

The Heirlooms & Hand-me-downs public artwork features in the book 'The Liberties A History' by Maurice Curtis.

The following text can be found on pages 128-129.

. . . A number of plaques on the walls facing onto Nicholas Street give a fascinating insight and snapshot into the lives of some residents over the years.

A fascinating public artwork consisting of twenty-one bronze plaques on the walls of the Iveagh Trust Buildings at Patrick Street, Nicholas Street, Ross Road, Bride Street and Bride Road, was unveiled in 2009. Artist Chris Reid created the permanent public artwork that was commissioned through Dublin City Council's Public Art Programme, arising from the refurbishment of these buildings. The texts on the plaques are based on recordings the artist made from 2004 to 2008 with residents and people associated with the area.

According to Chris Reid:

These flats, which were due for demolition in the early 1990's, were saved on the grounds that they were considered to be a part of Dublin Cities architectural heritage. These flats are social housing and though many residents left after the refurbishment in the late 1990's some of those who remained are directly descended from the families that moved into the flats when they were originally built in 1905. Many other residents have families and connections living in the liberties for many generations.

However, he was of the view that the voices of these local people are generally not heard or included in the heritage of their area.

One plaque tells of a recovering drug addict who plans a new life for his family. In another, a man shares a joke through his first-floor window with curious bus tourists. Other plaques address hidden histories, and one speaks of the influence of the catholic church over family planning and its sometimes tragic repercussions. In another a woman recounts the changed behaviour and silence of returned British Army soldiers after the first and second world wars. Some plaques tell of everyday actions that have since been forgotten like the cooperation between women on each floor to keep the halls clean. Other plaques map social and physical aspects of the area that have since been transformed. One plaque lists venues where a woman in the 1940's danced and socialised – all of which have since disappeared. Altogether these plaques attempt to give historical significance to these local voices by making monuments to the ordinary.

On Nicholas Street, a plaque reads: 'The hill was steeper, the street narrower. The surface was all cobblestones. When winter weather made them freeze, horses struggled to climb. Sparks flew from their hooves.' And another on the Ross Road:

From the time I was born Moggy was there. I'd be swinging on the lamp post (or scutting the back of the coal lorry) and she'd be sitting there at the window her dog beside her, watching the kids and the people. She had six kids herself and she was left a young widow. She'd wash the dead or anything to earn a schilling to rear them and if she never had a schilling she was always in good form. She'd go around for a few glasses of stout at Corbett's and would come

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The Liberties

A HISTORY

MAURICE CURTIS