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ANNIVERSARIES IN 2015

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# Memory lane: Che Guevara, Mick Mackey and the lost Lusitania

■ Some memorable anniversaries to be marked in Limerick during 2015

MIKE DWANE

IT was 25 years ago this year that Texan computer king Michael Dell brought Limerick into his PC revolution by opening a factory in Raheen.

It would go on to become far and away the city's largest employer and, at its height, Dell in Limerick was responsible for a good chunk of Irish GDP.

While the closure of the manufacturing plant in 2009 was a bodyblow for the region, Dell remains one of the Mid-West's largest and most valued employers. And a deal signed with biopharma company Regeneron will see the redesigned plant open, with hundreds on the payroll again, during 2015.

Adare Manor – recently purchased by JP McManus – is also celebrating an anniversary this year. It is 25 years since work began on the Robert Trent Jones-designed course that would go on to host the Irish Open and, of course, the world's best golfers at the McManus Pro-Am.

From humble beginnings in Limerick in 1990, a four-piece rock band fronted by Dolores O'Riordan would go on to global stardom. Starting out as The Cranberry Saw Us, the group had the good sense to ditch the dreadful pun, achieving worldwide success later in the decade as The

members are still performing 50 years on, not least singer Johnny Duhan.

While the Intentions were only starting out, Limerick's Brendan Bowyer was already a showband star and the Leader reported how he was "mobbed" by fans when opening a new "teen beat fashion store" on O'Connell Street in September 1965.

Mayor Frank Leddin, at 31, had just been elected Limerick's youngest ever first citizen but he too was caught up in the chaos, "buffeted about but suffering little injury", as "400 screaming teenagers lunged" at Bowyer.

"It took a force of gardai to extricate the worried-looking Bowyer from the crowd and as he emerged, it was seen that buttons had been ripped from his coat. One admirer went so far as to try and cut a bit of the singer's hair," the Leader reported.

Excitement didn't reach quite the same pitch during the general election count of 1965. But that was the year that saw James J Collins (FF), Denis Jones (FG) and Donnachadh O Briain (FF) returned in Limerick West and Donogh O'Malley (FF), Tom O'Donnell (FG), Steve Coughlan (Labour) and Paddy Clohessy (FF) in Limerick East. Sean Lemass would name Donogh O'Malley as his Minister for Health after the election.

The late Paddy Clohessy may have



Brendan Bowyer, 'mobbed in Limerick' 50 years ago, looked in danger of suffering the same fate at the Jetland when the Leader went along to capture his moves back in 1988

serious kind stalked the land during The Emergency and the papers of 1940 are full of reports on food supplies and prices and rations. There was also the many tragedies visited on Limerick's merchant mariners whose vessels had become targets for Nazi submarines and aircraft.

The collier, the Kerry Head - owned by Mullock & Sons - was the first Irish ship to be attacked during the war off Kinsale in August 1940. It survived and limped back to Limerick but would not be as fortunate two months later when she was again attacked by a German plane off the Cork coast and lost with all souls aboard. There were five Limerick crew among the victims, including brothers George and James Naughton from the Windmill.

Meanwhile, 2015 marks the centenary of an altogether more famous maritime disaster off the Cork coast, the sinking of the Lusitania in May 1915. There were eight Limerick people among the victims and Kilmallock seems to have been





Richard Harris graced the silver screen with one of his most iconic roles - as the Bull McCabe in Jim Sheridan's *The Field*.

It was 50 years ago this year that Limerick was visited by another icon, although Ernesto Che Guevara was evidently less able for the Guinness in the pubs of the city than Dickie Harris.

When he was delayed by mechanical trouble with his aircraft at Shannon Airport in March 1965, the revolutionary - then a minister in Fidel Castro's government - decided he wanted to go and sample the nightlife in Limerick. And the late journalist Arthur Quinlan was there to record the occasion at Hanratty's Hotel for a front page report in the *Leader* the following day. Quinlan later recalled that Che was much taken by the ladies of Limerick and was "three sheets to the wind" by the time he made it back to his hotel.

Another person on a flying visit to Limerick that year was The Big O - Roy Orbison - who played a sold-out show in the Jetland in July. The same year, The Yardbirds complained about the range of cigarettes available at Shannon Duty Free.

But it wasn't all about the English Invasion in 1965. That was the year Granny's Intentions formed in Limerick - and some of the band's



Che Guevara enjoyed his night out in Limerick 50 years ago

ago but he was also celebrating 75 years ago when Limerick were crowned All-Ireland hurling champions, with Clohessy at centre-back.

Mick Mackey had inspired his county to a comeback win against Kilkenny and this was the last of three All-Irelands won by Limerick's greatest. The victory marked the beginning of a 33-year famine for Limerick's senior hurlers.

Shortages of an altogether more

freely, both Kilkenny and Limerick lost as was another woman from the town, 23-year-old Katherine Gleason who was returning from Chicago to see family.

Years later, the *Leader* would catch up with the only Limerick survivor of the *Lusitania*. On a trip home to Castleconnell in 1964, Pat Hanley would give a vivid description of seeing the approach of the torpedo that would result in the deaths of almost 1,200 people.

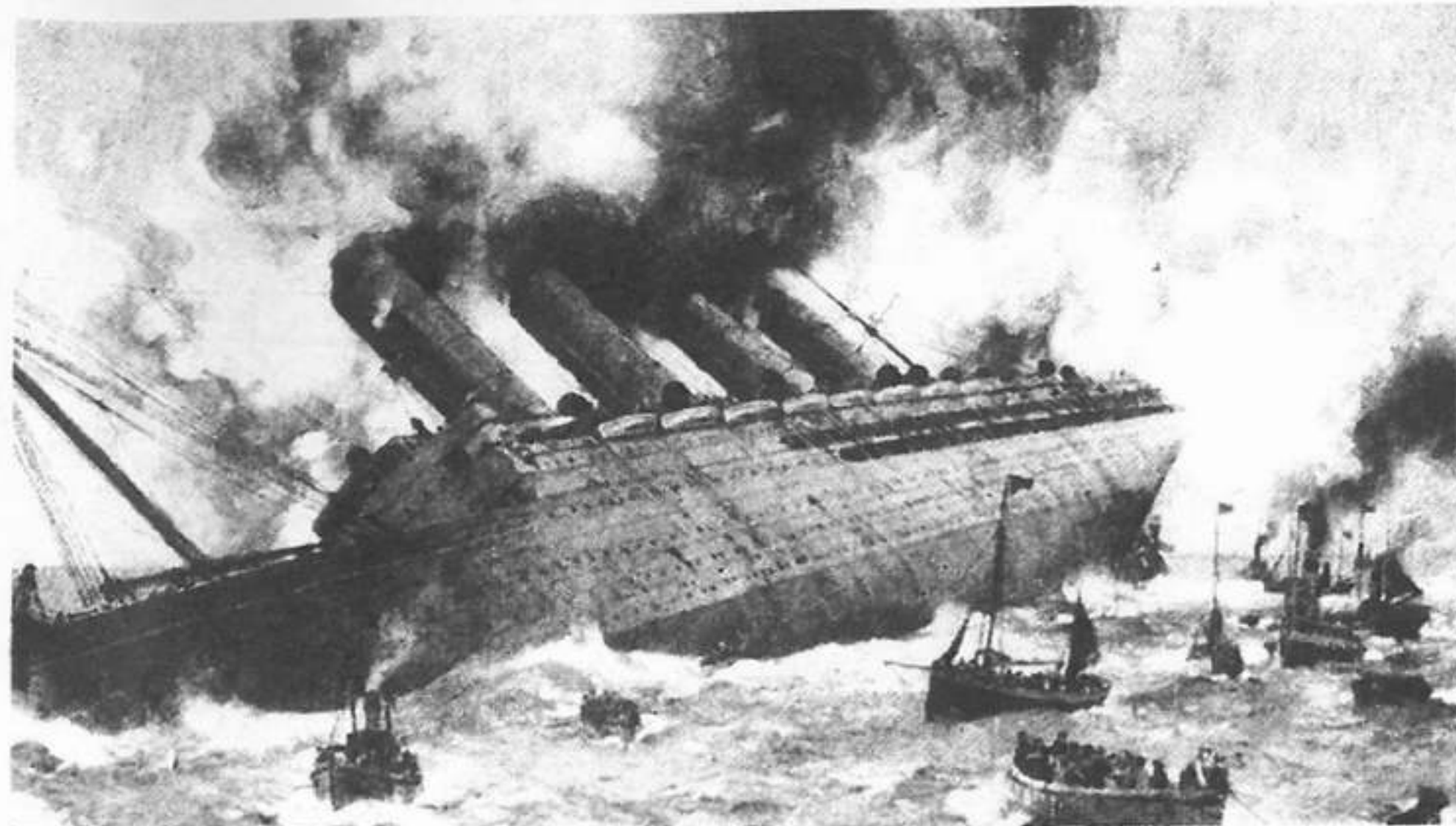
The Limerick *Leader* of 1915 was full of reports of the deaths of soldiers on the Western Front and in Gallipoli. They included many Catholics as well as the Anglo-Irish, such as Lt James O'Grady Delmege of Castle House, who succumbed to poison gas at Ypres.

A year before the Easter Rising and political feeling in Limerick was running high.

While Limerick was one of the first cities in which the Volunteers organised, a contingent of over 1,000 led by Padraic Pearse were attacked by a mob as they paraded through Irishtown in an incident known as the Whit Sunday Riot in May 1915.

Ned Daly, who was executed for his role in the Rising the following year, and Eamon De Valera were among those pelted with stones by the people of Irishtown 100 years ago.

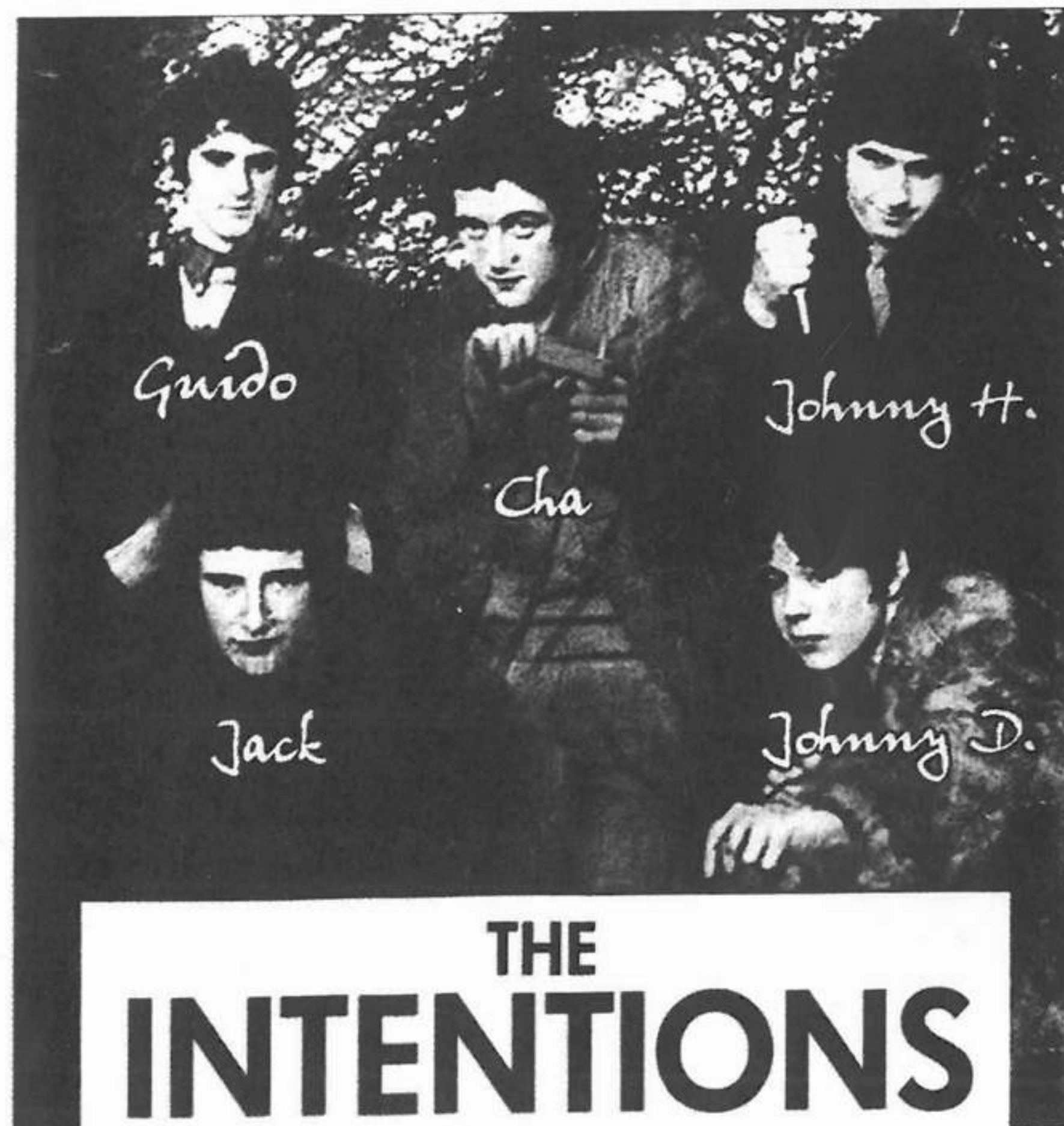
Fresh-faced Limerick band the Cranberries would go on to win global stardom, after being born as The Cranberry Saw Us in 1990



Eight Limerick people perished when the *Lusitania* was sunk by a German torpedo off Kinsale 100 years ago



Mick Mackey won the last of his All-Ireland medals with Limerick all of 75 years ago



Limerick's Granny's Intentions formed 50 years ago and while no longer together, they're all still active musically today