

# Council gives earl back his 'freedom'

■ Fourth Earl of Dunraven's descendants celebrate after honour removed over his support for conscription in 1918 is returned

By NORMA PRENDIVILLE

HE was a writer, an entrepreneur, an explorer who knew Buffalo Bill, a yachtsman, and a man who, in the course of his life, sat both in the House of Lords and in the Seanad. He was also the man who first proposed that St Patrick's Day be a public holiday.

But in the course of a long and colourful life, the Fourth Earl of Dunraven, Windham Thomas Wyndham-Quin, who died in 1926, had his share of controversy. He was the only person ever to be expunged from the list of those honoured as a Freeman of Limerick.

Happily, that situation has now been reversed. Limerick City Council earlier this year voted to restore the title of Freeman of Limerick to the fourth earl who had, in any case, always stoutly refused to return the box and parchment to the city.

The move, which came about through a happy combination of historians and politicians, was warmly welcomed by the earl's descendants who gathered in the home of the present earl, Thady Quin, last week to mark the event.

"We are delighted it has all been resolved," Lord Dunraven said. "We thank the city council and everybody involved."

Within the family, the expulsion in 1918 of their ancestor from the city's most signal roll of honour was not forgotten, Lord Dunraven explained. But he continued: "We understood why it happened. It was a very troubled time in this country. It was a very turbulent time. One quite understood the reasons."

He described the fourth earl, whom he never knew as "a bit of a character".

The Knight of Glin, Desmond FitzGerald, is a great-grandson of the fourth earl and joined his cousins, Lord Dunraven and Lord Meath in Adare to celebrate the restoration.

"He was an extraordinary polyglot, a great brain, a man of great political acumen, a patriot who was very keen on Ireland. He was very keen on devolution," said Mr FitzGerald.

His great-grandfather, he explained, was also a tremendous explorer who travelled extensively in America, where his guide was the legendary Buffalo Bill.

"He bought lands in Colorado and wrote a number of books about the Rockies," the Knight of Glin continued.

To this day, a number of places in North America

bear the Dunraven name. There is a Dunraven Lake, a Dunraven Pass and in Nova Scotia, there is a Dunraven Bog.

"He was very interested in spiritualism, like his father, and was a very good breeder of bloodstock," said Mr FitzGerald.

He also set up a tobacco factory in Adare where the Wild Geese restaurant is now located.

"He was a great navigator and sailor and competed twice for the America's Cup," he said.

The fourth earl's yachting, however, also led him into some controversy, the Knight explained. The first time his great-grandfather competed in the America's Cup, he brought two of his three daughters with him, the Knight's grandmother, Rachel, and his grand-aunt, Aileen. However, some problems arose, and the fourth earl accused another team of "removing ballast", and in protest resigned from New York Yacht Club.

"The belief now is that he was right in objecting," the Knight continued, adding that "it is all coming out now".

A two-volume history of the America's Cup has been published, and a third, which will be a pictorial record, will include paintings done by the Knight's grandmother.

Lord Dunraven added: "We are delighted at the interest that is being tak-

en in the America's Cup, and especially in the part the fourth earl played."

But last week's gathering was primarily about the resolution of the free-man controversy. The earl was first made a Freeman of Limerick on December 7, 1908, an unusual enough honour even at the time, given his background and the fact that he was a peer in the House of Lords, where in 1903 he proposed making St Patrick's Day a public holiday.

However, as historian Prof Liam Irwin pointed out, the earl had also been a member of the first Limerick County Council, where his experience of public affairs was of use and benefit to the fledgling local authority, and where he played a particularly good role on the finance committee.

"At the time he was made a Freeman of Limerick, he would have stood out. Most of them would have been nationalists. He was trying to find a solution really to the Irish question without completely breaking the link with Britain. His hope was that Ireland could get a measure of self-government," Prof Irwin explained.

But huge events followed that 1908 honour, the first world war, the setting up of The Volunteers, the 1916 Rising and in May, 1918, a vote was taken in Limerick City Council to "expunge"



Lord Dunraven at the reception in Kilgobbin House, Adare, to thank those who helped with the reinstating of the Freedom of Limerick to the fourth Earl of Dunraven, with Dr Matthew Potter, University of Limerick; Prof Liam Irwin, history department, Mary Immaculate College; Desmond FitzGerald, Knight of Glin; Cllr Kieran Walsh, deputy Mayor of Limerick; Lord Meath and Tadhg Moloney, secretary, Royal Munster Fusiliers Society

him from the roll of honour because of his support for conscription in Ireland.

It was a move which the earl strongly rebutted, claiming it was of dubious legality, but it was to be 89 years later before the matter was returned to again. Earlier this year, a trio of historians, Prof Irwin, Dr Matthew Potter of UL and Tadhg Moloney of the Munster Royal Fusiliers Association, opened discussions with Limerick City Council, and, in July, the councilors voted to restore the honour.

Cllr Gerry McLoughlin, who proposed the motion said, he was glad to do so.

"I think it was important," he said. The view of most councillors, he said at the time, was that "times have moved on."

"Lord Dunraven was a unionist, but a southern unionist. It was time for us to show that we could respect the views of different people. Plus, it had

to be recognised that the Dunraven family have done so much for Limerick throughout the years," Cllr McLoughlin told the Limerick Leader at the time.

Among the actions of the fourth earl were a donation of £500 for scholarships in Limerick city, and he also contributed £25 towards Ambrose Hall's collection for the erection of a statue to commemorate Patrick Sarsfield.

"I felt he was done an

injustice. He was entitled to his freedom of speech as an alderman, Mr Moloney added.

From a military history point of view, Mr Moloney also explained, the earl was honorary colonel of the 5th battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers.

"He had been in the Lifeguards regiment himself. He served in the first world war, though not as a combatant. He would have been too old. But he was a yachtsman, and he

used his boat to ferry injured soldiers. He also opened up the manor and charged admission and used that money to buy comforts for the soldiers at the front."

The fourth earl, who is buried in Adare, was the author of a number of books, including *The Theory and Practice of Navigation*, *The Great Divide*, *The Outlook in Ireland*, and two volumes of autobiography entitled *Past-times* and *Past Times*.

## Award-winning UL graduates have designed on the future

By ANNE SHERIDAN

UL graduate Kate Corish from Raheen took third prize in the Dyson Student Design Awards. Another UL graduate, Marion Barry from Newcastle West, came second.

Ms Barry developed an indoor children's exercise toy aimed at combating child obesity; Ms Corish designed a manual handling device for

and invented a manual handling device in the shape of an A-frame jig that enables a single user to lift, carry and manoeuvre sheets that are otherwise almost unmanageable alone.

Ms Barry is working for Tidi solutions, in Shannon, where she is involved in the design of a women's range of products, including a hair straightener pouch and handbag organiser.



## E-Towns 'important for quality of life'

By OWEN RYAN

THE development of rural areas is important for business and people's quality of life, according to Shannon Development.

At the development organisation's National E-Towns conference in Tarbert, its chief executive, Kevin Thompstone, said that its E-Towns initiative could deliver significant benefits.

"In coming up with the E-Towns concept, Shannon Development's objective has been to provide

Towns initiative provides a template that can be used for the development of smaller communities in any location in Ireland.

"Over the last few years, we have been involved in developing the concept and in preparing the foundations for E-Towns projects. This has involved working closely with local authorities and local communities in the areas of town planning, broadband access and training," he said.

Work on Ireland's first

Mr Thompstone said the scheme will come to Tarbert next.

"We were delighted to announce recently that we had lodged a planning application for full planning permission for the development of our second E-Towns project, consisting of eight life/work houses on a 1.3 acre site on Ferry Road. Our application for planning permission, if successful, will allow construction work on the €2m Tarbert E-Towns project to commence early next year."