

## Reid strikes a chord with locals



LOCAL PROJECT: Author Chris Reid, Masie McCarn-Redmond, Irene McWilliams-Redmond, Sean Redmond, Eurgus Redmond

### Sean Duffy

'Heirlooms and Hand-me downs' is the final part in a publicly funded art project which charts the experiences of individual residents on Nicholas Street, Bride Street, Ross Road, and Bride Road. The book is based on edited transcripts of interviews with people who lived in the flats in the past.

#### Plaques

Liberties residents will already be familiar with the plaques bearing quotes from past and present which have been inscribed on plaques outside the flats since 2008. Each plaque provides a snapshot of the

past, the recollections of an inhabitant, each holding its own deeply personal memory about the area. The plaques give the area its own unique voice - stories from generations past and present echoing into the future. The book 'Heirlooms and Hand me Downs' provides a detailed account of those recollections.

Chris Reid, the artist behind the project, was commissioned under the 'Percent for Art Scheme' in conjunction with Dublin City Council and Create, the agency responsible for developing collaborative proj-

ects in Ireland.

Reid has spent a number of years collecting material from local residents. While the accounts are from individuals, the triumph of Reid's work has been to mould a social history of the area through different eras, told through the authentic voice of Liberty's residents.

#### Respect

Reid says it was important from the outset to be mindful of the possible sensitivities involved. "Of course you have to try and tell people what you are doing. You have to respect people's reservations and

try to give them an understanding of what you are trying to achieve. Then you can begin you can then establish a relationship."

Reid has since found a much greater understanding of the area, its people and the culture. "Going back, what was striking was the sense of community that people felt. The older generation would certainly have explained about how people would have helped each other out through the years. Maybe that sense isn't as strong as it once was, but then in years gone by people probably had to endure poverty which isn't as harsh today."

What also struck a chord with the artist was the strong affiliations and friendships formed by people in the area over the years.

"Though I have lived in the city centre for the past 22 years myself, I come from a suburban upbringing. Coming from that kind of background I think you can miss that sense of closeness that people in the area here have. It was very interesting to see the bond that people have with the place. Even after they moved away, either to some other part of the city or if they moved abroad, they still maintained their links with people they knew," Reid adds.

#### Community

Although reluctant to talk about a legacy for his work, he does at least hope that the community itself has gained from the project. "I think it gives value and a sense of importance to the people and the place. Many people have left the area but the stories will always be there on those plaques as a reminder."