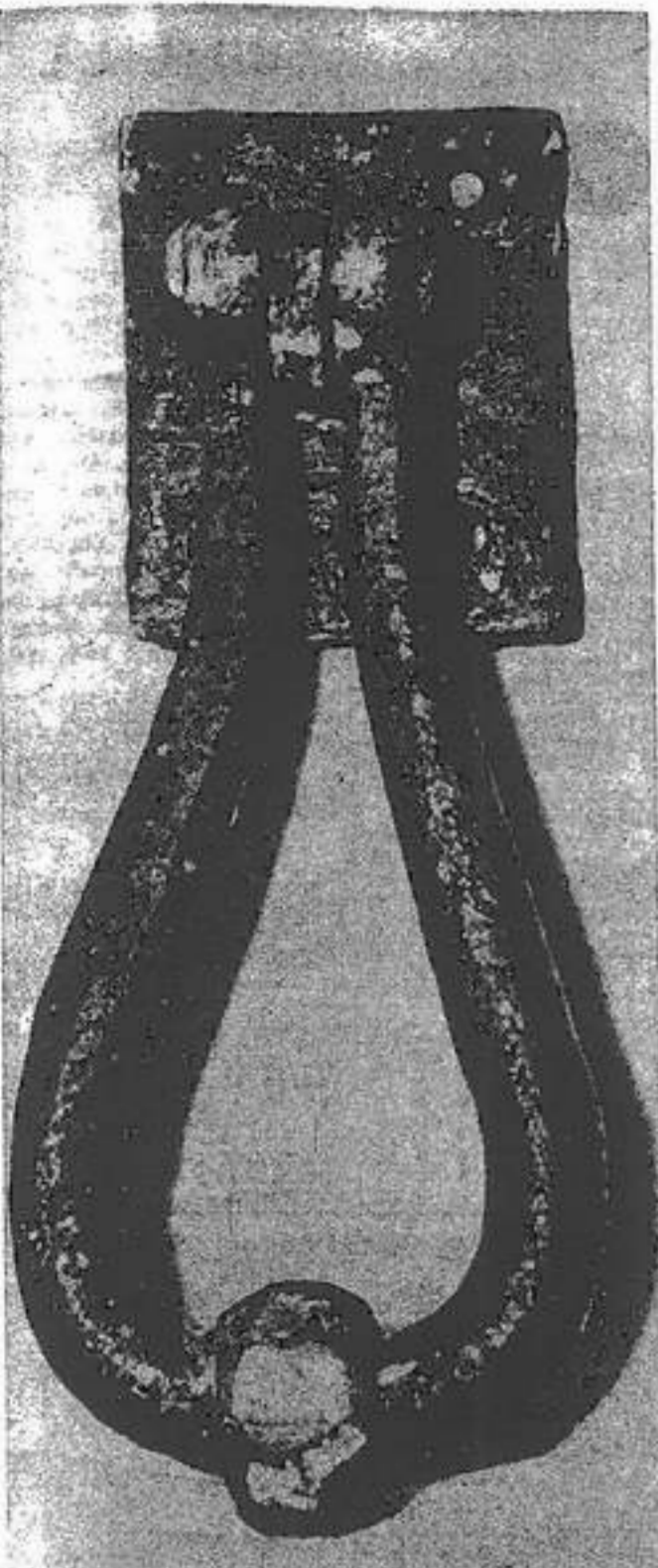


The last and most notorious of County Limerick outlaws THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF WILLIAM RYAN (PUCK)



The knocker of the old City Gaol.

William Ryan (Puck), a product of the troubles of his times, was the last and greatest of the Limerick-Tipperary outlaws. He was a terror to the country during the years 1846-'47, until his capture and execution, and was a member of the widespread clan of O Muirian (shortened in Ryan) of the counties Limerick and Tipperary. The clan came originally from Carlow and were so numerous in Limerick and Tipperary that many families into which it was divided were known by some of William's family name as "Puck".

The following account of the capture and trial of Ryan Puck appeared in "Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator" for August, 1877, and was very probably written by the great historian of Limerick, Maurice Lenihan. It says:—

The times

William Ryan (Puck) was the type of an iniquitous system, and the offspring of the most appalling of times that ever fell upon Ireland. Famine had already eaten into the marrow of the population. The voice of wailing was almost stifled throughout the land owing to the fact that tens of thousands of the people had already fallen helpless into coffinless graves, and that the survivors here they were decimated by eviction and the worse than charnel house of the workhouse.

A social revolution had already taken place in the overthrow of many hundreds of the landlord class; in the ruin of mercantile men; in the total sweeping away of whole townlands of their occupants.

The red hand of murder was not unrequited here and there, and the perpetrator of the crime was not unfrequently sheltered from the pursuit of the officers of the law by someone—as was the case in this instance—who would shirk perhaps with horror from staining his soul with actual bloody marks.

One of the very curious features connected with the trial of William Ryan Puck is the fact that the third name on the grand jury of the County of Limerick, which found true bills against outlaw and against William Frewen of Garden-field, by whom he was feloniously harboured, was William Smith O'Brien, M.P.; and we know full well that just six months after Ryan Puck's condemnation of execution, William Smith O'Brien, M.P., himself had become a fugitive, and, eight months after he sat on a grand jury on the case of Ryan Puck, he stood at the bar in Clonmel to answer to the charge of high treason.

Those times, we repeat, were fearful in the extreme; fraught with dangers, socially and politically, and charged with combustibles; society was torn in its every element, and the horrors that were enacted can never be too faithfully or too truly depicted.

The Irish nation went into the famine in the autumn of 1846 when the potato crop had become blighted with nearly nine million of souls. The Irish nation came of the famine at least two millions of souls less by starvation, by forced emigration, by the workhouse death rate, and so on. The Irish nation has not recovered from the effects of that terrifying visitation; nor is it likely that it can ever sufficiently recuperate the energies, etc., possessed before the famine came on Ireland.

with a loaded blunderbuss, and threatened to shoot any person who approached him. He did not carry his threat into execution, and was made prisoner by the police."

The capture

There were ten witnesses in all examined at the trial. The eighth witness was Alexander Heard, who was sworn and examined by Mr. Bennett, Q.C. Having stated that Ryan lived at Bunkey, within one mile of where John Kelly lived, and having stated that he arrested him at Garden Hill on the 17th October following the murder, and having been called upon by Mr. Bennett to describe what happened on the occasion, he proceeded to say:—

"I went to make search on the hands for a book, supposed to have been in the possession of a man named Nash, who had been murdered.

"A circumstance occurred which led me to search the house of a man named Frewen; I ordered the house to be searched; I was on horseback, and sent four constables in.

"I heard a man inside the house exclaim 'Puck! Puck!' I jumped off the horse and ran into the house; I saw the four policemen there and William

Frewen."

"Were you then looking for the prisoner?"
"I was not; I had been searching for him every night since the murder and previous to the murder. From the time Michael Kelly was shot at, on the 17th September, I was searching for him. When I went in I saw a blunderbuss aimed from the top of the bed. Constable Phillips was on the head of the bed.

"I heard the prisoner say: 'Mr. Phillips, I will not injure you.' Phillips replied: 'Billy, you did enough.' 'No,' said he, 'I will have a shot.'

"I called out to him and jumped upon the bed. I grasped at the blunderbuss; he shrunk back. I presented a pistol at him, and swore I would shoot him. He called out 'Will I fire?' William Frewen was in the room at the time. I told him I would blow his brains out. He said again: 'Will I fire?' No answer was given; if there had I would have pulled the trigger.

"The room was darkish. I could only see his movements by the motion of the blunderbuss. I could not see that there was any covering over him. The prisoner asked: 'Let me

fire about the house.' 'No,' said I swearing, 'if you do, I will shoot you!'

"Did he address himself to anyone in particular when he said 'Will I fire?'"

"He did not mention any person by name. There was no person in the room, but Frewen and the police. It was then about five o'clock in the evening—about dusk. Phillips grasped the blunderbuss, and William Frewen moved close to the foot of the bed, and put out his hand, as if to take the blunderbuss. Phillips seized the blunderbuss, and took it from him, and handed it to one of the constables. It was cocked, capped and loaded with eleven balls. I drew the charge (witness produced the charge). He was afterwards searched in the barracks, by my direction, and there was found on his person, powder in paper, with eleven balls loose in his pocket."

Chief Baron in an extraordinary rigid, effective and powerful address, passed sentence of death, and directed that the prisoner should be executed on the 7th February. But the 8th being Sunday, the day of execution was afterwards altered in the presence of the prisoner to the 7th February.

William Ryan Puck was accordingly executed in front of the County of Limerick Gaol, and in presence of an immense number of spectators on the morning of that day. He made no public confession.

His body was buried within the walls of the goal.

His lamentation was sung at fairs and markets, as was the case at the period with every malefactor throughout Ireland; but I am not able to lay my hand on a copy of this ballad.

When cut down the body was warm, and that the offices of the surgeon were applied for and that Ryan Puck was bled to death—but we give this on no authority.

His lamentation was sung at fairs and markets, as was the case at the period with every malefactor throughout Ireland; but I am not able to lay my hand on a copy of this ballad.

William Frewen was tried and found guilty on Thursday, January 8, 1848 (the day Ryan Puck was sentenced to death), for harbouring a felon (in the person of said Ryan Puck) and sentenced to transportation for life.



William Ryan (Puck) was publicly executed outside the County Gaol on February 7, 1848.

RADIO EIREANN

- SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27**
- 2.50—News Headlines.
 - 1.00—Goulding Programme.
 - 1.15—Television Club, Harcourt St., Dublin, Programme.
 - 1.30—News followed by Na h-Irisle Gaelige.
 - 1.45—Walter's Programme.
 - 2.00—The Invite Programme.
 - 2.15—Cooper McDougall Ltd. Programme.
 - 2.30—Associated Livestock Marts Programme.
 - 2.45—The Fruit Importers of Ireland Programme.
 - 3.00—News Headlines.
 - 3.01—Saturday Sport.
 - 4.00—Nuacht Headlines.
 - 5.00—News Headlines.
 - 5.30—Play on.
 - 5.55—Nuacht.
 - 6.00—Angelus.
 - 6.01—Weather Forecast.
 - 6.30—News.
 - 6.45—Dear Sir or Madam.
 - 7.15—Invitation Concert.
 - 8.00—Nuacht Headlines.
 - 8.01—Anything Goes.
 - 8.30—Oicheanta Mhuiscraí.
 - 9.00—News.
 - 9.05—Ceili House.
 - 9.45—Nuacht.
 - 9.55—Sports Final.
 - 10.00—On the Farm.
 - 10.70—See an tSathairt.
 - 11.00—News Headlines.
 - 11.30—Jazz Portfolio.
 - 1.45—Late News.
- SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28**
- News and Weather.
 - Michael Maguire's Music.
 - News and Weather.
 - Sunday Miscellany.
 - Nuacht.
 - 10—Cheol Thu, Claran na Mathúna.
 - 11—Mass from St. Flannan's College, Ennis, Co. Clare.
 - 11.15—News Headlines.
 - 11.30—Gaspard Mon Ami.
 - 11.30—Morning Prayer From the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin.
 - 12.30—Dear Valerie, Please Play.
 - 1.00—This Week.
 - 2.00—Palace of Varieties '71.
 - 2.45—Ceolta An Domhnaigh.
 - 3.15—The Dark.
 - 4.00—Topsey.
 - 4.15—Máire Callan.
 - 4.25—First Class.
 - 4.55—Nuacht.
 - 5.00—The Angelus.
 - 5.15—Country Call.
 - 5.45—Jazz.
 - 6.30—News.
 - 6.45—Sports Time.
 - 7.15—Dream Waltz.
 - 7.30—Nuacht Headlines.
 - 8.01—Sunday Concert.
 - 9.00—News.
 - 9.05—Sounds Traditional.
 - 9.55—Nuacht.
 - 10.00—Music of Sean O Riada.
 - 10.30—Bloody Sunday.
 - 11.00—News Headlines.
 - 11.01—G.A.A. Sports Results.
 - 11.05—Get an Earful of This.
 - 11.30—Nocturne.
 - 11.45—Late News.
- MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29**
- 7.30—Morning Airs.
 - 7.30—News and Weather.
 - 7.30—A Thought for the Day.
 - 7.55—Weather Forecast.
 - 8.00—News and It Says in the Papers.
 - 8.05—Headlines.
 - 8.10—And It Says in The Papers.
 - 8.15—Nuacht Headlines.
 - 8.20—The Doctor.
 - 8.25—Sports Summary.
 - 8.30—Nuacht Headlines.
 - 8.35—A Thought for the Day (repeated).
 - 8.40—News Headlines.
 - 8.45—Here and Now.
 - 8.50—Nuacht Headlines.
 - 9.00—The Angelus.
 - 9.05—News Headlines.
 - 9.10—Story Time.
 - 9.15—The Travellers.
 - 9.20—Nuacht Headlines.
 - 9.25—The Kennedys of Castle Ross.
 - 9.30—News Headlines.
 - 1.00—Sponsored.
 - 1.30—News At One-Thirty.

Glor na nGael

BHÍ ATHAS mor ar mhuintir an pharóiste agus go mor mor coiste Glor na nGael a dóibrig comh dian sin i rith na bliana, nuair a chualadar torthaí comortas Glor na nGael ar an Lúsin seo caite. Bhuaidh an paróiste an go ait an ehomortas do baile le daonra fe 1,000 duine. Be seo an chuid uair a chuir an pharóiste isteach ar an ecomortas agus ta an coiste an bhúioch dos na daoine go leir a chabhair leo i rith na bliana. Taisimid an bhúioch freisin don Limerick Leader as ucht spais a thabhairt do notal i nGaeilge gach seachtain.

Third prize
THE EFFORTS of the Glor na nGael coiste and the many helpers from the parish and outside were rewarded when it was announced on Monday evening last that Teampall a Ghleanain had gained 3rd place in its section of Comortas Glor na nGael, on its first attempt. This result shows the high esteem in which the Irish language and culture is held in the area.

Already a programme of events have been laid out for this year's competition, and with the continuing support of the parishioners, Teampall a Ghleanain should figure again in the prize winners' list of 1972.

Suipear

ONLY a very small number of tickets are now available for the Glor na nGael Social at the Devon Inn on Wednesday next. These can be had by contacting an Runal.

Cruinniu

BEIDH cruinniu de Glor na nGael i balla an pharóiste ar an Lúsin seo chugainn ar 8 o'clock. Beidh falte roimh each.

Special Commission

A Special Commission was set up by the Crown to try Ryan Puck and others who, according to the opening statement of the Attorney General, and which set forth that in the short interval since the summer assizes of 1847 "no less than nine brutal murders had been committed within a short distance of the place where you are now assembled, and in addition some forty outrages of a most sanguinary and dreadful description."

The Special Commission opened in the County of Limerick Courthouse on Tuesday, January 4, 1848, at 11 o'clock a.m. before the Lord Chief Justice Blackburne and the Lord Chief Baron, David Richard Pigott.

There was an imposing array of Crown Counsel, headed by the Attorney-General, General Monaghan, and the Solicitor General, John Hatchell. The prisoners, including William Ryan Puck, were defended by Mr. O'Hara and Mr. Charles Barry (both of whom were alive in 1877, the year this account was written—the latter, Mr. Justice Barry of the Queen's Bench).

Nothing could surpass the solemnity of the occasion. Nothing that could lend strength and impressiveness to the administration of the law was absent. The leading figure in those memorable trials was William Ryan Puck. He was a singularly daring and dangerous man; and it is well known that for months during those awful times he watched his opportunity to shoot down some one or other in the position of landlord or agent, but the murder for which he was arrested was that of a comparatively poor and humble small landholder of the name of John Kelly.

Ryan Puck's dispute with this John Kelly, according to Lenihan's account, was brought about by a family quarrel between the Ryans and the Kellys over the ownership of land. A most hostile feeling was, in consequence, excited between the families.

The Attorney-General, in the course of his charge, alleged that after the murder... The police were unable to find him until the 17th October, when being engaged searching the house of another person, they had reason to suspect that something was not right in the house named Frewen; they accordingly searched the house, and on the top of a bed was found the prisoner, concealed under a quantity of tow. He was armed

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