

# Thomondgate

## and the North Liberties

**T**HOMONDGATE takes its name from what was only the only entrance to the city from the Clare side. The name is now applied to what had become a suburb of considerable extent some centuries ago. In 1760 the population of Limerick was 32,196. The two main inns in 1790 were Taylor's New Inn in Irishtown and the Black Swan at Thomondgate. When a new line of road was under construction in the 1830s heaps of skeletons were found laid out in rows about fifteen yards in length and six feet in depth. They were supposed to have been the remains of those who died in the great plague.

**THE TREATY STONE** is the name given to a roughly hewn rock which is located near the northern end of Thomond Bridge until it was moved to its present position, and mounted on a pedestal, in 1865. It is now located to the south of the bridge, on the western side of the river. The Treaty of Limerick is supposed to have been signed on this stone in 1691 but it is most unlikely that either of the opposing forces was unable to provide a writing-table for such a momentous occasion. In all probability it marked the site on which the actual signing took place, some distance away.

**MICHAEL HOGAN (1832-1899)** is better known under his more popular name, the Bard of Thomond. The critics and literati of his day, and latter, considered his verse abominable but it found great appeal amongst the ordinary people. His mixture of patriotism, satire and humour was appreciated in the pages of *The Nation* and other periodicals to which he contributed articles. His *Lays and Legends of Thomond* could easily be listed as a tribute in verse dedicated to the more famous people and events in the history and folklore of North Munster. Within its pages can be found some extremely fascinating

footnotes, some of which are more interesting than the lays and legends themselves. Over the years he produced small editions of many poetry pamphlets, most of which are now quite scarce. *Drunken Thady and the Bishop's Lady* is reputedly his masterpiece:

"This true she lived - tis true she died.

Tis true she was a Bishop's bride;

But for herself tis little matter

To whom she had been wife or daughter".

Michael "The Bard" Hogan, a nominal employee of the Limerick Corporation, was buried in Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery. His memorial was destroyed by vandals in 1986.

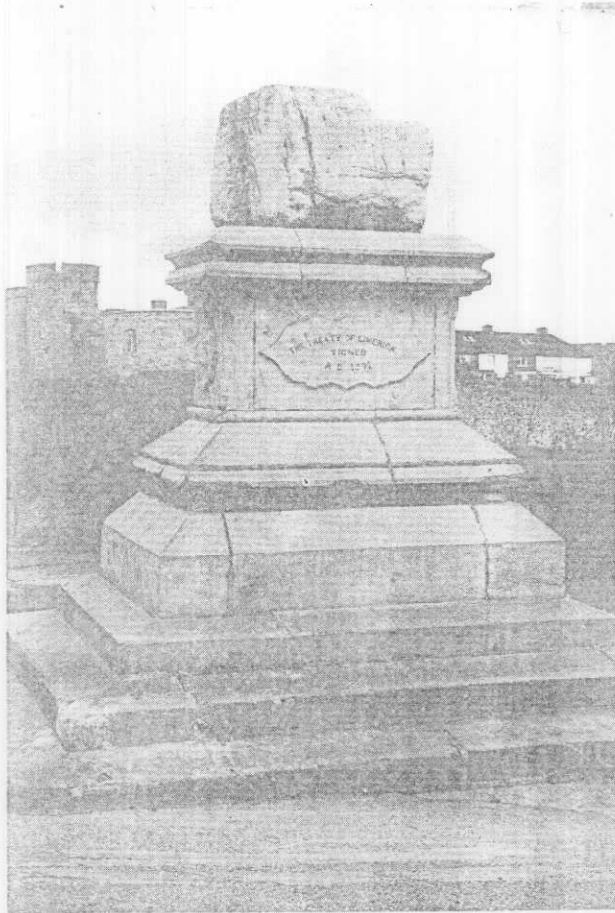
**FR. JOHN McENERY (1796-1841)** was educated in St. Munchin's Seminary at Park

House. Ordained in 1819 he was appointed chaplain to the Cary family, Torquay, England in 1822. He spent the remainder of his life there, near the underground chambers known as Kent's Cavern, devoting his spare time to palaeontology, the study of fossils. Rev. John McEnery was the first to discover the remains of the prehistoric sabre-toothed tiger in Britain. Many museums were enriched with his finds and his own collection was acquired by the British Museum after his death. His epitaph summed up his career; "Mr. McEnery was the pioneer of systematic observation in Kent's Hole and other Caverns in this neighbourhood, the sagacious and reverent observer of the works in nature of Him whose is the earth and the fullness thereof". He was buried in Torre churchyard.

**ST. MUNCHIN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH**, on the North Strand (now Clancy's Strand) was built in 1744. In 1827 it was described as "a commodious place of worship, but destitute of any particular object of interest". In 1837 the parishes of St. Munchin and St. Nicholas with the North Liberties formed the composite parish of St. Lelia's, the original parish church

of which was replaced with the present edifice in 1922. Samuel Lewis claimed that the "chapel, situated at Thomond-gate, is a large cruciform structure ... the first R.C. place of worship publicly erected in Limerick since the revolution".

**GEORGE CLANCY** was a native of Grange. Better known as Seoirse he was a teacher, an Irish speaker, an organiser of both the Irish Volunteers and the Gaelic League, a leader of the anti-conscription campaign and a collector of the Dial Eireann Loan. In January 1921 he was elected Mayor of Limerick. At 1.30 a.m. on Monday morning, 7 March, 1921, he went downstairs to answer a loud hammering on the door of his home. "It's all



*The Treaty Stone.*

## Replacement Car and Van Rentals

Contact: Stephen  
Bradshaw

Coonagh Cross, Ennis  
Road, Limerick.  
Telephone: 061-55811  
Fax: 061-55369  
Also Dublin 01-537091

## Woodfield House Hotel

Ennis Road

Try Woodie's Steak House  
for a bite to eat. Drink in their local  
bars.

Stay to experience the homely atmo-  
sphere of their old world family hotel  
Tel: 061-53022/53023  
Fax: 061-326755

Going places for

# 85

YEARS

## RIORDAN'S TRAVEL

Sarsfield St, Limerick  
Telephone: 061-44666

1904 - 1989

right Moll". he reassured his wife, "it's only a raid". Moll Clancy glimpsed three men at the door. They were tall, wore goggles, had caps pulled low over their foreheads and their coat-collars were turned up, concealing their faces. She overheard the ensuing conversation. "Are you Clancy?" "Yes! I am". "Come out here then. We want you." "What for?" "Come outside". "No I won't", said George as he stepped back into the hallway opening the front door wider. "Then take that!", one of the men shouted and he started shooting at George. Moll rushed forward and threw herself between her husband and his assassins. She was too late. George was fatally wounded and she was shot in the hand. This shooting was one of several such killings on that night, later known as the night of the Curfew Murders.

**THE CURFEW MURDERS** on the night of 6-7 March 1921 were believed to have been perpetrated by a group of British intelligence officers variously known as the Cairo Gang or the Murder Gang. This group had first come together in Cairo, hence the former name, but they had been reassembled in Ireland to carry out a series of raids, searches and assassinations at the behest of Sir Henry Wilson. Michael Collins suspected that the British were "shooting by roster" when seventeen Irishmen were murdered in October 1920. On the morning of Sunday 21 November 1920 his special counter-intelligence unit shot fourteen of these special agents dead. Despite the Collins' coup on Bloody Sunday the undercover war was continued by the English. A notorious ex-convict, and rapist, Captain Nathan, was the ringleader of Wilson's Murder Gang in Limerick. He is generally believed to have been responsible for the Curfew Murders, and was definitely involved in the murder of Denis O'Donovan in Castleconnell. During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) he was killed fighting on the Communist side with Bela Kun.

**MICHAEL O'CALLAGHAN** was Mayor of Limerick in 1920. His grandfather, Eugene O'Callaghan, once proposed a motion urging the repeal of the Union at a Corporation meeting in 1843. Michael had continued in the family's nationalist tradition. He was a member of Sinn Fein, a volunteer officer, and a member of the Gaelic League. He was shot at 1.00 a.m. on the morning of 7 March, 1921, by two men whose descriptions matched those of two of George Clancy's killers. Like George, he was murdered in the presence of his wife. She later refused to attend the inquiry into his, Michael's, death and was elected in the "Partition Election" of May 1921. During this general election 124 Sinn Fein and 4 Independent candidates were returned for the Southern Ireland Parliament

while the Northern Ireland Parliament returned 40 Unionist, 6 Nationalist and 6 Sinn Fein candidates. Clancy's Strand and O'Callaghan's Strand are named after the two murdered mayors.

**JOSEPH O'DONOGHUE** of Ballinacargy, County Westmeath, was also slain on the night of the Curfew Murders. At 11.40 p. m. on the night of 6 March 1921 he was taken from the Lyddy home at *Tig na Fáinne*, Janesboro, by twelve R.I.C. men under the command of a Detective Leech. His body was discovered on Janesboro Avenue the following morning.

**THE THOMONDGATE DISTILLERY** of Stein, Browne and Company produced 455,000 gallons of whiskey annually in 1837. In the same year the city possessed seven breweries which brewed a total of 5,000 barrels of porter, ale and beer annually, mainly for local consumption. Several cooperages, iron-foundries and comb-manufacturers also existed locally.

**THE HOUSE OF INDUSTRY** on Clancy's Strand had its foundations laid on 10 March 1774, by Joseph Johns, Mayor of Limerick, after legislation was introduced in 1772 to establish poorhouses and workhouses in every county. Bishop Gore granted the land at an annual rent of one pepper corn for ever and the Grand Juries of both city and county donated £500 towards the erection of the house of industry. Launcelott Hill supervised the building of this "respectable edifice, forming a large square, built in courses, with a handsome front of cut stone", designed by Rev. Deane Hoare. Doctor Edward Smyth of Dublin gave £200 towards the provision of a number of cells for lunatics in the infirmary which was behind the main building, in the garden. By 1827 the building was considered inadequate as 450 inmates were confined in a space meant for 200. In 1838 the Irish Poor Relief Act led to the establishment of workhouses in the unions of Limerick, Croom, Kilmallock, Rathkeale and Newcastle West. The Corporation now use the building for storage and as offices.

**THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS** opened a school in Thomondgate in September 1844. By 1852 they had four schools in the city, in Sexton Street, Clare, Street, St. Mary's Parish and St. Munchin's Parish. On 12 September 1888 they laid the foundation-stone of the Brother Welsh Memorial School, in John Street, on a site purchased from Crehan McMahon for £100. This last was built and furnished for £1,700.

**THOMAS HENRY CLEEVE (1844-1908)** was a son of Edward Elms Cleeve, Plumstead, Woolwich, England. He was reared and educated in Quebec, Canada, and