

# Notorious gang nears collapse as gardai move on crime boss

Barry Duggan

**GARDAI** are preparing to arrest one of the last remaining leaders of the notorious McCarthy-Dundon gang as part of their crackdown on organised crime.

The man - who is in his early 40s and has several criminal convictions - is one of the few members of the now bitterly divided gang who has not already been jailed or gone on the run.

The anticipated arrest comes almost exactly 10 years to the day after the murder of a Limerick crime enforcer in a city pub which sparked the murderous decade-long feud that has so far claimed the lives of 22 people.

From the 22 deaths, seven cases have been successfully prosecuted. Trials are pending in five other cases, while 10 murders have not resulted in convictions as investigations continue.

Since the first murder a decade ago, Limerick's criminal's underworld has been constantly evolving.

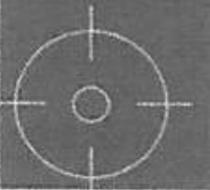
## Outfit

The majority of the most senior criminals are behind bars serving lengthy sentences including life, while others are awaiting trial.

The McCarthy-Dundon gang has been left severely depleted in their stronghold of Weston on the city's southside following the arrest of eight members of the outfit earlier this year as part of 'Operation Red Wing'.

One senior member of the outfit is believed to have started taking heroin in prison and is regarded as being extremely volatile. Other former associates are now attempting to distance themselves from the gang. The McCarthy-Dundon's associates in Moyross are also under considerable strain following recent operations by gardai. Officers have focused their attention on one individual who is controlling the gang's drugs trade from his Moyross base.

**A DECADE OF CARNAGE THE LIMERICK GANGLAND KILLINGS DURING THE LAST 10 YEARS**



**Eddie Ryan (40)** - Former enforcer of the Keane gang. Shot dead in the Moose bar in November 2000 by Kieran Keane and Philip Collopy (both now dead). Paul Coffey convicted of manslaughter.



**Brian Fitzgerald (34)** Night-club bouncer shot dead in November 2002 by James Martin Cahill and Gary Campion who were both convicted.



**Sean Poland (42)** Car dealer, shot dead at his Clare home on New Year's Eve 2002. No conviction.



**Kieran Keane (36)** Gang leader, brother of Christy Keane, murdered in January 2003. Five men sentenced to life imprisonment for his murder.



**Robert Fitzgerald (23)** Shot dead in Moyross in May 2003. No conviction.



**John Ryan (47)** Eddie Ryan's brother. Shot dead while working on a patio in 2003. No conviction.



**Michael Campbell McNamara (23)** Associate of the Keanes, tortured and shot dead on October 2003. No conviction.



**David Nunan (25)** Shot dead in October 2005 in Parteen, Co Clare. No conviction.



**Darren Coughlan (18)** Beaten to death in early November 2005 by Joseph Keane, Richard Treacy and Shane Kelly who were convicted.



**Richard 'Happy' Kelly (17)** Serial car thief, went missing on night of April 23, 2006. His body was found in a Clare lake over a year later by fishermen. No conviction.



**Aidan Kelly (19)** Shot dead in May 2006. No conviction.



**'Fat Frankie' Ryan** A member of the McCarthy-Dundon gang. Shot dead in September 2006. Gary Campion convicted for murder.



**Noel Crawford (40)** - Innocent victim. Shot dead outside his family home in December 2006. Two charged and awaiting trial.



**Noel Campion (35)** Well-known criminal was shot dead by the McCarthy-Dundons in retaliation for the murder of Fat Frankie Ryan. No conviction.



**Gareth Grant (25)** Father of three shot dead in October 2007. One man charged and awaiting trial.



**Mark Moloney (40)** Shot dead in April 2008. A man pleaded guilty to his manslaughter this week and is awaiting sentence.



**James Cronin (20)** Shot dead in April 2008 by the McCarthy-Dundon gang. No conviction.



**Shane Geoghagan (28)** Innocent victim. Murdered in a case of mistaken identity near his Dooradoyle home in November 2008. One man charged and awaiting trial.



**Roy Collins (35)** Innocent victim. Murdered in his father's amusement arcade in April 2009. James Dillon convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment this year.



**Daniel Fitzgerald (25)** Shot dead at his uncle's caravan last December. One man charged and awaiting trial.



**Daniel Treacy (35)** The breadman was shot dead at a Limerick petrol station on February 22 last. One man charged and awaiting trial.



**Lee Slattery (24)** Shot dead and buried in a shallow grave on the outskirts of Moyross over a small drugs debt last May. No conviction.



**Philip Collopy (29)** Took his own life when he accidentally shot himself in the head in March, 2009.

He was recently arrested by gardai in connection with a substantial discovery of heroin on the outskirts of the city. Officers hope that a lengthy prosecution against the individual will soon arise.

Last month, an AK-47 assault rifle and ammunition were found near his base. He is also

closely aligned to the Ryan brothers, Kieran and Eddie, who received lengthy jail terms this summer for the possession of a handgun.

On the opposing side of the feud, the *Irish Independent* has learned that two members of the Collopy gang have fled the city as they fear arrest and

imprisonment. One man - who was recently released from prison following a drugs conviction - fled to Europe after threatening to kill a former associate. The other man - aged in his 20s - fled after a substantial seizure of heroin in the Ballysimon area of Limerick earlier this year.

Three other members of the outfit are in custody awaiting trial for serious offences.

Speaking to the *Irish Independent* yesterday, Limerick prosecutor Michael Murray said "a terrible price has been paid for this feud".

"There are people serving very long jail sentences and

families that have been bereaved. So long as the feud continues, this misery will continue," he said.

As for legislation introduced last year to deal specifically with criminal gangs, Mr Murray said it was too early to pass judgement. "It has yet to be tried and tested," he said.

## After 10 years of bloodshed, feud moves on to next generation

### BACKGROUND

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TEN years of intense violence, 22 dead men and Limerick's gang war continues relentlessly.

Regardless of who they kill or harm, the city's feuding gangs have accounted for some of the darkest days encountered by the State since the turn of the Millennium.

Numerous families across Limerick and further afield have been destroyed thanks to the criminal gangs.

It all began on a cold Sunday

night - November 12, 2000 - when two gunmen burst into the Moose Bar and shot feared criminal Eddie Ryan 11 times.

Ten years since Kieran Keane and Philip Collopy burst into the packed pub and opened fire - and the violence, retributions and settling of scores continues. Many believe the gangland feud is all about the story of two families and their spiralling quest for vengeance.

But that is too simple. This dark episode in Limerick's story boils down to drugs, power, control, families and, indeed, a deep-rooted hunger for retaliation.

Those who chose to ignore that Limerick had a serious criminal problem argued that it

was confined to estates and suburbs where the gangs operated - Moyross, Southill, St Mary's Park and Ballinacurra-Weston. That defence is long redundant as the violence has spread like a cancer.

Those who have chosen the path of gun-wielding thugs have been killed, maimed or imprisoned while the lives of innocent, law-abiding citizens and families have been shattered.

Only following the deaths of Shane Geoghagan and Roy Collins in recent years did the nation stand back aghast. More than 5,000 took to the streets of Limerick last year demanding government action before gangland legislation was introduced.

But before these atrocities, the innocent were still being murdered.

A doorman at Doc's night-club, Brian Fitzgerald, was shot dead outside his home in 2002 for refusing to allow drug dealers operate within the night-club. Car salesman Sean Poland was murdered weeks later by criminals looking to rob him shortly after they bought a car from him.

In the intervening years, it is estimated that more than 150 people have been jailed in connection with drug-related offences or Limerick's feud.

As the Celtic Tiger came and went, rows of houses were abandoned as petrol bombs and

shootings became the norm as opposed to the exception.

Children and women have been shot and assaulted, pipe bombs seized and death threats issued via internet websites as the gangs went online.

From the cases coming before both Limerick's District and Circuit Criminal Courts, it is clear to see that the feud has now passed to a third generation.

Two weeks ago, cousins Noel Stanners (18) and David McCarthy (17) were sentenced to three years' detention for possession of a shotgun.

Stanners's father killed Kieran Keane while McCarthy is the grand-nephew of murdered Eddie Ryan. Both teens had just

begun primary school when the feud ignited.

More gang members are awaiting trial next year and the resources of the State have been severely tested by the criminals.

At least four families in Limerick are receiving round-the-clock armed garda protection after providing crucial testimony at major trials while others will be called to do so next year.

Publican Steve Collins wears a bullet-proof vest going to work while breadman Philip Treacy has an armed escort driving along his daily routes. Both have lost sons.

Ten years since Eddie Ryan was murdered - and there are no signs of a let-up.