

Saturday
25th April 1992

Limerick men in Easter Week

ODDS AND ENDS

An Manganire Sugach

I KNEW three Limerick men who fought in the Easter Week Rising in Dublin in 1916. They were Eamon de Valera, from Bruere (where he had lived from the age of two-and-a-half years to manhood); Eamon Dore, from Glin (who later owned a confectionery shop in Upper William Street, Limerick), and Gearoid Mac Auliffe, from Newcastle West, who came back from England to take part in the Rising.

It is almost certain that I saw a fourth, though I cannot recall it. Dr. Richard Hayes, a Bruere man (later well known as historian and film censor), was out in 1916, fighting under Thomas Ashe. He was sentenced to 20 years penal servitude for his part in the Rising.

Dr. Hayes's brother, Garrett Hayes, was serving his last few months as principal of Bruere boys school when I commenced my schooling there. He died, I think, in 1927, a year or so after his retirement. All the pupils of the school formed a guard of honour as his remains were being removed from Bruere church for burial. It is almost a certainty therefore that my eyes must have rested for some short period

on Dr. Hayes as he passed by among the chief mourners.

Limerick was well represented in the Easter Week Rising. It supplied three leaders to the Rising: Ned Daly, Con Colbert and Eamon de Valera. Daly and Colbert were executed. De Valera was sentenced to death, but had his sentence commuted to one of penal servitude for life because of his American citizenship — England was at that time busily endeavouring to bring America in on its side in the First World War, and dared not risk the strong reaction of Irish-American opinion that would result should de Valera be executed.

Other Limerick men involved in the Rising were Jim Flanagan and his cousin Matt Flanagan of Monagay, and Pat and Jim Mac Namara of Knocknaboula, Loughill. — Another West Limerick man who certainly would have been in the Rising, but for a tragic prelude to the events in Dublin, was Donal Sheehan of Ballintubrid, Newcastle West.

He was one of the three men drowned on Good Fri-

day 1916 when the car in which they were travelling to Kerry, hopefully to meet Roger Casement and contact the German arm ship, the *Aud*, took a wrong turning in the dark and plunged into the sea off Ballykissane Pier. The other two victims were Con Keating of Cahirciveen, and Charlie Monaghan of Belfast. The driver of the car, Tommy Mac Inerney, of Limerick, managed to escape. A second car, on the same errand, this also driven by a Limerick man, Sam Windrim, didn't make the fatal turning, and it and its three occupants survived.

In the aftermath of the Rising Gearoid Mac Auliffe was deported with 200 prisoners to Knutsford Jail, England, while Eamon Dore was deported to Stafford Jail. These deportations took place on May 1, 1916. Tommy Mac Inerney, of Lock Quay, Limerick, and Sam Windrim, of Dominick Street, Limerick, who had driven the cars to Kerry on Good Friday, were among 273 prisoners deported to Wakefield Jail on May 13.

There were others with Limerick addresses, who,

while not having taken part in the Rising, were still considered dangerous enough to the welfare of the British Empire to be rounded up and deported to English jails.

These were: J. J. Geoghegan of Ballingrane Station (near Rathkeale) deported to Stafford Jail, May 2.

James Armstrong, Galbally, deported to Wandsworth Jail, May 9.

James Heber, Lord Edward Street, Limerick; John O'Connell, 22 Upper Cecil Street, Limerick; James Quigley, Garryowen, Limerick; S. M. Ruttie, accountant, Adare — all deported to Wakefield Jail, May 13.

James Malone, Crescent College, Limerick deported to Lewes Jail, May 20.

James Malone, a Westmeath man, teaching in the Jesuits' Crescent College, was better known under the Irish form of his name, Seamus O'Maoileoin. During the War of Independence he played a very active part with the East Limerick Brigade IRA under the name Bear Forde. He wrote a most interesting book about the War of Independence

period; it is called *B'fhua Braon Fola*.

Ned Daly was the youngest of the Easter Week leaders to be executed. An eye-witness describing the surrender of the Volunteers at the end of the Rising has left us this picture: "Then into O'Connell Street, from the Quays, marched a splendid body of men, their arms at the slope, their heads held high. It was the Four Courts garrison, and at their head marched 25-year-old Ned Daly of Limerick. They took up their allotted position near their comrades of the General Post Office garrison".

If the new Shannon Bridge in Limerick were to have been named 40 or 50 years ago, I am sure valour and honour and sacrifice would have been recognised, and the Bridge called *Droichead Ui Dhalaign, Daly Bridge*.

West Limerick man, Con Colbert, was only 28 when he was executed that is three years older than his comrade-in-arms Ned Daly. The Capuchin priest, Fr. Augustine, who attended Con at his execution, has

left this account of his last moments. He says:

"While my left arm linked the prisoner's right, and while I was whispering something in his ear, the soldier approached to affix a piece of paper on his breast. While this was being done, he looked down, and then addressing the soldier in a mild and perfectly natural way, said: 'Wouldn't it be better to put it up higher, up nearer the heart?' the soldier said something in reply, and then added: 'Give me your hand now'. The prisoner seemed confused and extended his left hand. 'Not that', said the soldier, 'but the right hand'.

"The right hand was accordingly extended and having grasped and shaken it warmly, the kindly, human-hearted soldier proceeded to gently bind the prisoner's hands and afterwards blindfolded him. Some minutes later, my arm still linked in his, and accompanied by another priest, we entered a dark corridor and, his lips moving in prayer, the brave lad went forth to die".

It is to be regretted that the materialistic Ireland that is now evolving has no time for men like Colbert and Daly.

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