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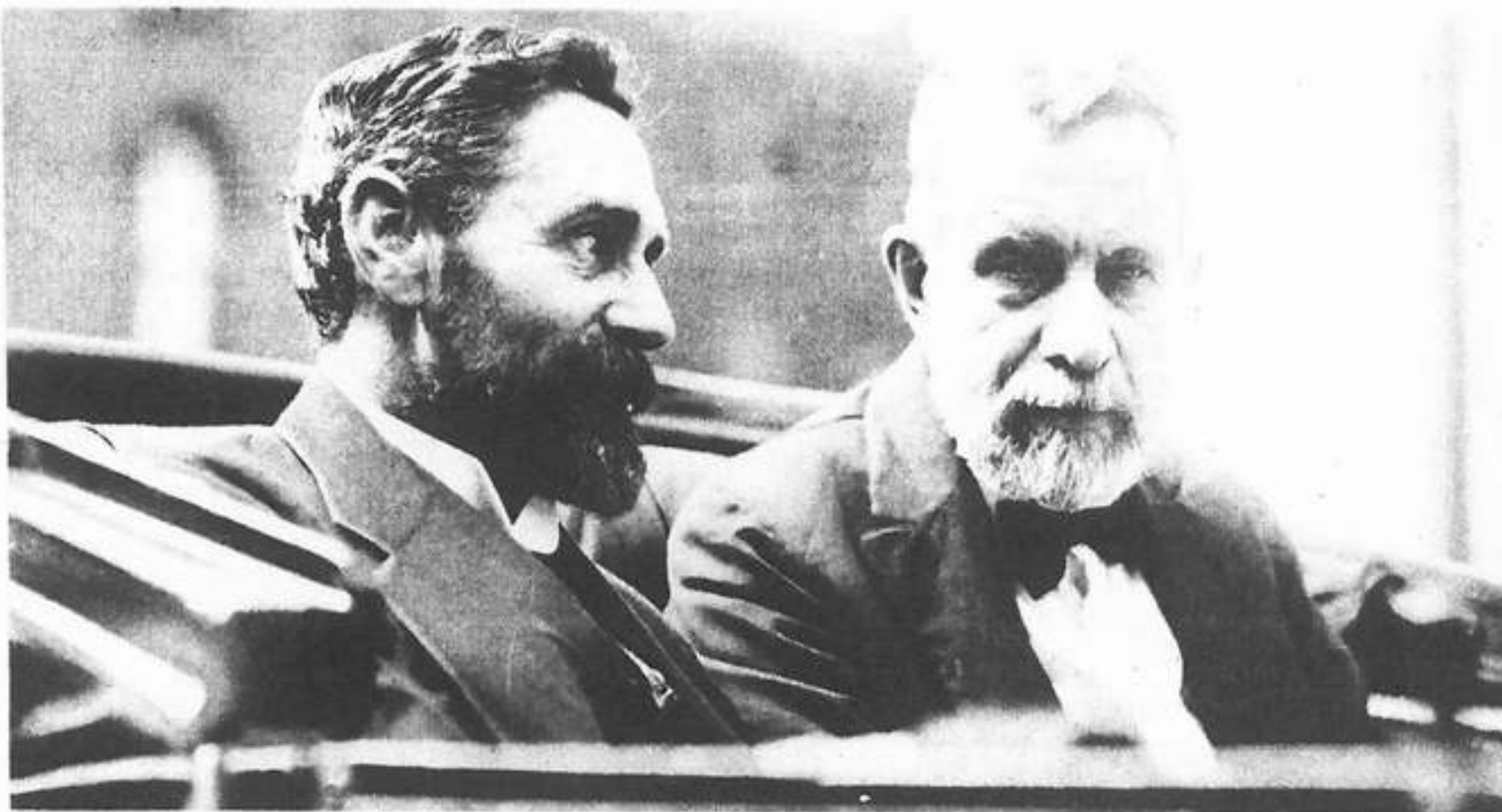
(essential). Anyway, it is important

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But what you don't have control over, using this

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Roger Casement, left, with fellow Republican John Devoy was to land a shipment of German arms on Banna Strand after Donal Sheehan and Co distracted the British navy by sending a false signal from Cahirciveen. At least, that was the plan. Sadly for the conspirators, it ended in tragedy

# Sheehan's tragic mission leaves us asking 'what if'

West Limerick native was one of the first men to die in 1916's Easter Week Rising

DONAL SHEEHAN from Ballintubrid, Newcastle West was one of the first casualties in the Easter Week Rising of 1916.

He died along with comrades Con Keating and Charlie Monaghan, when their car entered the River Laune at Ballykissane Pier near Killorglin on Good Friday night.

The car was driven by Tom McInerney, the only survivor of the four occupants. They were on their way to Cahirciveen to seize radio equipment to secure contact with the German ship the Aud which was carrying arms and ammunition for the Irish cause.

Sheehan was born in Ballintubrid in the parish of Monagea, a few miles west of Newcastle West in 1886. He attended Killoughteen primary school and later the Courtenay School Newcastle West.

He was a keen student of the Irish Language and he passed his civil service examinations. He left for London and he secured a job as a book-keeper in the Savoy Hotel. He also joined the Gaelic League which helped to keep the national spirit alive amongst the Irish exiles.

He also became a volunteer and rose to the rank of captain under Joseph Plunkett. His quiet and unassuming manner soon made him a general favourite in London, where his knowledge of his country's history and his sincere patriotism was appreciated by all.

When the First World War commenced Donal returned to Ireland to avoid conscription, and worked for a short period at Geary's Biscuit Factory in Merchant's Quay, Limerick city.

He stayed in the home of Mrs. Hall a friend of the Geary's at Assembly Mall also known as Charlotte Quay.

The family took an instant like to the tall sandy-haired lodger as he was mannerly, quiet and interesting and they were sad to see him leave.

He was recalled by headquarters to Dublin to take part in a special mission in Cahirciveen.

The story of the first three casualties in the 1916 Rising is interesting for a number of reasons, not least the "what if" factor of what might have happened had their mission not ended so tragically because they were given the wrong directions.

How often has human error



## Then & Now

with Tom Aherne

played a significant part in determining historical events?

On Good Friday - April 21, 1916 - six men set off from Dublin by train to Killarney: Charlie Monaghan, Donal Sheehan, Con Keating, Dennis Daly, Thomas McInerney, and Colm Ó Lochlainn.

According to the memoirs of Gerry Plunkett, and the Killorglin Archives, they were to travel by car to Cahirciveen in order to seize control of the wireless station on Valentia Island. From there, the plan was that they would signal to the British Navy that a German naval attack was imminent on the Scottish coast.

The purpose of this would be to distract the British naval presence from the Kerry coast, thus facilitating the landing of 2000 German rifles and 10 machine guns at Banna Strand from the U-boat the Aud.

On board the ship was a small group of Irish Republicans led by Sir Roger Casement. They were then to liaise with Austin Stack in Tralee, to ensure that the weaponry was distributed throughout the country to coincide with the Easter Rising in Dublin on Easter Sunday.

The men travelling to Kerry from Dublin had each been selected for their particular expertise, Keating originally from Cahirciveen was a radio expert and had been a radio officer on a number of ships. Monaghan was a mechanic and wireless installation expert, Sheehan had worked at the War Office and knew the Admiralty codes.

On arrival at Killarney the group transferred into two motor vehicles. Denis Daly drove the first car with Colm Ó Lochlainn and Thomas McInerney drove the second car carrying Con, Charlie, and Donal.

Since Denis knew the route, McInerney was to follow his tail-lights. However, as is often the case in life, plans began to unravel when a breakdown and a curious RIC officer held up the lead car.

Somehow the second vehicle lost sight of the first car just outside Killorglin. McInerney asked a young girl for directions to Cahirciveen. She told them to take the first turn on the right and not knowing the road, Thomas mistook the turn which led to the quay.

In the darkness he only realised his mistake when the two front wheels of the car went over the unprotected edge into the River Laune, which is deep and wide at this point.

It is said that in the moonlight, the reflection of the water resembled a continuance of the road. In the ensuing panic the car became unbalanced and fell into the river with its four passengers still on board.

Totally disorientated, Thomas McInerney started to swim heading in the wrong direction, only for the intervention of local man Thady O'Sullivan, who guided him back to the shore.

At this stage it was clear that the three other occupants of the car had somehow become trapped in the vehicle and had sadly in all likelihood quickly drowned.

Other local people such as Patrick Begley and his son Michael, an Irish teacher based in Limerick, had made strenuous efforts to rescue them but this proved impossible.

Cold and disheartened, the one survivor and the rescuers gathered in the O'Sullivan kitchen.

McInerney was advised to go to the RIC barracks and report the incident. Whilst away, McInerney's wet overcoat was picked up, and a revolver was discovered in it.

Patrick Begley soon realised that there was more to the night's events than first thought. At that moment the RIC arrived at the cottage, Begley hid the revolver by sitting on it under a cushion.

The RIC had arrested a man in Tralee and were alert to the possibility of some Fenian-related activity in the area.

McInerney stuck to his story

that he had been driving tourists around Kerry and that he did not know the occupants of the car personally.

On a wet Holy Saturday morning the bodies of Con Keating and Donal Sheehan were located by fishermen. No trace of Charlie Monaghan was found until October, some six months later, when his body was discovered on an island in the river.

That same morning McInerney tried to retrieve his revolver from Patrick Begley, but Begley said that if the RIC returned it would be better if he was not carrying a weapon. As predicted, they did indeed return and arrested Thomas McInerney.

He was transferred after the Rising was suppressed to the prison camp in North Wales, Frongoch, which was to be the destination of the bulk of those Republicans captured after the Rising. McInerney on release from Frongoch rejoined the IRA and was later killed in County Tipperary.

Donal Sheehan was not known to the local people and after his body was recovered from the Laune River it was not identified.

As a result he was reverently buried in the local cemetery and his funeral attended by the whole countryside.

It was a fitting final tribute from the people he sought to serve and to set free. A monument to commemorate the loss of life of the three Volunteers is located on Ballykissane Pier.

In 1966 a plaque was erected at Monagea Church where Donal was baptised. In April 2004 a limestone Memorial was put in place near his home place beside the Killarney Pole on the verge of the N21 outside Newcastle West on the way to Abbeyfeale, and Kerry.

It was unveiled by Mike Dwane of Feohanagh, and arranged by Newcastle West Old IRA Association. The monument was blessed by Fr Patrick Costelloe and a wreath was laid by Mary Mc Carthy PRO of the Association.

Tim Mulcahy Monagea gave the oration, and Seamus Hunt played Marbha Luimnuighe and the National Anthem on the pipes. Donal continues to be remembered each Easter Sunday by the members of Newcastle West Old IRA Association, and next year will be the centenary of his death.

# Good trout on the Feale alas Canals

## John B. Keating

### OUT IN THE OPEN

LAST week and the week before two parties of trout anglers arrived in Listowel to do some trout fishing. They had heard reports that it was a good area for trout fishing. People up the country had told them that there were good-sized trout in the Feale. The first party of three spent one night, in the town, did a little fishing the following day but caught nothing and so departed somewhat disappointed.

The second party was luckier. They had a friend in the town home on holiday from England. He was a trout angler one time himself. His name is John Dore, and he used to work in the Listowel Post Office before resigning for a position with the London Times.

Anyway, his friends arrived, and he directed them to Finuge, where they had two good days fishing for the smallish slob trout, erroneously called pink trout along the Feale. These slob trout quit the river in the middle of April and are not seen again until the following March. They weigh a maximum of a quarter of a pound, and are regular suckers for flies and small minnows, not forgetting Lane baits.

The fact that they disappear from the river in April has led many to believe that they are, in fact, young salmon, and not trout at all. This is not so. They are trout alright, and they belong only in rivers where there are great slob in the estuaries. English visitors did very well, and were so delighted that they intend on coming for a fortnight next year.

#### Beyond Abbeyfeale

Seriously speaking, however, neither the Feale river, nor its tributaries, the Gale and Smearla, are good trout rivers by Irish standards. The trout are there in abundance, but they are small for the most part. In parts of the Gale, there is a dwarf or pygmy trout, and although fully matured, never grow more than eight or nine inches in length. The majority rarely attain six inches.

Of course there are white trout but these are June fish with the exception of the very rare spring and harvest trout which weigh up to three and a half pounds in weight. The average weight of the June white is about a half pound.

In the Feale from Listowel up to Abbeyfeale there is a small brown trout averaging about two and a half ounces and rarely exceeding four. These small trout are quite plentiful and extremely palatable.

Many maintain that they have no equal when fried. For trout of any consequence one must go beyond Abbeyfeale. There are certain streams in

the Feale where res trout of a pound w plentiful.

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