

Development of a Tenement experience at 14 Henrietta Street **Dublin 1**

In April 2014 the Government announced a National Investment package of £22 Million for infrastructural projects to mark the centenary of the 1916 uprising and other important Commemorative events. One of the projects approved was for the creation of a permanent Tenement Experience at Henrietta Street in Dublin City based on the very successful and popular “pop up” and temporary Tenement Museum which was created at this location during last year to celebrate the centenary of the **Workers Lock Out** of 1913.

This document sets out a heritage-led approach to the development of a facility that explores tenement life in North Georgian Dublin as transmitted by the social cultural and architectural significance of 14 Henrietta Street and North Georgian Dublin. The house will act as a focal point for a dynamic exploration of the rich and varied history of North Inner City Dublin: from its origins in the early 18th century and its eventual conversion to tenements, a period which lasted over 100 years.

No.14 Henrietta Street— Summary History

The tripartite history of Henrietta Street is rich in contrasts. First it was home to the 18th century patrician ruling class; then the legal learning in the 19th century; and ultimately and for almost 100 years by the residents of the tenements.

No 14 Henrietta Street

No.14 Henrietta Street was built before 1748 along with Nos. 13 and 15 as a single building campaign by Luke Gardiner. Along with No.3 these were the last houses to be constructed on Henrietta Street, which was laid out almost 20 years before in 1729. The architect is unknown. Each of the three houses was constructed to a similar design, internally and externally. The interior of No. 14 has a plan derived from 30 Old Burlington Street, London, which is more perfectly realised in No.9 Henrietta Street, built over 15 years earlier. No.14 was first occupied by Richard Viscount Molesworth (from 1748-1758) and subsequently by Lord Chancellor John Bowes (1759-1967).

Legal Learning

Following the enactment of the Act of Union in 1801, politically and socially significant residents were on the move. Although the face of Henrietta Street began to change forever at this time, unlike other terraces north of the river, the street did not immediately turn to tenements.

Instead, many of the houses were converted to offices for legal professionals or were converted to institutes of legal learning by Tristram Kennedy, a barrister with a vision of turning the entire street into such an institute. For 10 years No.14 was occupied by the Encumbered Estates Court (1850-1860) and subsequently for 13 years by the Dublin Militia.

Tenement Life

In 1883 No.14 became the first tenement on Henrietta Street. 17 families comprising 100 people are recorded in No.14 in the 1901 and 1911 Census. (No.14 remained a tenement until the 1970s.) By the 1890s, the legal profession had largely abandoned the street. Many of the houses on the street, including those owned by the estate of Tristram Kennedy, were bought up by Alderman Joseph M. Meade who divided the houses up into the maximum possible number of tenement rooms and Henrietta Street’s tenement history began in earnest. At the time of first census there were 141 families comprising 897 people living on the street.

From Georgian Life to Tenement Living –Proposal

The Proposal: From Georgian Life to Tenement Living

It is proposed to develop 14 Henrietta Street as a centre for the exploration of Georgian and Tenement Life in North Inner City Dublin.

The facility will incorporate a static (but ever evolving) digital exhibition, a living oral history initiative, a dedicated flexible space for temporary exhibition and a temporary training programme for conservation trade skills.

Between the building of this house as a single dwelling for a member of Dublin's patrician class, and its subdivision into a multiple occupancy tenement for some of its poorest citizens, the rooms at 14 Henrietta Street were decorated and redecorated by a succession of house owners and tenants in response to a variety of social practices and behaviours, consumer economies and circumstances. These stratified layers of house occupancy inform how we read, understand and interpret the contrasting fortunes of its many occupants over its 266 year history. 14 Henrietta Street is virtually unique in that it remains largely unchanged from its tenement days. It retains the distemper wall paint, layers of copper sulphate applied to the public areas as a disinfectant, peeling layers of wallpaper, historic graffiti, nail marks where possessions once hung on walls.

As there are no authentic artefacts to tell the story of the material period, the house itself, becomes the principal 'character' in any narratives developed. It and an immersive digital experience becomes the principal mode of telling of this story of Georgian and tenement life.

The facility will incorporate the following strands:

- * Immersive exhibition including a static permanent digital exhibition and smart phone/mobile tablet technology
- * Engaging and dynamic website
- * Dedicated multi-functional space for temporary exhibition and performance
- * Recording Living History Initiative (Oral History Project)
- * Public events programme, including talks, seminars, recitals on themes related to Georgian and Tenement Dublin
- * Tours of cultural and architectural history of North Georgian Dublin
- * Youth programme
- * Heritage trades programme in conjunction with DIT (for 3rd and 4th floors)

There will be scope to link the narrative proposed here at No.14 Henrietta Street with other emerging facilities under consideration at Moore Street and the GPO. Perhaps under a broader thematic structure that focuses on Dublin (and Ireland's) complex modern history, the struggle for Independence and on other aspects of the decade of centenaries.

This important project will be led by the Planning and Development Department of Dublin City Council with Charles Duggan Heritage Officer as the Project Co-ordinator working closely with the Arts and Culture Department in the context of its role on Commemorations generally. It is intended also to work closely with **The Trade Union Movement, the Irish Heritage Trust** and other relevant external stakeholders.

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