Severest rainstorm in living memory

THE biggest downpour in living memory occurred in Co. Limerick on August 11, 1946, and continued for more than 24 hours. The *Leader* correspondents were kept busy describing the havoc that was created by the downpour, in the following weekend edition.

"The floods couldn't have come at a worse time for many fields were laid out in hay, wheat and corn, much of which was ruined and swept away."

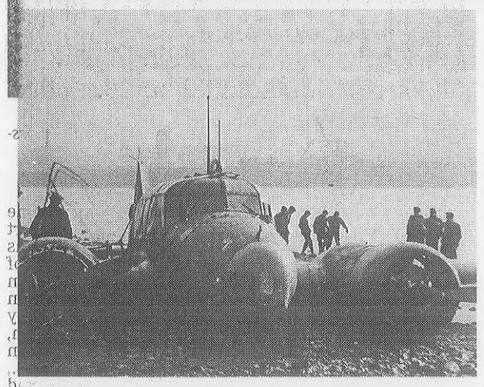
Roads were impassable and bridges damaged. At Colmanswell part of the bridge was damaged making the road impassable. Hundreds of homes were flooded and there are reports of livestock perishing. At Annagh four very courageous men rescued eight horses from drowning in a very dangerous operation. The monks of Glenstal had provided them with a boat which made the rescue possible."

In the midst of the catastrophe, the Croom Cor. graphically describing the floods, had a story with a happy ending:

"At Croom the flood in the Maigue had reached its high-water mark by 10 o'clock and a roaring, swirling, jostling, foaming mass of angy waters rolled relentlessly past, carrying floatsam of every kind on its heavy bosom. Many wynds of hay floated down with the flood, and onlookers were amazed to see a rabbit clinging desperately for life on one of them.

"As the wynd approached the bridge the mass of hay spun for a moment and then was sucked into the vortex which was formed by the waters racing through the almost choked up arch.

"The bunny's perch was too high, the top of the wynd decapitated, and it and the bunny were cast into the water. Tossed about among the speeding conflicting currents below the bridge, he struggled gamely and to the exceeding joy of the onlookers, made land some hundred yards further on."



The RAF Anson general purposes plane which crash-landed in the Shannon in 1946

Stringent times in Emergency

EARLY in 1941 the first effects of the war began to be felt in earnest here as essential commodities like flour, tea, coal, petrol, etc., which had to be imported, began to dry up and rationing was introduced.

From then on to the post-war years, a major activity was the pursuit, by fair means or on the black market, the above commodities plus cigarettes, bicycle tyres and dry batteries for radios. Tea and sugar were some of the scarcest and most sought after commodities and many novel ways of stretching out tea were devised. It proved the No. 1 purchase in the black market.

Despite these privations, people were more united than they had been for a long time and borrowing and returning of such things as cups of sugar from neighbours were the norm. Some of the wounds of the Civil War began to heal as the populace found common cause.

It was an extremely difficult time for transport, all private cars were eventually put off the road, and trains with great difficulty ran on turf. Even the humble bicycle was in trouble

The CIE fleet is blessed in the late 40s.

the coaching days of the last century.

The coach drew up at Cruise's Hotel, fittingly the Bianconi's original stopping place. The service proved a huge success with Dublin tourists also availing of the facility. The coaches, "The Shamrock" and "The Thomond" contributed greatly to lessening of transport difficulties, and gave work to a considerable number of local people. It closed down for the winter months and Lord

the next few years. There were many cases reported in court throughout the war, and afterwards, of black-marketing and heavy fines and even imprisonment were meted out to those found guilty.

Compulsory tillage was introduced and prosecutions followed for those who did not comply with the regulations with district judges berating those prosecuted for their lack of patriotism. "Till more, toil more" was the cry

receive their seeds and implements free and those who were in a position to do so would be asked to make a small donation.

The severe shortage of every kind of commodity was exemplified when it was proposed that due to a scarcity of leather, that members of Local Defence Forces be supplied with boots with timber soles. "All available supplies of leather must be preserved for the army. The army have

broke out in the country in 1941 and quickly spread to Co. Limerick with cows being slaughtered in several areas. Many sporting fixtures were cancelled in the efforts to contain the disease.

By 1942 restrictions on the amount of newsprint a paper could have had its effect here when the mid-week editions of the *Leader* were reduced from eight to five columns.

An irate shopkeeper

Reporting the war

THROUGH the six years of World War II the *Leader* carried stories of all the great engagements.

Early on, the collapse of France was heralded: "France Gives Up The Fight. Hitler's Armistice Terms Stated to be Harsh."

It gave an account of the evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk and described the rescue operation. ""With the collapse of the French Army, the British Expeditionary Forces were trapped and in an unprecedented rescue operation, thousands of troops were rescued from Dunkirk on May 30, 1940. Hundreds of vessels of any and every description crossed to and from England and it was estimated that 370,000 troops have been landed safely in British ports."

The London Blitz and the Battle of Britain were all covered , with the headlines: "Big Air Raid on England, One Hundred German Planes Take Part." "London Attacked Twice in the One Night." "Death, Fire and Destruction on British Capital. Buckingham Palace Hit." "Thirty Dive Bombers Attack Town (name not divulged) in south-east. There were claims and counter claims on both sides on the extent of casualties.

The blanket bombing of Coventry was reported: "1,000 Casualties. Historic Cathedral Destroyed.

The first visible sign of the war to come to Limerick was when a lifeboat, found by the S.S. "Glendalough" was picked up drifting off the south-west coast of England and brought here to the Docks and put in the custody of the Receiver of Wrecks. There was no-one on board when it was found.

Meanwhile the I.R.A. were active through the war and a report said that over forty arrests were made in swoops in Limerick and Clare in 1940.

The Newcastle West correspondent showed his knowledge of the effects of bombing, and the disastrous results of what would happen in West Limerick if such an eventual was taken for granted that he would announce the end of the war in Europe.

It was reported that Russian investigators were combing the ruins of Berlin in order to try and solve the Hitler Mystery. A number of German officers asserted that Herr Hitler had committed suicide.

The dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was one of the last major reports of the war in the *Leader*.

"Hiroshima Was But Is No More" was the heading and the report said that "close on quarter of a million had been blotted from the face of the earth, the desruction being wrought by the atomic bomb – product of advanced science and twentieth century civilisation."

The Nuremberg trials of the Nazi war criminals, as they were called, was announced and the report stated that ten Nazi leaders were hanged that morning (October 16, 1946). There was a sensational turn of events in the trial when it was announced, on the eve of his execution, that Goering had committed suicide by swallowng a phial of cynide of potassium, "a deadly poison."

Four of the condemned were Catholics and they received Holy Communion from Fr. Sixtus O'Connor before their execution. Hans Frank, a convert, was said to have a broad smile on his face as he went to his death, having found comfort in his new found religion.

The same year a Limerick woman, Miss Kathleen O'Farrell, attached to the American Army newspaper, "Stars and Stripes" gave evidence at a trail in Nuremberg when a negro soldier, James C. Devone, was sentenced to be hanged for the murder of two G.I.'s. Miss O'Farrell and an English girl were with the two soldiers at the time of the shooting and were lucky to escape injury.

Queues

THE effects of the war were still being felt in transport, and buses to destinations outside the city were few and far between. "People have

Hurling fans beat the ban

WARTIME travel restrictions did not deter hurling fans from going to Thurles to see Limerick playing Cork in the Munster Hurling Final in July, 1940. Thousands travelled from the city and county by many modes of conveyance. It was a successful foray as Limerick beat Cork and neither did the restrictions deter 50,000 spectators from heading for Croke Park for the showdown with Kilkenny in the All-Ireland final.

The *Leader* said of the final on September 1st that the match was played at top speed, the display of field craft by both sides electrified the vast attendance. Limerick won their third All-Ireland Senior title in seven years, on the score of 3-7 to 1-7, and the minors also won, beating Antrim, for their first title in this grade

"Kilkenny Beaten by Two Clear Goals". "Limerick Submerges Kilkenny". "The Green and White on Top" were some of the headlines that trumpeted Limerick's great win. The report of the match implied that Paddy Clohessy was star of the Limerick team. "Kilkenny attack fell on dangerous breakwater in Paddy Clohessy, who played the biggest part in subduing the Kilkenny attack." Mick Mackey played a captain's part in the win, inspiring his team.

Thousands turned out at the Limerick station to greet their heroes on their return from Dublin. "People Frenzied with Joy" was the heading.

Later that week the triumphant team was introduced to an enthusiastic audience at the Savoy Cinema. The City Manager, Mr. Berkery, said that he hoped this would be a forerunner and "that year after year we would have the same introductions."

There was no Savoy the following year as the holders of the All-Ireland got a ferocious trouncing at the hands of Cork in the Munster semi-final on the unbelievable score of 8-10 points to 3-2. It would be another 32 years before Limerick would win another All-Ireland.

In 1944, Limerick led Cork by five points towards the closing stages of the Munster final in Thurles in 1944 but the southerners pulled out all the stops and in a sensational finish won by a clear goal. Many novel methods of transport were used getting to the final in Thurles: sidecars, pony and trap, ass and car, and the predominant mode of transport was the humble bicycle. Supporters set out from all parts of the city and county by bike in the early hours of the morning and some snatched sleep in haybarns along the way.

The great tea hoax

THE tea scarcity has provided some practical jokers in Limerick with a rare opportunity for a good hoax, said a *Leader* report in 1942.

Early workers proceeding to business the other morning were delightful-

1940 saying that the business in town was the best for many years but bemoaned the fact that so many were unemployed in the district and many families were in dire straits. "There were huge congregations attending

ties.

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The Newcastle West correspondent showed his knowledge of the effects of bombing, and the disastrous results of what would happen in West Limerick if such an eventuality occurred. "After the Russian bombardment of Helsinki it was found that approx. only five per cent of the casualties were found to be suffering from wounds inflicted by direct hits of shrapnel from the bursting bombs and that a much larger percentage, and even some of them with the most horrible wounds, were caused by the shattering of glass, which penetrated the eyes and even the lungs of some of the victims.

"In this connection it would be interesting to know what steps are being taken by local householders to prepare themselves for such an eventuality as an aerial bombardment because no efforts as of yet have been made to protect the windows in the town. Some of the more realistic citizens have already drawn up plans for air raid shelters," the cor. added.

News of the loss of the "Irish Pine" at sea in 1942 brought home the tragedy of the conflict when it was reported that eight Limerickmen went down with the Irish Shipping vessel. The ship had shortly beforehand discharged a load of grain in Limerick Docks and was greatly admired by the general public.

The Leader continued to report on the War as it spread world wide with America joining in after the bombing of Pearl Harbour and the invasion of Russia by Germany, and the consequent Siege of Stalingrad which spelt defeat for the invaders.

Whether it was censorship, or rationing of newsprint, as the war progressed the coverage was not as striking as in the early years, never gaining more than a single column heading. The Russian offensive rather than the Allied campaign, got most prominence.

The Allies had landed in Europe well before the *Leader* took up the story and from then on it was nearly all good news as the advance on Germany, with Russia on the Eastern front, became stronger with each passing day.

And then it was all over.

"War in Europe Declared at an End"' screamed the *Leader* headlines, the biggest since the war had begun. The date was May 7th, 1945. "All German Forces to Surrender. Now in their Captors' Hands.'' Admiral Doenitz, who had succeeded Herr Hitler, verified the end of the war in Europe. Mr. Churchill, British Prime Minister, was to broadcast to the nation later in the day and it

before their execution. Hans Frank, a convert, was said to have a broad smile on his face as he went to his death, having found comfort in his new found religion.

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Queues

THE effects of the war were still being felt in transport, and buses to destinations outside the city were few and far between. "People have become so used to queuing during the war years that they often queue for considerable times at the terminus in Sarsfield Street and when buses don't turn up, start queuing again so inured are they to waiting," said the report.

Fatal fog

IN what was described as the night of the big fog, December 23, 1946, Patrick Moloney, Ballymartin, Pallaskenry, on his way home, reaching the Dock area in his pony and trap after doing his Christmas shopping in Limerick, lost his bearings and wound up in the Dry Dock. On leaving the trap to try find his way, he toppled in over the quay and was found drowned next morning. The pony and trap were still intact with the Christmas parcels still in place. He left a widow and six children.

Plane crash

A SENSATION was caused in Limerick last night (November, 19, 1946) when it became known that a plane had crashed in the vicinity of the city and all sorts of rumours gained currency. The city hospitals were told to stand by as it was presumed there would be casualties following the crash.

It transpired that an R.A.F. Anson general purposes aircraft crashed into the Shannon above Barrington's Pier. The plane had taken off from Co. Down and the pilot lost his bearings in the thick fog. He opted for a crash landing on the Shannon and when the aircraft came to a standstill, the pilot, Flight-Lieut. K. Goffrey, and crew escaped on to the mudflats by climbing along the wings. Hundreds of people visited the scene of the crash.

Roches fire

DAMAGE estimated at half a million pounds was the result of a disastrous fire which burned Roches Stores to the ground in 1948. It was estimated that between eighty and ninety people would be out of work as a consequence.

New lights

THE new traffic lights erected at the corner of William Street and O'Connell Street in 1949 were the object of much curiosity and no little wonderment.

tea were devised. It proved the No. 1 purchase in the black market.

Despite these privations, people were more united than they had been for a long time and borrowing and returning of such things as cups of sugar from neighbours were the norm. Some of the wounds of the Civil War began to heal as the populace found common cause.

It was an extremely difficult time for transport, all private cars were eventually put off the road, and trains with great difficulty ran on turf. Even the humble bicycle was in trouble with the scarcity of tyres and tubes and it was reported in the *Leader* that cyclists were reduced to stuffing their tyres with grass in the absence of tubes.

A simple method of saving petrol was reported by the Clare cor. when Mr. Flinn, turf contractor, Ennis, on arrival in Limerick with three lorryloads of turf, attached two of the empty vehicles to one and towed them back home to Ennis afterwards.

With travel by car or bus practically non-existent due to shortage of petrol, Lord Adare showed great initiative when he put two stage coaches on the road plying between Limerick and Rathkeale. "A flourish on the horn, a swish of the whip, the startled crack of horses' hooves on the road, the creak and strain of the harness and the initial sways of the coach and all were off to start the new service from Rathkeale to Limerick this morning (May 8th, 1941)'' reported the Leader. Back had come

The CIE fleet is blessed in the late 40s.

the coaching days of the last century.

The coach drew up at Cruise's Hotel, fittingly the Bianconi's original stopping place. The service proved a huge success with Dublin tourists also availing of the facility. The coaches, "The Shamrock'' and "The Thomond" contributed greatly to lessening of transport difficulties, and gave work to a considerable number of local people. It closed down for the winter months and Lord Adare was considering whether or not it would operate the following summer.

In 1943, according to "No. 7'' in the Rowing Notes, it was not permissable to use private motor cars, and travelling to the Galway Regatta Shannon R.C. supporters had to disembark from the train at Ardrahan and cycle the rest of the way. Athlunkard veterans Tom Earlie and Willie Reid, were also doing the same but saved themselves a long cycle when Ned Connaughton of St. Michael's came to the rescue and took themselves and their bikes into the taxi he was travelling in.

The first prosecution of over-charging under the new regulations in the the early forties came in Shanagolden when a shopkeeper had the misfortune to overcharge the local sergeant for his quota of tea. He was fined 10/- for his misdeameanour. At the same court, a farmer was fined for allowing noxious weeds to grow on his lands, a charge which was to be repeated many times over the next few years. There were many cases reported in court throughout the war, and afterwards, of black-marketing and heavy fines and even imprisonment were meted out to those found guilty.

Compulsory tillage was introduced and prosecutions followed for those who did not comply with the regulations with district judges berating those prosecuted for their lack of patriotism. "Till more, toil more'' was the cry from the all those in authority, including bishops and government ministers. The Taoiseach, Éamon de Valera, speaking in Limerick, warned that the people might have to face starvation and he declared grimly that it was a crime against the community to allow arable land to remain untilled.

The Corporation were alloting plots of one-eighth of an acre on the outskirts of the city for those willing to grow their own produce. The unemployed would receive their seeds and implements free and those who were in a position to do so would be asked to make a small donation.

The severe shortage of every kind of commodity was exemplified when it was proposed that due to a scarcity of leather, that members of Local Defence Forces be supplied with boots with timber soles. "All available supplies of leather must be preserved for the army. The army have long route marches and wooden soles would be impracticable. Furthermore, it was pointed out that F.C.A. members use their boots when working on their farms, etc., and the wooden soled variety would do just as well." The report, by the Ennis cor., concluded by saying that "when needs must the devil drives'' and it seems almost certain that boots with leather soles cannot be officially issued next year.

To add to the difficulties, a serious outbreak of foot and mouth disease broke out in the country in 1941 and quickly spread to Co. Limerick with cows being slaughtered in several areas. Many sporting fixtures were cancelled in the efforts to contain the disease.

By 1942 restrictions on the amount of newsprint a paper could have had its effect here when the mid-week editions of the *Leader* were reduced from eight to five columns.

An irate shopkeeper wrote in accusing wholesalers of holding back goods and selling them at excessive profit to certain purchasers who in turn sell them at prices well above the market. "Numerous small shopkeepers are thus deprived of a living and are barely able to keep their heads above water."

Even when the war was over, in September 1946 there were still huge scarcities and the Killaloe cor. reported that they were in a bad way in the town for the lack of cigarettes. "The nerve soothing weed was never so scarce in our midst and shopkeepers were besieged every morning and evening by womenfolk in quest of same for themselves and their husbands, many of whom were complaining of headaches and loss of appetite, dizziness and sleeplessness due to the want of the popular cigarette. The menfolk eventually tried the pipe but they discarded the dudín the moment the belated cigarette supply arrived in town,'' the cor. concluded.

MILLENNIUM BRIEFS . . .

Camogie scenes

IT wasn't strange to read of scenes in male football and hurling matches down the years, it was unusual to read of trouble on the camogie pitch. In 1941, a committee of five was set up to investigate the scenes that accompanied the Rathbane v Friarstown game at St. Patrick's Field.

Napoleon

A DEATH of a Co. Limerickman, Mr. A. N. Bonaparte-Wyse, C.B.E. recalled the family links with Napoleon Bonaparte. His grandfather was married to a niece of the French military ruler thus establishing a direct link with the famous Corsican. The deceased was Permanent Secretary to the Minister of Education in Northern Ireland.

Country arms as war news puts us in severe hazard

WHEN war broke out across Europe in 1939, it was just sixteen years after the ceasing of hostilities in our own civil war and bitterness and old wounds unhealed were still abounding. However, with the real possibility of invasion, old adversaries who had fought on opposite sides in 1922/'23 buried the hatchet and were now standing side to side again as the country, from 1940 onwards, prepared for an invasion that it was reckoned could come at any time or from any quarter.

The question on everyone's lips was would the Germans attempt an invasion or would the British invade here to forestall a German landing as they had done in the case of Iceland? Whichever, it was felt the country's neutrality was no deterrent to either of these eventualities happening. As a consequence, many young began to enlist and the period that became to be known as the Emergency had dawned.

The Newcastle West cor. reported in March, 1940, that the response to the call for men for the Defence Forces and for the Local Security Force appears to be gathering momentum and at a meeting of the West Limerick Brigade, Old IRA, a resolution was adopted calling on all Old IRA members to enrol immediately for service with the various defence forces. Ballyagran branch carried a similar resolution.

All other correspondents reported a great response for enlistments: in Rathkeale 200 enrolled in the Local Security Forces: leaders were P. Roche, M.C.C.; J. O'Leary, B.E.; J. G. Power, manager Munster and Leinster Bank; R. Sheehy.

Volunteers had several options, either joining the regular army or the LDF (Local Defence Forces) or the LSF (Local Security Forces).

In the city in 1940 a special meeting was held at the O'Connell Monument in support of the campaign to organise national defence measures to meet any emergency. Ald. Dan Bourke, T.D., the Mayor, had summoned the meeting and was applauded when he said: "The whole country was united in its determination to safeguard its neutrality. There was grave danger that their neutrality would not be respected but if their young men joined the Army they could make it unprofitable for anyone to attack them. Those too old to join the army could give their services in other capacities, on the Local Security Force, Red Cross and A.R.P."

Mr. McCormack said no mother need be ashamed to see her son wearing the uniform of his country, and no sweetheart but should love her young man more because he was a soldier of Ireland (applause).

Notable local sportsmen to answer the call to arms were Mick Mackey, the famous Limerick hurler. The report said that Mackey would be available to play for Limerick in all important matches during the season. "If the team were to lose his services their chances of reaching the All-Ireland final would be very greatly reduced,'' a report said.

Paddy Griffin, Garryowen's star-wing forward, has also donned the uniform of the National Army, and the County Board of Health was told at its meeting that several of its staff had joined up including C. Cleary, E. Cregan, M. Madden, F. Goodwin, P. Barrett and P. Coughlan.

played the biggest part in subduing the Kilkenny attack.'' Mick Mackey played a captain's part in the win, inspiring his team.

city and county by bike in the early hours of the morning and some snatched sleep in haybarns along the way.

The great tea hoax

THE tea scarcity has provided some practical jokers in Limerick with a rare opportunity for a good hoax, said a *Leader* report in 1942.

Early workers proceeding to business the other morning were delightfully surprised to find a display card prominently hanging on a shop window which ran somewhat as follows:

"Tea! Unlimited quantity! 5d. per ounce!"

The discovery seemed too good to be true, but more than one observer did not wait to calculate that the price was obviously in excess of the Government controlled price per lb.

At the risk of being late for work, several even turned back to tell their wives of the good news.

By the time the shop was opened for business many people had seen the advertisement and the startled shop-keeper was confronted with a series of demands for tea.

But alas, for the hopes of the would-be purchasers, the shop-keeper disclaimed all knowledge of the advertisement, which was as much a surprise to him as to the shoppers.

Athea

THE Athea correspondent was at Christmas 1940 saying that the business in town was the best for many years but bemoaned the fact that so many were unemployed in the district and many families were in dire straits. "There were huge congregations attending the Masses with many familiar faces among them that had been absent for the past year. Here and there too were gaps caused by the absence of those who have passed the bourne during the year, people on whom mortal eyes will never rest again in this world of ours."

Hanged

CITY Council discussed the imminent hanging of two Irishmen due to take place in Birmingham Jail in 1940 following the Coventry bombing outrage. It was mentioned at the meeting that there was some doubt about their guilt and there should be a stay of execution and a possible commution of their sentence. If the executions took place, it was stated that relations between this country and England could become strained.

The discussion was all in vain as the men, Peter Barnes and James McCormick, were hanged side by side on Wednesday, February 7th, 1940, with four executioners in attendance.

Rathkeale

PHOTOGRAPHS in 1949 showed the newly erected town houses in Rathkeale, numbering 28, and in contrast an old thatched cottage with the residents moving out, which had been condemned.

At the same time, and some twenty years after the Shannon Scheme opened, rural electrification came to Kilfinane. 40 E.S.B. workers were employed in the area at £5 10s. a week.

Dying

SALMON were expiring in the Shannon due to lack of oxygen caused during the prolonged heat wave of the summer of 1949. The river was at its lowest level for many years.