

Liberties stories told in new book

A DUBLIN artist has written a new book that recounts some fascinating stories about one of the Southside's most well known social housing flat complexes.

Chris Reid (48) has written 'Heirlooms and Hand-me-downs - Stories from Nicholas Street, Bride Street, Bride Road and the Rosser'.

The book is a history of the last 100 years as told through the memories of current and former residents of a small corner of the Lib-

by Jamie Deasy

erties situated roughly between Christchurch and St Patrick's cathedrals.

The early 20th century, three and four storey flats on Nicholas Street, Bride Street, Bride Road, and Ross Road

were earmarked for demolition in the 1990s. But the buildings were eventually retained because they were considered to be part of the city's architectural heritage.

The flats are currently in the ownership of Dublin City Council, which leases them out as social housing units. Many of those who still live there are directly descended from the families who first moved into the buildings when they were constructed in 1905.

The book is based mostly on audio recordings that Mr Reid made with over 40 people who agreed to participate in the project by telling their stories and the stories of their family members and other former residents of the flats.

The book originated from a Dublin City Public Art commission whereby Mr Reid selected 20 stories from the recordings and cast them as bronze texts in the form of heritage plaques and affixed them

to several walls at the flat complex.

Mr Reid said the book contains many interesting stories of former residents' lives, which were linked to major historical events such as the two world wars and other tales from the period surrounding the struggle for Irish Independence in the early 20th century.

"I found there were a lot of stories of men joining the British Army in the First World War and their sons who fought in the Second World War," he recalled.

"There is a story that features Bridie Halpin who was in the female arm of the IRA known as Cumann na mBan. The details regarding what she did are unclear because she never spoke about them. She was in Kilmainham Jail for a time and then the North Union Prison which is in Grangegorman.

"Eventually she left the prison and emigrated to the US where she worked in the Pierre Hotel in New York for 40 years. She seemed to live a very conventional life but when she died her relatives found her papers in a suitcase regarding her time spent in Cumann na mBan."

In addition, Mr Reid said the book also contained stories of personal testimonies about the poverty and overcrowding that was prevalent in the area in the early and

mid-20th century.

"A well-known publican in the area who grew up on Ross Road described the poverty. When he was a kid he wouldn't have pocket money or anything like that so they would chop up wood from old buildings and sell it in town.

"People wouldn't have had the type of running water that we are familiar with today. Some of the flats would have been considered quite modern in their time but they wouldn't have had any hot water.

"Some people remembered going to the Iveagh Baths to wash.

"There were also a huge number of children in the flats and you might have 10 kids in one room and a granny in another room and parents somewhere in between."

The book can be purchased for €17.50 from Eason's on O'Connell Street; Hodges and Figgis on Dawson Street; Book Upstairs on College Green; The Winding Stair Book Shop on Ormond Quay and the IMMA Bookshop at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Kilmainham.

Anyone who wishes to order a copy can also email artsoffice@dublincity.ie

To learn more about the book or Mr Reid log on to <http://www.chrisreidartist.com>.



● Pictured at the launch of 'Heirlooms & Hand-me-downs' are (from left) Marie Redmond, Sean Redmond, Irene Redmond and Fergus Redmond who all appear as children in the photo on the cover that was taken in the 1940s. Chris Reid, the author, is holding up the book in the foreground. Photo by Johnny Banbury