, the amount given not only paid for the memorial, but allowed the Legion to purchase the lease. The lease on the Hall was assigned to Squadron Leader David M Tidmarsh on behalf of the British Legion in December 1929.

Squadron Leader David Mary Tidmarsh MC (28 January 1892 – 27 November 1944), born in 'Lota', North Circular Road, Limerick, was a World War I Royal Flying Corps flying ace credited with seven aerial victories. He was the great grandson of James Moriarty Tidmarsh who, with Michael J. Clery (of Clery's and Company, Dublin) bought Cannock's Department Store from George Cannock and Peter Tait.

The Hall as a Social Club

Billiards were popular in the first half of the 20th century but as time passed, snooker took over. As part of the social aspect of the club, the playing of billiards, and later snooker, was very important. The ground floor of the hall was given over to two billiards tables (about twice the size of a pool table).

The Orme Shield for Limerick Billiards was initially won by St. Michael's Temperance Society, Cecil Street, in 1927 and 1928 but was won outright by the Legion over the next three years after which it was retired.



The Orme Shield still hangs in the St. Michael's Temperance Society's Cecil Street premises.

It is possible that it was given to them for safekeeping when the Legion Club closed in 1962.

Two notices feature in The Limerick Chronicle October 19th 1930 which would indicate that upgrades and improvements were being made to the Hall by the new leaseholders.

"The Annual Poppy Dance will be held on Friday, 14th November in the Legion Club, Hartstonge Street. Note : Owing to recent structural alterations the floor space for dancing is greatly increased."

The British Legion, Women's Section, also advertised a Bridge Tournament in aid of the Reconstruction Fund to take place on Saturday 1st November 1930.

In the 1938 valuation report, the Legion had a licence to sell alcohol. Some time previously a bar, seating area and toilet had been built upstairs. This was accessed by a front and back stairs. (The hatch for bringing beer barrels up to the bar is still there.)

The upstairs bar area had a large swing window, where members could look down into the main ground floor hall to see if the billiard tables were free.



Limerick Branch British Legion circa 1937 receiving the Southern Ireland Area Shield awarded annually for 'Endeavour'.

The gentleman sitting right centre is Major General Sir William Hickie KCB, long time President of the British Legion in Southern Ireland Area and the General Officer commanding the 16th Irish Division at the Somme. He unveiled the Limerick War Memorial in 1929 and served as a Senator until 1932.

Of the names we know - second from left on the back row is David Ronan RMF veteran, centre back is Jack Duhan, third from right is Joe Hardaker RMF veteran and second from right is James Leamy, RMF veteran.

On the 9th March 1938, the Limerick Chronicle advertised an Old Comrades Reunion - noting that there were not many of these valiant men left.

'The Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades held the annual reunion dinner and smoking concert in the Legion Hall last weekend.'

When The Old Comrades Association & British Legion Secretary, John Ring died in 1960. L.C. John Cleary filled the vacancy and remained in the position until his death on the 4th May 1970.

After 43 years, too few in numbers to keep the Legion Hall open, the club closed in 1962.

The Missing Lions

As with every good story there is a mystery, the case of the missing lions ...

During the time collecting this information, we came across a story that there were two stone lions at either side of the steps up to the front door during the time when the Old Comrades & Legion were in the hall.

Unusually for stone lions (which are normally standing), these were lying down, facing one another.

This photograph is similar to how they would have looked in situ ..



Where they came from, when they were put there, who put them there and where are now is unknown.

If anyone can add to this story - it would be a lovely finish to this chapter of the story ...

'Immaculata Hall', The Legion of Mary, 1962 to 1973

Article from Limerick Chronicle, 2nd June 1962

Opening of new Legion of Mary Hall

"The club in Hartstonge Street, Limerick, which up to recent months had been the local branch of the British Legion was on Thursday night last blessed and officially opened by Most Rev. Henry Murphy, D.D, Bishop of Limerick, for it's new owners - the Limerick Comitium of the Legion of Mary.

Thus, it has passed from one legion to another and it is now known as Immaculata Hall. It will be availed of for the larger meetings of the Legion, notable for entertainments of an Irish character for tourists who come to the city during a peak tourist season; as a meeting place for emigrants returned from abroad for holidays, and for the activities of the juvenile clubs attached to the organisation.

The presence of the Bishop, the Mayor (Councillor Frank Glasgow) and other members of the Corporation in their official robes, as well as some prominent local clerical and lay personalities, the President of the Consilium of the Legion in Ireland (Mr. John Gavin) gave the occasion an air of importance.

Rev. M. Manning, C.C., St. Michael's, said that the Legion had been extending itself for some years past. The premises they had was much too small to cater for their activities. They had been on the lookout for new premises and when the hall came on the market they were very glad to obtain it. It would be used for their larger meetings and functions."

"It is their intention to entertain in the hall any tourists who wish to spend some time in the city. They would entertain their visitors in an Irish way of life, as they had been doing in Connolly Hall, Sarsfield Street, where last year they had 1,200 such visitors. Father Manning also spoke about their work in catering for emigrants. "Many of our emigrants come from abroad during the tourist season," he said "and we want to let them see when they come back to their own country that we have not forgotten them and that as a result of their visit here they will go back with happy memories of their stay at home. All in all, we feel that this hall is an absolute necessity."

Finally, he thanked Mr. James O'Dwyer, architect (Chevalier P.J. Sheahan's office) for his great work in transforming the hall.

Most Rev. Dr. Murphy, in his address, said he had not seen the interior of the premises before but certainly they looked very well that evening.

Unfortunately, the detail of works carried out by P.J. Sheahan's have been lost over time. We do know however that the Legion of Mary are to credit for installing the Irish Oak floor from McMahon's, Limerick, for dances and ceilis. (The heel marks of the shoes are still visible today.)

As an interesting aside; one month later, 6th of July, 1962, saw the first airing of The Late Late Show with Gay Byrne.

Having occupied the building for 11 years, 'Immaculata Hall' was put up for auction by The Legion of Mary on the 24th February 1973. *Limerick Chronicle*

'Munster Hall ', GBM, 1973 - today

On Monday 16th May, 1967, a Limerick Man, Mr. Bryan McGann and a Waterford Man, Mr. Dermot Long set up General Business Machines (Limerick) Ltd. in Adare Buildings on Sarsfield Street, Limerick.

Limerick Leader, 10th June 1967

General Business Machines, Sarsfield Street. General Office Suppliers, Filing Cabinets, Office Machines, envelopes etc. Tracing Paper, Ammonia & Semi Dry Print Papers

In 1969, they moved to Number 20, The Crescent.

The premises was small however and they moved to 28 Henry Street, on the corner of Hartstonge Street and Henry Street in order to house the very large reprographic machines and cameras.

When the Legion of Mary put the building up for sale in 1973, GBM purchased it but did not move in until 1977.

In the interim, the hall was rented to a clothing company owned by the Costelloes (cousins of the famous Limerick-born fashion designer, Paul Costelloe). They produced uniforms - and so 70 years later, it became a clothing factory once again.

Before moving in GBM excavated what is now the basement for additional storage. New windows were installed. A suspended floor was added upstairs (this connected with the bar area built by the British Legion). The increased space on this level is used as a showroom with a new access stairs.

In all good stories, many of the threads weave together - and this is no exception. The Limerick YMCA established in 1891 at Number 1 Hartstonge Street which was the 'side door' to Number 20, The Crescent. They built Munster Hall in 1899, eight years later. GBM operated from the same building, Number 20, in 1969 and moved into Munster Hall in 1977. Again eight years later.

In 2016, to mark it's 117th year, the building has
reclaimed it's original name, 'Munster Hall'.



Although I have tried not to write a 'history' lesson - the occupants were very much 'of their time' and it is their unique stories which make 'Munster Hall' as opposed to the building itself. Although it is thought to have been the largest occupied galvanised building in Limerick City - it is a very modest structure - but with a really lovely wooden floor !

It has been a fascinating journey unearthing the story of the Hall, which started 'life' as an evangelical meeting house, then a shirt factory, an ex servicemen's club, a catholic hall, a clothing factory and is currently a busy printer, signmaker, specialist supplier and retail shop.

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the help of the following people.

Mr. Kieran Kerr, Archivist & Historian, St. Michael's Temperance Society & Rowing Club. Grandson of Albert Kerr, OCA.

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Mr. J Stephen Turner, National Secretary, YMCA Ireland

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Mr. Dermot Long, GBM Limerick Ltd.

The late Mr. Denis Leonard, founder of the Limerick Civic Trust, whose articles on Newtown Pery gave an invaluable insight into the development of Georgian Limerick.

This story is for my family



Appendix

1 - Additional Stories

2 - Noteable Leaseholders/Consignees

3 - Plan of building from 1911

4 - Map from the 1907 sale of Limerick ground rents by the Earl of Limerick. We are LOT 1

1 - Additional Stories

Although these are an aside from the Story of Munster Hall - they were gathered during research and may be of interest.

The term 'tackie', used when describing a running shoe, came back to Limerick with the Royal Munster Fusiliers who served in The Second Boer War in South Africa, 11 October 1899 - 31 May 1902. 'Tackie' was the local name given to a light shoe with a rubber sole - which in the heat would become soft and 'tackie'.

The story of Garry. In 1914, Miss V. Grant of Lichborough Hall, Northampton offered a young Irish Wolfhound to the Leinster Regiment as a mascot. The offer was refused however, as they were being transported to the front within weeks. The 3rd Royal Munster Fusiliers, based in Cork, wrote to Miss Grant saying "we would very much like to have the Wolfhound for the battalion, he would have a good home and would be very well cared for - my only fear that he would be too well looked after as all the men love a dog". Lichborough Garryowen "Garry" was stationed in Aghada Barracks, Cork, with the Munsters in 1915. He went to France and was wounded but well cared for. He returned home to Lichborough in 1922 when the regiment was disbanded. Garry was with them for seven years and had his own coat with RMF embroidered on it.

When researching the Old Comrades Association - the meaning of 'Comrade' was explained to me in many stories. Here are just two ..

One gentleman told me of his grandfather, an ex servicemen from the RMF who joined the IRA when he returned to Ireland. He remained a lifelong member of the Old Comrades Association and the British Legion because they had 'a bond that could not be broken'.

Another gentleman told me of his father, who at the time lived in County Limerick, and enlisted in the East Kent Regiment who were based in Fermoy. When in France, he transferred to the Royal Artillery. In the field, the artillery were in dugouts in front of the trenches to cover the infantry when they came 'over the top'. During one battle, a young soldier came out of the trenches and dropped his gun. This was considered 'desertion' and soldiers received a court martial and, if sentenced to death, shot by a twelve man firing squad. His father grabbed the young soldier and brought him back to the trench to get his gun. Both men survived the Great War. He and the young soldier from Cornwall wrote to one another every Christmas up to their deaths. "There was never an issue about different religions - we were all just comrades who wanted to get out of that hell and go home."

Captain Guy Warneford Nightingale, 1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers wrote to his family in 1917, " I'm glad I'm an Englishman in an Irish regiment, as I can go unprejudiced to those outside fellows and tell them straight that though I'm not an Irishman I would sooner be in an Irish regiment with Irish soldiers behind me in a scrap than any English or Scotch troops they would like to produce."

2 -Notable Lease Holders / Lease Consignees on

Hartstonge Street Lower 1900 - 1950

Francis Ward. Died Oct 1871 aged 69 years.

Eliza Ward, sister of Francis, died in their house on Hartstonge Street. Their father William Ward, was a silversmith on Charlottes Quay. He died on 25/8/1832

Ellen Ward, his wife and sole heir, inherited his property - which included much of Lower Hartstonge Street. Ellen M Ward was born 06/02/1841 and died Nov 15th 1908 aged years.

Captain John & Mary Anne Jones 1886. 1 & 2 Lower Hartstonge Street. Spirit Vendor. (It may be that Kennedy O'Brien bought the Jones public house licence on the death of Mary Anne Jones.)

Kennedy O'Brien. 1 to 6 Lower Hartstonge Street. Grocer & Spirit Vendor. Born in 1862 and died 22nd Feb 1932 aged 70 years. His wife, Margaret Fitzpatrick O'Brien died 23rd June 1939 aged 81 years old in her daughters house 'Alva', O'Connell Avenue, Limerick.

Their known children ...

Bridget M O'Brien Ryan d 1985, Patrick Joseph O'Brien d 1980, James O'Brien d 1968 & Mary O'Brien

Daniel Liddy. Butcher, 3 Lower Hartstonge Street & 27 Catherine Street. 1951 Daniel Liddy dies aged 86 years.

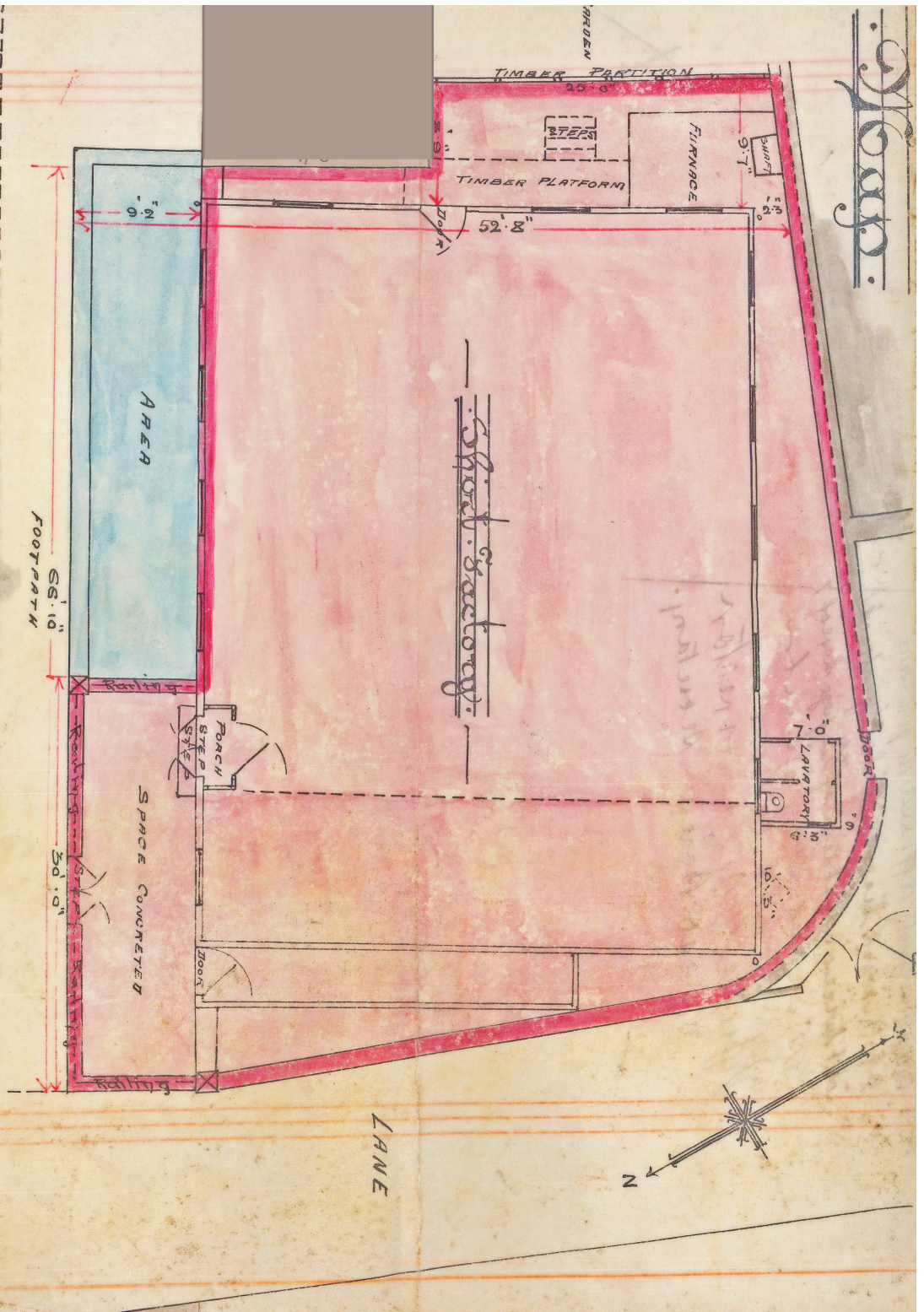
Charles S. Barry. Butcher, 3 Lower Hartstonge Street & Thomas Street, 1955 (Jesuits Lane was also known locally as Barry's Lane)

Sir Vincent Nash. Houses 11 - 22 Lower Hartstonge Street.

Marian St Clair Ruggles Brise. 2 & 3 Hartstonge Street. Born Bermuda, West Indies 1887. Died Sussex 1939.

Daughter of Cpt Cecil Edward Ruggles Brise (1859–88) and Emilia Meliora Hobson, Mylar's Park, Wexford. Marian's mother married Mountiford Westropp on the death of Cecil in 1896. Mountiford died in 1914. Marian was the niece of Fredrick St Clair Hobson (maternal uncle) and his wife May Vandeleur Westropp. She lived with them in 'Lanahrone' Corbally, Limerick, with her cousin Maud Emily St Clair Hobson. Marian married Oswald Beddal Sanderson, Royal Irish Dragoon Guards in 1917. (Oswald b. 3 Jan 1863, d. 25 Dec 1936) and divorced him in 1927.

Woods



Shed factory.

HARTSTONGE STREET

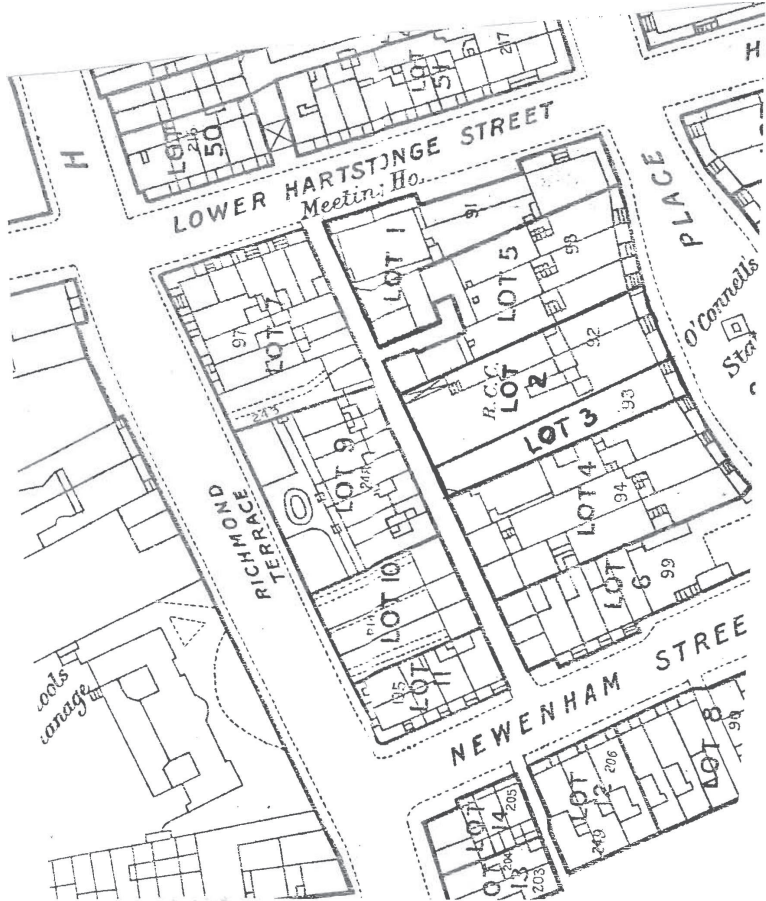
LANE

Scale: 1/8" = 1 Inch to Overall Foot.

J. C. HANNAY & Co.
7, Cecil St.
Limerick

LOT 1.

Nos. on Map	DENOMINATIONS	Grantees' and Lessees' Names	Gale Days	Yearly Rent	TENURE	OBSERVATIONS
Map No. 1 91	1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 Hartstonge-street ...	Charles Burton Newenham	25th March and 29th Sept.	£ s. d. 29 9 2	Fee-farm Grant, dated 20th March, 1853, made between William Henry Tommison, Earl of Limerick, of the one part, and Charles Burton Newenham of the other part, in conversion of a Renewable Lease, dated 1st April, 1804, from Edmund Henry, Earl of Limerick, to Robert O'Callaghan Newenham.	The rent set out in the Rent Column is an adjusted rent. The Landlord's part of the Fee-farm Grant and of the Original Lease and such of the Renewals as are forthcoming will be handed to the Purchaser. This rent is paid by Mr. James Weply, of O'Connell-street, Limerick, Agent for the Grantee.



The premises are described in the Grant as "All that lot of ground part of South Priors Land, in the South Liberties of the City of Limerick, marked No. 1 on a Map that day agreed upon and signed by the said Earl of Limerick and Robert O'Callaghan Newenham, containing in front to Richmond-place, George's-street, 26 feet, and from front to rear on one side 200 feet, be the same more or less, bounded on the South in front by Richmond-place, George's-street, on the East by Hartstonge-street, and on the West and North by lots of ground in the possession of the said Robert O'Callaghan Newenham, as described in said Map."

The Grantee covenants to keep in repair the premises and all houses, buildings and other improvements

Total, £29 9 2



Presbyterian Church, Henry Street, is built at a cost of €6.000



MICHAEL HOGAN — (The Bard of Thomond)
Born 1832 - Died 20th April, 1899

Irish Poet, Michael Hogan (1832-1899) , The Bard of Thomond, dies.



18/2/99

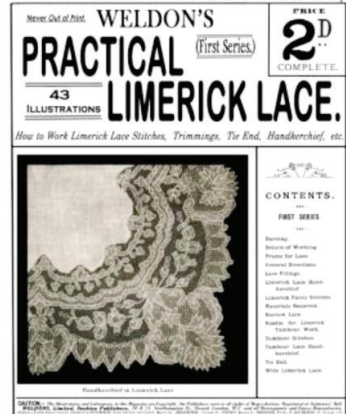
The **1899 elections** are the first local elections following the reorganisation of Irish local government under the Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898. John Daly (1845-1916) is elected Mayor of Limerick.

Limerick in 1899



Maud Gonne, on behalf of the Irish Transvaal Committee 1899, comes to the Athenaeum, Limerick to raise support for the Boers. She is awarded the Freedom of the City.

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