

LIMERICK IN FOCUS

ANOTHER LIMERICK LEADER EXCLUSIVE

The Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band

THE end of World War I saw the return of many of the old veterans of the Boherbuoy No. 1 Brass & Reed Band. They came back at a period when times were difficult in the old bandroom in Lord Edward Street . . . a period when membership figures were dropping to a dangerous level. Among them were the brothers, Sammy and Jimmy Prndergast; Eddie Hartley; Pat Keating; Paul Mackey; Pat McGrath and his nephew, Jackie McGrath.

To such men must go much of the credit for keeping the old band going when the odds were stacked against survival. During their long days of waiting for employment, they would spend a good deal of their time in the bandroom, surrounded by many of the young boys of the district, to whom they passed on their wonderful knowledge of music. Among the older members at the time was Ned Reilly, one of the finest euphonium players in Ireland, who has long since passed on to his eternal reward but whose memory is still kept alive among those who are following in his footsteps. He became a character known throughout Ireland among bandmen and, indeed, even to this day his name is recalled with pride far from the old Treaty Stone.

Still, mind you, we are in there fighting every inch of the way and if we fail I can assure you it will not be for the want of trying. Joe also mentioned that for many years they had been hoping

by Mr. P. J. McCormack, a youthful conductor of this ancient band. His story is one that could well make a special feature all on its own, but he will be the first to tell you that he would be happier to have it included among that of "the boys." P.J. has held the baton for the past three years. He took it over from his late father, Dave, one of the most wonderful personalities in the life of the band . . . and under the direction of his late father he sat in the body of the room playing the clarinet—a bandsman by nature.

TOM TOBIN

IMPORTANT ROLE

To-day he plays an important role in the Gilbert Sullivan Opera Society and in the Choral and Operatic Society. He teaches in the new School of Music and has many other interests . . . but from what I could gather in my brief period with a man I regard as a brilliant musician I have no hesitation in saying here that P. J. McCormack is upholding a tradition that Limerick will one day be proud to claim its own.

WIDELY KNOWN

Jimmy Clancy is a name that is widely known in Limerick, but I have no doubt that he is even better known as "Bud"—a man whose dance band has brought joy to many down through the years. I met Bud in the bandroom of the old Boherbuoy, where he sat as a playing member and where you are likely to find him almost every Sunday morning. After almost 40 years as a bandsman, his story is quite an unusual one. During the difficult days of the post-World War I, Bud was the only cornet player in the band and when it came to a special turn-out a very great deal indeed, depended on him.

I met Pat Phelan, a cutter employed by Danus Clothing Factory; Frank Phelan, of Cannocks; Dave McCormack, a brother of the conductor, who is one of the finest cornet soloists I have heard in my lifetime, and Denis Cuddihy, who has been playing with the band for the past 30 years. I met Tony Stenbridge, who plays the E Flat bass and whose job is a coal merchant. I heard all about Sidney Egan, who had his beginning with the band in Limerick and who became one of the most prominent figures in the Radio

Life can play many strange turns almost down through the years, but perhaps one of the most memorable in Bud's life was something that happened on last St. Patrick's Day, when he established Christian Brothers' School Pipe Band led the Limerick parade for the first time and made a lasting impression on all who saw them and heard their rousing music. Among the members of that new band was Bud's nephew. I won't mention his name but after almost 40 years as a bandsman, his story is quite an unusual one. During the difficult days of the post-World War I, Bud was the only cornet player in the band and when it came to a special turn-out a very great deal indeed, depended on him.

IN AMERICA

His brothers, William and John Joe, may well make the same claim. To-day they are far from the land, but their hearts are ever with us. William will be remembered by many as a clarinet player. He is in America now, where he serves with the New York Police Department, and as a result of his services in World War II he holds the honorary rank of District Commissioner in the American Legion. John Joe is also in America. To-day he is Master Sergeant in the U.S. Army and lives in Kentucky. Like William, he, too, played the clarinet . . . and it may well go on record that both of them have never forgotten the old band that gave them their first taste of music.

Another interesting personality whom I met in the old bandroom in Lord Edward Street was Andre Fernon, a Frenchman with a strong claim to membership of the Limerick band. Andre is Chief de Cuisine at Shannon International Free Airport and has been a musician all his lifetime. In his five or six years here in Ireland he has been playing in the concert flute with the Boherbuoy Band and has "really enjoyed every moment of it."

However, I was really impressed

Fireann Symphony Orchestra. I was told the wonderful story of George Dillon, who was presented with a valuable euphonium for his part in the famous competition in Manchester way back in 1885, when the name of the Boherbuoy became famous in Manchester and in all England for that matter . . . and all because they refused to play the British National Anthem, and played "O'Donnell Abu" instead. I was told the story of Mick McHugh, of "no fixed abode"—a man of the roads who would call into the bandroom to say a prayer before the picture of St. Patrick . . . and, indeed, many other stories, too, that I can never forget . . . that in my opinion are part of the history of the old Limerick.

FAMOUS PLAYER

A famous cornet player still remembered in Limerick is Tom O'Brien because of what may be unheard of to-day—his "treble-tongued" solos. Another star of the past was the late Tom Prndergast, who was a founder-member of the Garryowen Rugby Football Club and was at one time High Sheriff of Limerick.

Mr. Dinny Connors, who is still in bed to-day at his home in Lenihan Avenue, Prospect, was another great treble-tongued cornet player whose name will live on in Limerick. He will be remembered also as a brilliant player of the xylophone and though he may not lead the band that was so much a part of his life, I'm sure that he will be happy in the knowledge that his many friends are keeping on the grand old tradition that he helped to build.

GRAND CHARACTER

Stories like that of old Sam Benson, who was a member of the Boherbuoy Band and who was father of Paddy Benson, a name that will need no introduction to Limerick people, wherever they are, are always willing and eager to step in to help out. I met Tom Glynn, secretary of the Boherbuoy Band, whose father was one of the bass players in the days of yore but who was killed in the Dardanelles fighting with the Munster Fusiliers. Tom is also secretary in this area of the Irish Federation of Musicians, and his son, Jack Glynn, is proprietor of the well-known Music Centre in Catherine Street, Limerick . . . and a good musician as well.

There are many names attached to the Boherbuoy Brass & Reed Band. I have tried to recapture some of them . . . only some of them. Their story goes back well over 100 years. However, my main reason in turning the spotlight on them to-day is to remind you that right now they are struggling for survival. They need funds to overcome many problems. I think we should help them. Each and every one of us can help them in some small way . . . and indeed, I'm sure that anyone with an ounce of love for music will do so. Limerick would not be the same without them . . . the men of Boherbuoy are too much a part of its colourful history. We should not forget this. We should ensure another century in the life of a truly great band.

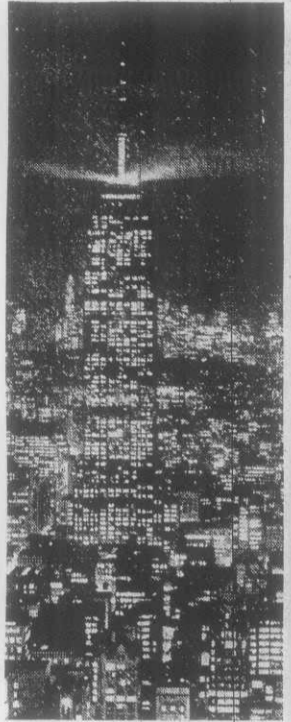
It was Bud Clancy who told me the story of Paul Mackey, who lives in Talbot Avenue, Prospect. As a boy he joined the Munster Fusiliers, in 1915, was one of those who fought in the Somme and was gassed. He returned home to resume his place with the old Boherbuoy, but in 1922 he was one of the first into the Irish Free State Army and helped to found the first Irish Army Pipe Band.

His very good friend, the late Bill Kelly, also of Prospect, joined the British Grenadiers and stayed in their place in uniform. When he returned to his home on holidays he would sit in with the Boherbuoy Band and, eventually, at the end of his military career he opened a shop in Limerick, which is the only one to be named after a musical instrument—the

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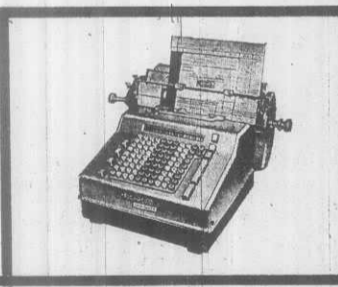
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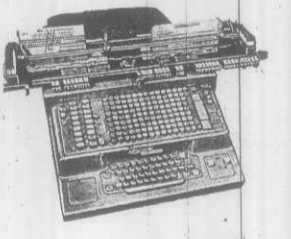
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