

MISCELLANEA

SOME GLIMPSES OF LIFE IN LIMERICK, 1793 & 1800

The *Freeman's Journal* was founded in Dublin by Dr. Charles Lucas and Henry Brooke in 1763. It operated as an anti-government newspaper until 1786 when it was bought by the administration in Dublin Castle. Thereafter it supported the lord lieutenant and his policies.¹ In July 1793 the following account was printed of a general disturbance in Limerick city:

Accounts were yesterday received from Limerick, which assert that a riotous mob had assembled there, from different parts of the country, threatening to destroy the place. They were opposed by Mr. Oliver, an active magistrate of that town, aided by a party of the army, who took seven of the principal leaders, and lodged them in Limerick gaol.²

The matter came to the attention of John Fitzgibbon the Lord Chancellor, who lived at Mount Shannon, near Castleconnell, when not attending to his political duties in Dublin. Fitzgibbon commented on the behaviour of the soldiers but he referred to them as the militia rather than the regular army. He was full of praise for their conduct in drawing the field guns themselves without waiting for horses. However, he was extremely worried because he believed that Limerick was in a state little short of rebellion. In his view treachery was everywhere and was being spread by many people. Speaking in the Irish House of Lords he stated that 'he had heard on good authority that two persons like gentlemen, were seen in a carriage driving on the roads near Limerick and who as they went along distributed papers of sedition to all they met at each side of the road.'³

Edmond Henry Pery, the second Baron Glentworth,⁴ was a firm supporter of Dublin Castle and a strong advocate for the passage of the act of Union in 1800. He made his viewpoint very clear in a speech to the Irish House of Lords in February 1800:

Union alone with England could quiet the country and secure the empire. It was Urged by opponents, that the Minister and Government had miscalculated the Sentiment of the nation, but surely his Majesty's servants had better opportunities of ascertaining the national opinion than any others. Another argument of opposition was, that because Mr. Pitt [the Prime Minister] and Lord Castlereagh [the Chief Secretary for Ireland] were sometimes friendly to Parliamentary Reform, they awkwardly or badly entertained their present political measures. But surely if the unexpected circumstances of affairs, that latterly operated in Europe was duly appreciated, it would not be conceived a dereliction in duty in those gentlemen to oppose the torrent of revolution.⁵

In fact Glentworth was so dedicated to his belief in the advantages of the Union that he was elected by the Irish House of Lords to become one of the twenty-eight temporal peers who went to London on the 1 January 1801 to represent the Irish nobility at Westminster.

Glentworth had been very energetic in putting down outrage and tumult in the years 1798 and

¹ R.F.Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London 1988) p. 239.

² *Freeman's Journal*, 18 July 1793.

³ *Ibid.*, 20 July 1793.

⁴ His father, William Cecil Pery, was raised to the peerage as Baron Glentworth of Mallow in June 1790.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 13 February 1800.

1799. When discussing the bill for the suppression of rebellion in the course of the summer of 1799 in performance of his military duty, 'the painful task devolved on him of sitting on a Courts-Martial, where out of 13 persons accused 12 were convicted.'⁶ Outrages continued into 1800, some had political motives while others clearly did not. 'Saturday se'night a number of villains attacked the house of Mr. Ryan of Castle-guard, and demanded arms, and attempted to set fire to his house and out offices, but being fired on by Mr. Ryan and his sons, the villains made off without effecting their diabolical purposes.'⁷ On the following night, Sunday, there was another attack near Croom. 'Sunday, se'night, a number of snug farmers' houses, from between the foot of Tory-hill, to the four roads at Kilpeacon, in the county of Limerick were robbed of cash and bank notes, by a banditti of armed men, who alleged that they were only collecting for the support of the widows of a number of honest fellows, that had been killed by the Bolands, at Manister.'⁸

Almost all of the references to Limerick in the *Freeman's Journal* during the 1790s dealt with the unsettled state of the county and the city. This was a reflection of the violence which disturbed the whole country in those terrible years. However, there were some items which dealt with the more routine aspects of life. In March 1793, it carried the sad news of the burial of Lady Hartstonge who had opened the fever hospital on the site of what is now St. John's hospital:

Saturday, the remains of Lady Hartstonge, was conveyed from her house in this city to Bruff, to be interred in the family vault; the funeral was attended by a vast number of carriages and a great concourse of gentlemen on horseback: the shops in this city were all shut, in respect to the memory of so exalted a character and the countenance of all ranks of people bore evident marks of their heart felt sorrow for her death.⁹

Charlotte Murphy

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The *Limerick Chronicle* newspaper reported in July 1810 on the killing of a soldier by two members of the Night Watch:

Yesterday, the Right Worshipful Francis Lloyd, The Mayor, as Coroner, held an inquest at the New Barracks, on the body of Corporal William Bridges, of the Waterford Regiment of Militia, quartered in this City, who on the night of Saturday last, was wantonly attacked by two of the Watchmen of St. Michael's Parish, and received such a stroke on his head, inflicted with the mounted Pole of one of these nightly guardians that it proved mortal, and by which he expired on Thursday evening.

A number of witnesses gave evidence and the jury having examined all the information available to it returned the following verdict:

We find that the said William Bridges was wilfully murdered by James Devitt, a watchman of St. Michael's Parish, by his the said James Devitt, on the night of the 30th June last, in said Parish wilfully striking the said William Bridges a violent blow with a Pole on the left side of the head, causing a mortal contusion thereon, of which mortal contusion he instantly languished, and died at the New Barracks, in the suburbs of said City, on the 5th day of July

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20 March 1800.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25 March 1793.

instant. And We further find that Robert Maguire, another Watchman of said Parish was in company with the said James Devitt at the time of his giving the said blow.¹

Both Devitt and Maguire were arrested and the former was subsequently charged with his killing. In August Devitt was convicted of manslaughter² and sentenced to 'six months imprisonment, to be burned in the hand; to give security self £100 and 2 of £50 each.'³ Interesting on the same day a local man, Michael Moylan, was convicted of 'burglary and robbery at the house of Michael Lynch' and he was sentenced 'to be hanged on Saturday 1st September.'⁴ The life of a soldier would appear to have counted for less in those days than petty crime involving property. A sad footnote to the killing appeared in the newspaper:

CHARITY

Whereas a most wanton & unprovoked murder has lately been committed on the person of Corporal William Bridges, of the Waterford Regt., of Militia, a good soldier and a man of unexceptional Character, whereby his widow, also of good character, a stranger far from her native home and Friends, is left destitute with two infant children.

The officers and Garrison, deeming that this poor Woman's station to be deserving of Commiseration, have set a subscription on foot for her relief, to which they invite the kind aid of the Citizens of Limerick, several of whom have already contributed.

The smallest Donation will be Thankfully received for the above purpose by Major O'Donoghue, at the Adjutant's office, and a list of the subscribers will be published in a future *Chronicle*.⁵

Liam Mulligan

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY REMAINS UNDERNEATH CANNOCK'S

On 26 January 1980, the *Limerick Weekly Echo* carried an article which stated that a cornerstone [here the word means a stone used to protect the angle of a building from carts etc] a roadway and the remains of houses or warehouses were to be seen beneath Cannock's Department store on O'Connell Street, Limerick.

The writer visited Cannock's on 18 February 1980, because the store was to change hands on 16 March 1980 and extensive renovations were proposed by Penneys, the new owners. I sent the following observations to the National Museum:

There is a natural incline towards the river in the area at the rear of Cannock's. I think that the cobbles etc, were part of the quays in Limerick during the eighteenth century when the newer part of the city was the preserve of merchants who were making money in the provision trade. In the mid-nineteenth century, when the new department store was being built, it extended towards the river and covered-in part of the old quays.

¹ *Limerick Chronicle* July 7th 1810

² *Ibid.* August 15th 1810.

³ *Ibid.* August 16th 1810.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* July 11th 1810.

I received an answer dated 26 February 1980 from Ragnall Ó Floinn, of the Irish Antiquities Division of the National Museum, which stated that the discovery was an interesting one and he that had passed my letter to the Office of Public Works (National Monuments Branch). The following letter, dated 9 April 1980 and signed by Aighleann O'Shaughnessy, Office of Public Works was sent to me: 'Your letter re remains of buildings etc under Cannock's store was passed to me. I inspected the ruins recently and I agree that they are probably 18th cent quay buildings.

The remains consisted of what appeared to be a shop front, approximately six feet in height, a cornerstone, once used to protect part of a wall from wheeled vehicles or horses and a section of cobbled street, approximately four feet by four feet. I recently made enquiries on what had happened as a result of the alterations and was informed by a member of Penney's management that nothing had survived because the entire basement area had been concreted over in 1980.

Charlotte Murphy



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3