

# WOOD QUAY NEWS



## IT'S OVER TO YOU, JACK

In the long run the funds to re-locate the office and develop the Wood Quay site properly come from central government.

The electorate have given their verdict, now it's up to the government to respond. Wake up Jack and George, let's have this long awaited decision.

## 20 GLORIOUS DAYS

"Peace! We come in peaceful protest" said F. X. Martin, O.S.A., to the astonished doorman as he entered Wood Quay on Friday June 1. The protest was against the laying of concrete and the digging of foundations for tower blocks at a time when the Corporation Council had asked the City Manager to enter into negotiations with the contractor. It was a protest for the rights of democracy against the inertia of bureaucracy, for the wishes of the citizens of Dublin against the wishes of the Corporation. These wishes were clearly shown by the voters during the protest. Paddy Belton, Ray Fay, Lauri Corcoran and Sean Kelly are gone. A new Council, pro- Wood Quay has been elected. Three weeks of no destruction, and time for the Council to consider its views were gained by the protest.

The personal request made by the new Lord Mayor William Cumiskey to John Paul & Co. to stop building work on the National Monument together with his visit to the site and that of the City Councillors and Aldermen shows the willingness of the Council to not only agree with but take on the responsibilities and sentiments of the protestors.

This twenty-day protest both in its personalities, execution and success was unprecedented. Although the Supreme Court has found against the protestors, Wood Quay will be saved.



*Black Raven, symbol of Odin, hovering over Wood Quay.*

## THE HIGH COURT

As a result of a temporary injunction which was granted by Mr. Justice Hamilton on the 13th June, the "Wood Quay 9", i.e. the nine members of the occupying group who were named in the document, appeared at the High Court on Monday the 18th June. The atmosphere in the packed courtroom was tense as Mr. Justice Gannon opened the proceedings. Sworn statements from both parties were presented and Mr. Francis P. Murphy S.C. (for the construction company) began by outlining the reason why he proposed that an injunction should be granted. Other affidavits were sworn by F. X. Martin and two others of the '9'. were read. Significantly, an affidavit of the representatives of the Fine Gael and Labour groups, namely Councillors Alexis FitzGerald and Dan Browne outlined their belief that a City Council motion preventing further destruction of the National Monument was imminent and that it would have majority support on the new City Council. Fr. Martin pointed out in his affidavit that the City Council

meeting of May 4th had already requested that the City Manager renegotiate the contract in order to preserve the national monument site at Wood Quay.

Mr. Justice Gannon having considered the elements of the case delivered his verdict. He identified two main aspects of the case (a) the trespass for which he deemed a High Court Injunction inappropriate; (b) the contract between the Corporation and the construction company. He argued that it was a pity that the parties should seek to use the courts as an instrument for 'jousting'. He referred to the matter of trespass and he deemed that this was not a sufficient reason for continuing the injunction.

Messengers were sent to the site as soon as the verdict was known and a notice was put outside the front gate which read 'Injunction removed, justice has been done'.

When F. X. Martin arrived he received a hero's welcome and was greeted at the site by clapping, cheering and an impromptu rendering of the Wood Quay ballad. He immediately declared that the occupation was still on.



*Better days: Viking structures under scientific excavation, January 1979.*

### WOOD QUAY – A CROCK OF GOLD

The blatant destruction of our National Heritage here in Wood Quay would indicate that we are a Nation without a soul. This argument that this destruction is justified in economic terms would indicate that we are short in brains as well. The only survey / study of the economic / tourism potential of the site – carried out for the Irish Hotels Federation eighteen months ago – concluded that the site if properly investigated, preserved and presented, would make an important contribution to Irish tourism; that its worth in terms of the Scandinavian tourist market alone would be in the region of £4 million per annum to Dublin City in bringing in an additional 10,000 tourists to the city. Every 16 additional tourists according to Bord Failte created one new job. This was an independent and highly professional study.

There were conservative and guarded conclusions. But it is not unreasonable to deduce that the site is worth at least £20,000,000 in capital terms assuming that it generates a spin-off cash flow of £4 million. In simple English it is worth £20 million as a National Asset, and could create an additional 1,000 jobs in tourism and allied industries – based on its attractiveness to northern Europeans alone. It is not only an important part of our heritage, it is also a “Crock of Gold”, and it is being destroyed in the name of economic progress. If this is economic progress – God help Ireland! A great part of this cultural and economic “windfall” is still capable of being preserved – if sanity can yet prevail and Dublin Civic Offices are re-located on a more appropriate site.

*D. A. Walsh, Hotelier*

### A VISION OF WHAT SHOULD BE

After spending 15 days living, eating and sleeping at Wood Quay a mental picture has emerged of what it could, and should be like when the Civic Offices are moved.

#### EXCAVATION / PRESERVATION

There are still several unexcavated areas around the site in addition to the half excavated ‘Fishamble Street strip’ and these should be explored and excavated, and sections preserved. This can be done – the net result would be an archaeological park showing first hand the sites of Viking/medieval houses, paths, gardens of early Dublin.

#### RECONSTRUCTION

Alongside this a variety of houses and structures should be built to demonstrate at first hand what living conditions were like 1,000 years ago. This has been done elsewhere with great success (the Crannog dwellings near Shannon are an example).

#### MUSEUM

A Heritage museum should be built – this building would have to be low-rise and designed with great skill to harmonise with the cathedral and sit naturally into the landscaped hill. The thousands of early tools, vessels, and ornaments found at Wood Quay would be displayed, and in addition it would act as a much needed major extension to the National Museum. This would incorporate exciting modern display methods, such as life-size living situations showing models of early Dubliners at work, play and rest – with film and sound effects added. (A cinema and lecture theatre would be included where school groups would learn the history of their own city, an important social function if vandalism is to be eliminated.

#### HOUSES

Town houses, built of brick, and terraced up the hill on both sides of Winetavern Street could be built. This would fit into the Government’s declared policy of inner city renewal.

#### ENTERTAINMENT

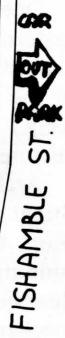
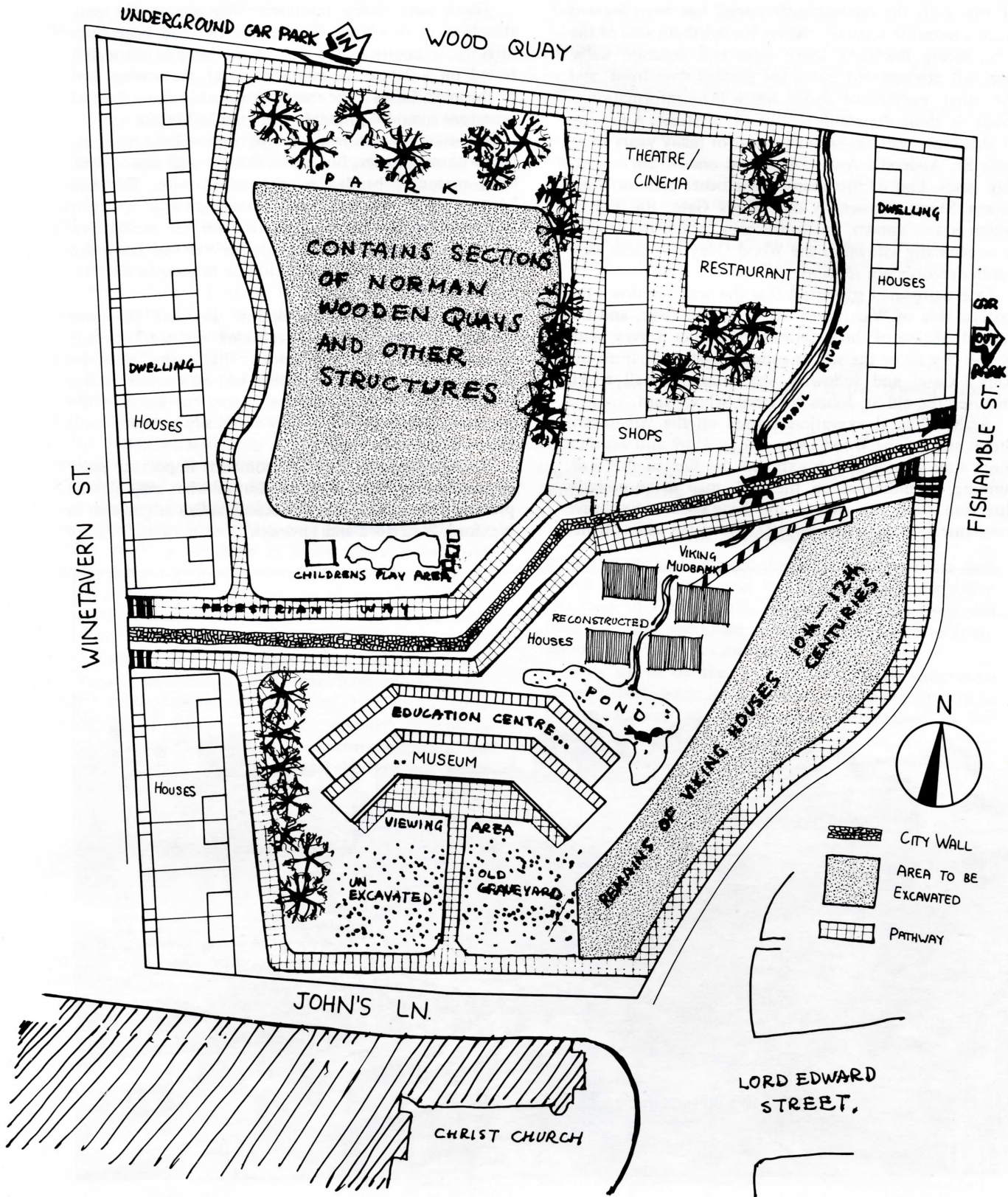
As this proposal would attract thousands of tourists to the Christchurch area it would make sense to incorporate a restaurant, pub and even a small theatre which would ensure that the investment in the complex was recoverable over most of the day and night.

#### THE CATHEDRAL

I am reminded of a visit to Edinburgh where the Castle dominates the skyline and a park rolls down the hill to the main street – and provides a green area for citizens and at the same time major tourist revenue to the city. Wood Quay could be developed like this, with the great added bonus of providing Dubliners with tangible evidence of the birth of their own much loved and painfully abused city.

*Michael O’Brien*

# A Plan for Wood Quay



## 900 YEARS OLD

Throughout the early records of the Corporation of Dublin there are many references to the defences and walls of the city. These have been studied in association with the visible remains, and as a result the position of the walls throughout their circuit has been located with reasonable accuracy. Along the northern side of the city, facing the river there were two separate walls, one, well documented along the present river-front, and the other, earlier one about which little information is available along the south side of Cook Street. A portion of this inner wall has been exposed for many years along with St. Audeon's Arch, which was one of the original city gates. East of this there was another gate on Wine-tavern Street, known as the King's Gate, the site of which is also known, but in the area further to the east, now generally known as the Wood Quay site there were neither records nor remains.

One writer had suggested that the wall ran down the eastern side of Wine-tavern Street to the river, and the earliest edition of the large-scale Ordnance Survey maps of the city show the site as running eastwards from the King's Gate, and following the retaining wall which enclosed the old St. Johns National School yard.

Archaeological excavation started on the Wine-tavern Street side of the Wood Quay site in 1969 and within a short time a trial trench exposed the line of the wall, running, as indicated on the O.S. map in an easterly direction from the site of the King's Gate. Extensive mechanical excavation in 1973 revealed the further

extension of this wall, running, not in a straight line, but bending first to the north east, and then to the east.

Further archaeological excavation over the following few years exposed both the front and back faces of the wall, and indicated by the stratified material piled against the inner face that it had been built before the Norman Invasion of 1169. This was the first time that any evidence had been found to suggest the earliest dating or origin of the city walls.

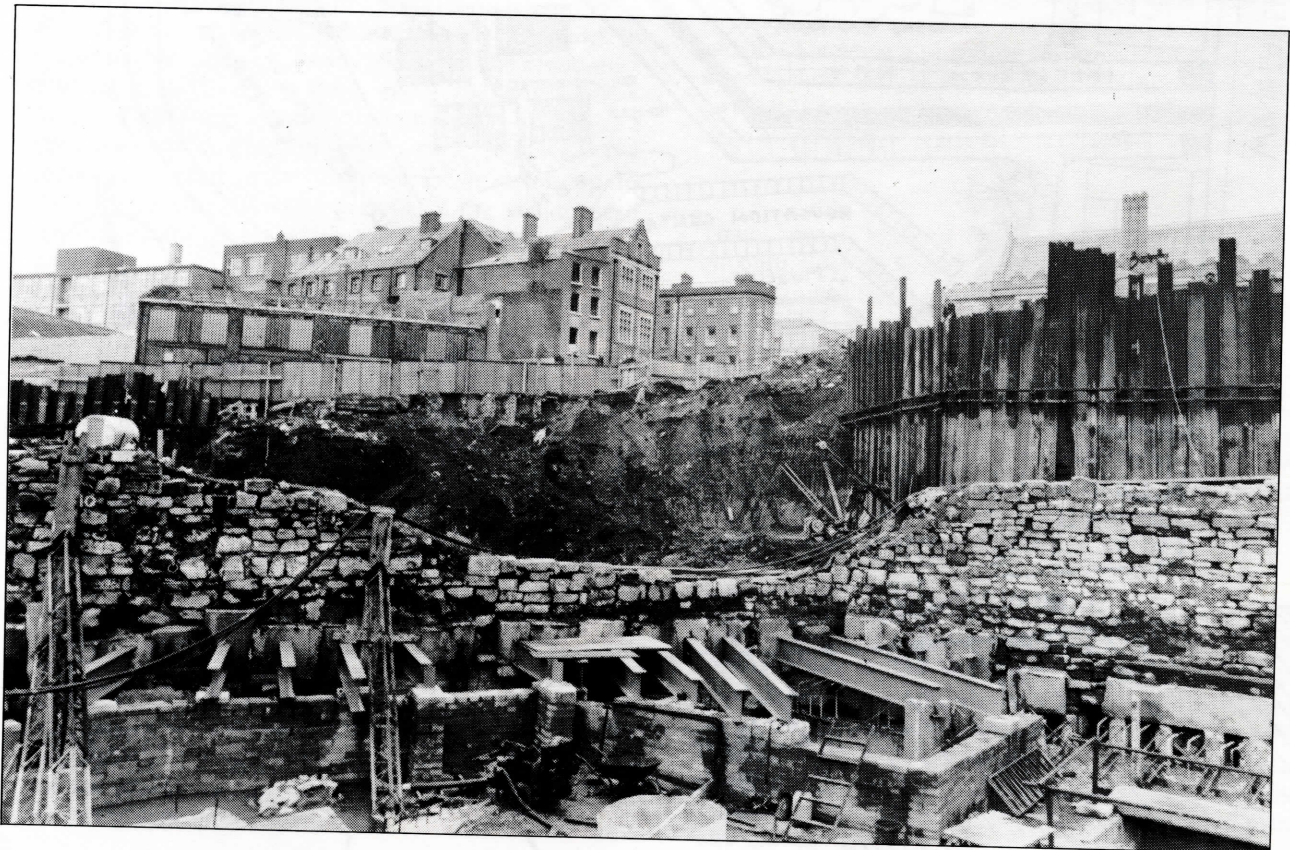
There were many interesting features in the construction of this wall. The eastern end had been built directly on bedrock, but west of the bend in the wall it rested on a deposit of compact gravel, the original bed of the river Liffey. The masonry was of hammer dressed limestone quarried probably from the bed of the river.

The first few courses were of large blocks of stone laid without mortar, but above this the wall was of well-built masonry, bedded in a strong mortar. This had become much weathered on the outside face where it was exposed to the elements, but on the inside face where it had been protected by an earthen ramp the mortar was in as good condition as it was the day the wall was built.

The standard of construction was not the same throughout, and generally speaking the workmanship at the western end was superior to that of the remainder of the wall, and was of rubble laid to courses with a number of offsets on the inner face, but some of the masonry at the eastern end was extremely poor and built of rounded beach stones.

The information derived from this important piece of wall may well be an indication of what may also be preserved at other centres of Scandinavian origin such as Wexford, Waterford and Limerick.

*Paddy Healy*



*The destruction of the oldest town wall in Ireland.*

## PRESERVING THE STRUCTURES: WOOD QUAY

Since 1977 the opinion has been offered on a number of occasions that it would be impossible to preserve the remains of structures *in situ* or at all because of the manner in which they were built. Foremost in expressing this view has been Etienne Rynne, Professor of Archaeology at Galway, and it has been adopted enthusiastically by Dublin Corporation as another attempt to justify their destruction of the National Monument.

In archaeological work, organic materials, wood, fabric, leather etc., present special problems. Once excavated from the ground where they lie, they begin to deteriorate within a matter of hours. This is a matter of great importance where Wood Quay is concerned because the preservation of organic material is particularly good due to the waterlogged conditions which present many of the bacterial causes of the decay. The danger occurs when an object is allowed to start to dry as this leads to shrinkage, distortion and ultimately a reduction in powder.

When organic material is recovered from waterlogged conditions it is possible to preserve it with immediate treatment by means of the well-known techniques which are available for different materials. Where timber is concerned, one method of treatment consists of immersing the wood in a solution of a plastic wax. This wax soaks into the timber and replaces the water in the fibres so that they are no longer in danger of collapsing when the material is dried. Even large pieces of timber can be treated in this way, and already planks originally used for ship-building in the 13th century have been taken from Wood Quay and preserved in this way.

The problem we have in Wood Quay is two-fold. Firstly, what structures to preserve, and secondly the specific method to employ when working on the structure *in situ*. The first problem is one of selection. However, since many archaeologists feel they should leave some portion of their site sealed and unexcavated for future generations who may have more sophisticated methods available to them, this would mean leaving Wood Quay a carefully selected system of terraces containing conserved structure showing the development of the settlement, and the type and layout of the dwellings and workshops which the excavators find at different levels.

The question of how to preserve the selected structures *in situ* is not as difficult as it would seem. Much thought and research has been applied to the problems of waterlogged wood, and a major international conference at Neah Bay, Washington, U.S.A. in 1976 correlated and considered the various methods available and published their results. Problems of a somewhat similar nature to Wood Quay have been faced in excavation in Poland and, more importantly, solved. The major difficulty in this regard is the fact that the Wood Quay structures are of post and wattle, and consequently of a delicate nature. However, we now find ourselves in the position not only of having some of the finest extant remains of these structures outside Scandinavia, but the prospect of leading research into the archaeological and conservation problems which they present.

*Damian MacGarry*

## BALLAD OF WOOD QUAY

What did I have said the bould Paddy Belton,  
What did I have the old Lord Mayor did say.  
I had four office blocks, each one was a folly,  
But the Friends they came and tried to take them from me.  
But John Paul's men, they fought to save my follies,  
They fought and they tried to block Christchurch said he.

On June the first, said the bould Paddy Belton,  
The Friends moved in and occupied the site,  
And the first thing I did was blame that F.X. Martin,  
He mobilized his troops, they overtook the machines,  
MacWilliams was shocked, the workmen they reacted,  
But no drenchings or pranks could move them from their posts.

What have I now said the bould Paddy Belton,  
A string of pubs but no council seat have I,  
And those idle cranes, they drive me to distraction,  
These four office blocks would be my monuments.  
But due to the Friends I can't leave my mark on Dublin,  
They've overthrown me and now will save Wood Quay.

*Air: Four Green Fields.*

## A FORTNIGHT

At 7.05 a.m. Friday the 14th an announcement was made from the central tower, i.e. the cement mixer, celebrating the fact that the Occupation had now lasted for two weeks. This was greeted by a resounding cheer from the 'occupiers' who left their posts to head for the 'bunker' to partake of a curry that had been specially prepared to mark the occasion.

## SITRIC'S SWIMMING POOL

In a spot wedged between the old city wall and the cliff, which is a towering steel face holding back the soil at the base of Christchurch. A huge hole has been dug here and the workmen were pouring concrete foundations here when we moved in.

Now we sit by the 'lake' which is flood water now about 6 feet deep. Several of the occupiers have been swimming and are now sunning themselves in the evening heat while we wait for the call for our tea. The 'bunker' staff have been busy and we look forward to our meat salad.

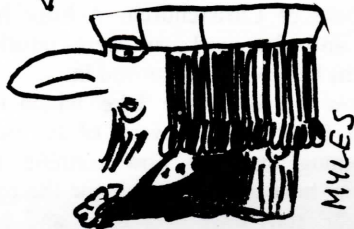
When the sun shines even a hole in the ground at Wood Quay is pleasant.

*Michael O'Brien*



*Oblivious to rain, an occupier looks on.*

## A THOUSAND YEARS



Tuesday, June 5th, I arrived at 7 a.m. with Ben Kiely and Sean White (who had marshalled us) to join in the last ditch battle for Wood Quay. What exactly could we do? Wasn't it too late to do anything? F. X. Martin and Friends didn't think so, nor did Mary Lavin, nor Tom Kinsella, poet. When the men broke in at last and tried to work they didn't seem to be worried that many machines were already occupied by Medieval Friends. I suppose they were confident that you can make machines obey you like dogs if you know them well enough; they knew them better than we did. So one way or another a big dumper around which Leo Swann had ordered us to gather was started up by a clever fellow in a blue helmet who pulled the reverse gear. So what now? So James Plunkett stepped instantly behind it – it was his city and machines like these had already reduced it to ruins, and they were about to manhandle a thousand years of history now. I moved into the space beside Jimmy in the churned limestone rubble and I don't think it occurred to either of us that two or three tons of technology might be reversed on top of us. It wasn't of course. Cursing, the man switched off and younger men in blue helmets cursed too, calling us layabouts who only wanted to stop other people working. Sean D. Dublin Bay Rockall Loftus shouted above the restarted engine about getting an injunction, and the foreman shouted back.

Friday June 8th was a day of squally rain and sunbursts, it was all different. The angry voices of those workers had been (with the exception of Derry Foreman, Ben Kiely had greeted like a neighbour) Dublin voices. This wilful city of savage dreamers so old so sick with memories, was their city too, and some of them smiled when we cheered Belton's defeat. And I like to remember that nice quiet man who chatted on the step of the machine – to me in occupation of it – about taking his children to the museum on Saturday mornings, about liking old things and old places himself. I asked him if he'd seen the toy boat a Viking father from this very place had carved for his son maybe one long winter's night by dim rushlight, and he said he'd like to see that and show it to his children maybe, and he'd be just as pleased himself if he and his mates could get on with building the Corpo offices some place else.

*Val Mulhern*



Strengthening the barricade. Wood Quay redefended after 900 years by (left to right) Seamus O'Reilly, Bride Rosney, Sean O'Maonaigh, Michael O'Brien, Leo Swan, John Gallagher, Aidan Dunne, Prof. F. X. Martin, Mary Lavin, Oisín Kelly, Sr. Benvenuta MacCurtain, Ald. Kevin Byrne, Michael O'Leary, T.D., Sen. Gemma Hussey, Richard Haworth, Ald. Alexis FitzGerald, Tom Kinsella, Donal Nevin and Denis Larkin.

OPEN LETTER TO HIS EXCELLENCY,  
DR. PATRICK HILARY,  
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

Dublin, Tuesday, 12 June, 1979

"Monsieur le Président  
Je vous fait une letter  
Que vous lirez peut-être  
Si vous avez le temps"

Boris Vian (1920-59)

Your Excellency,

On continental Europe and in my native France, any person may appeal to their head of state as a final resort in case of serious public or private controversy. It has been found that this appeal is looked at favourably and sympathetically and I, therefore, approach you as President of Ireland and as former Member of the Commission of the European Communities to intervene on behalf of the people of Ireland and Europe to save Wood Quay.

This is of special importance since Ireland will assume the Presidency of the Council of the EEC from July of this year. Further, you will recall that, when you were in Brussels, the Nine adopted (in 1973) the first joint action programme on the environment presented by the European Commission.

A second programme was subsequently drawn up for the period 1977-81. In Section 3, under the title: "Conservation of ancient monuments and areas of special natural interest", it says: "Our architectural and natural heritage is a 'non-renewable' resource of the Community... Owing to change, our heritage is at present seriously threatened with deterioration and even destruction." On May 13, 1974, the European Parliament passed a resolution (O.J.62 or 30/5/1974) on the safeguarding of Europe's cultural heritage and recommended Community action in this field; in particular, the establishment of a European Fund for ancient monuments and historic architecture and natural sites of special interest.

The image and impressions of Dublin and Ireland which I shall bring with me on my return to the Continent will depend greatly on the outcome of the Wood Quay situation. If Wood Quay is a lost cause, I do not think I would wish to return to Dublin. I feel the destruction of Wood Quay would be an unfortunate archaeological and environmental precedent, and a significant dismissal of public opinion and of the democratic processes of this country.

Yours faithfully,  
Annie Pedersen

(former trainee of the European Communities, 1975)  
Department of French, University College Dublin

## THE WIDER IMPLICATIONS OF WOOD QUAY

Now that the massive canvass by the Woodquayites against the destroyers of Wood Quay who were presenting themselves for election has paid off so handsomely the realisation that the most painful place you can kick a politician is in the ballot box will be more fully realised. The virtual wipe out of those candidates virulently opposed to the conservation of Wood Quay, the Lord Mayor Paddy Belton, Ray Fay, etc., etc., has shown that the power is still with the people.

It is obvious that the significant shift of votes to Sean Dublin Bay Loftus - 11% - on a platform of concern for environmental issues must worry all the leading parties. Comments by Seamus Brennan and Garret FitzGerald on election night TV pointed out this 'worrying' development for the parties.

No doubt when the Carnsore Nuclear issues goes 'critical' a similar approach both locally and nationally might well show a dramatic turnaround of party attitudes.

Aside from the direct political implications of the 'clean out' at City Hall, what Wood Quay has done is to increase the national awareness of conservation issues right across the board. Suddenly there is an increased interest in and concern for wildlife, woodlands, historic buildings and hitherto neglected archaeological remains. All the conservation bodies, An Taisce (The National Trust), the Georgian Society, The Irish Wildbird Conservancy, The Wildlife Federation, are all getting increased responses from the spill-over effect of the activities of the Friends of Wood Quay. And this is not merely a Dublin based response: Wood Quay has demonstrated that fight across the country, from Donegal to Wexford, from Achill to Arklow, from Dursey to Dundalk, there are people, young and old - but more especially young, who CARE. Care, not merely about the destruction of one of the most important parts of our historical heritage, but also care about the destruction of our coastline, care about the increasing level of personal greed seen in the legal raping of our salmon stocks, by the indiscriminate snaring of badgers in the hunt for the suddenly valuable fox pelts, and care for the disappearance of road scapes lined with ancient trees in order to increase our level of 'gas guzzling'. They are reacting in larger numbers against the rampant me-feinism, the "I'm all right Jack" attitude which says if its in the way, knock it down or plough it up, which is to be seen increasingly throughout the country.

The Wood Quay Campaign and Occupation is a classic example of a community's frustration at not merely a national, but also an international, value being ignored politically and desecrated physically. The reaction to that will continue to be forcibly pointed out at the ballot box and on the streets in the years to come.

The Wood Quay Campaign waged so steadfastly and courageously by the Friends of Medieval Dublin has lit a torch which has illuminated the dark corners of our cultural chauvinism. It has shown that the way to that basic human right of a quality environment is something that one has to be prepared to fight for.

Fergus O'Gorman



## THE WOOD QUAY NINE

After 13 days of occupation the builder John Paul was granted an injunction in the High Court against nine of the many people living on the site – why the particular names were chosen is any man's guess.

The nine were: F. X. Martin, Professor of Medieval History at U.C.D., Bride Rosney, Educationalist, Paddy Healy, surveyor, (11 years working in Dublin archaeology), Michael O'Brien, publisher and artist, Richard Haworth, librarian and archaeologist, John Gallagher, organiser of Liberties Information Centre, Seamus O'Reilly, mechanical engineer, Leo Swan, headmaster and archaeologist, and Seamus Kelly, university tutor.

Immediately the nine consulted with their legal team and thrashed out the implications of the injunction.

The election results demonstrated conclusively that the people of Dublin want Wood Quay preserved and the Civic Offices re-located. However, even though there is now a 'pro-Wood Quay' majority on the Council it will be some days before an effective motion can be put down. The seven believe that in effect they are preventing the destruction of the National Monument by holding off the builders until the City Council instructs the manager to say STOP.

## LOUD AND CLEAR

There is a medieval saying – "All perfect things come in three". So it was last Monday, 18 June.

First, there was the High Court case which began early in the afternoon. When Judge Sean Gannon rose at 3.15 p.m. we had the result – the injunction against the Wood Quay occupiers was lifted.

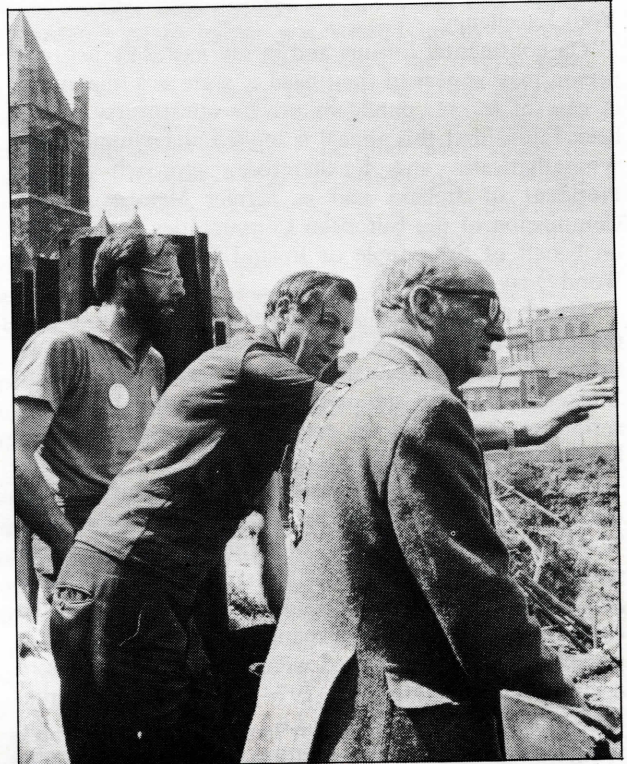
Secondly, that evening, the new Dublin City Council met for the first time and the first item on the agenda was the election of a Lord Mayor, William Cumiskey. Once installed he quickly came to the point of central public interest – Wood Quay, and declared that he was requesting that all construction work cease, and that at the first opportunity the Council would see how the National Monument site could be preserved. This, it was explained, could be done by withdrawal of the consent to destroy the National Monument by the Corporation. He had hardly finished his announcement when there was a spontaneous burst, a wave of applause from both councillors and from the public galleries. It was a most impressive and heartening evidence of the popular will.

## LORD MAYOR'S VISIT

The very first official visit of the new Lord Mayor, Mr. William Cumiskey was to the Wood Quay site on Tuesday 19th June. He was greeted with applause, and brought on a conducted tour by two of the occupying force. He was shown the excavations and the alternative plans for Wood Quay which are being drawn up on the site.

His visit is in marked contrast to the attitude of the previous Mayor P. Belton who has now retired to his £200,000 home in Howth.

We live in hope!



The new Lord Mayor of Dublin, William Cumiskey is given a guided tour of the Wood Quay site by archaeologists Paddy Healy and Richard Haworth.

Thirdly, the mayor announced later that night, during the reception at the Mansion House, that the following day he would go on an official visit to the Wood Quay site. A worthy start for a worthy Mayor!

The message is loud and clear for all to hear. Wood Quay is to be saved and cherished, for Dublin, for Ireland and for Europe.

F. X. Martin

# Dubline Medieval Trust

The Dublin Medieval Trust has been established to sponsor research into Viking and Medieval life in old Dublin. In particular its function is to cater for and encourage the excavation of historic sites that fall free as a result of development work.

I wish to become a member

YOU CAN HELP – JOIN NOW

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose £ \_\_\_\_\_ (minimum £1)  cheque  PO  cash

Send to: F. X. Martin, Medieval Dublin Trust,  
Bank of Ireland, College Green, Dublin 2.



**Title:** Wood Quay News, No. 3

**Date:** 1979

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