Like the "Chronicle" it Recorded the Great Events of the Past

The Mayoral Chain has Links with History

IN recent years it has become the accepted practice for the Mayor of Limerick to bring the great Mayoral Chain with him on visits to the United States. Only in very exceptional circumstances, however, did former Corporations allow this priceless antiquity to be taken outside Ireland, and, up to a decade ago it had been taken abroad on only three occasions.

The first was in 1875 when Ambrose Hall attended a week's festivities given by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London to all the Mayors of the world; the second in 1901 when Limerick's first Fenian Mayor, John Daly, took it with him on a tour of America, and the third in 1957 when the then Mayor, Alderman G. E. Russell, toured America to inaugurate a fund raising campaign for a memorial to Seoirse Clancy, Michael O'Callaghan, Brigadier Sean Wall and Volunteer Joseph O'Donoghue, who died in Ireland's War of Independence.

The Mayoral Chain is of great historical interest and has been associated with civic events for over 140 years. It is recorded that during Ambrose Hall's visit to the Guild Hall, London, in 1875, no chain was so much admired by many of those present, including the Syndic of Rome and the Prefect of Seine.

The greatest storm weathered by the emblem of our "ship of state" was in 1901, when Mayor John Daly took the Mayoral Chain with him on his visit to America. As he was not sent out as the direct representative of the city, or Corporation, it was held that he had no right to take away the chain of office.

The storm of controversy raged fiercer on Daly's return, but Limerick's first Fenian Mayor made a forceful retort to his critics when, at a banquet given in his honour in the Council Chamber, he stated: "My right to take the chain was vindicated by the brainy men of America, for they said that here is a man who has been in chains for the most part of his life, and Limerick now sends him to us with the golden chain of office."

It was the first time that the chain was taken outside the British Dominions. In 1875, Ambrose Hall wore it in London during the week's festivities given by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London to all the Mayors of the world, and at the expiry of his term of office he expressed himself pleased to get rid of the responsibility of its safe keeping. Somewhere about the middle of the last century it was very near being lost at the old Newcastle Racecourse during a race meeting—whether as the result of betting transaction or bad whiskey we are not told! No Mayor ever afterwards or before this occasion wore the chain unless on official occasions and representing the Corporation.

LIMERICK'S Mayoral Chain is one of the city's most treasured possessions, and intrinsically its value is even greater than many of the more elaborate-looking adornments of Mayors of far larger cities. What this intrinsic value is has not been computed, but it is undoubtedly very considerable. Its weight in 1866 was 19 ozs. 91 dwts., and it has been considerably added to since then, bringing it in 1944 to 2 lbs. 7 ozs. 14 dwts.

Its historic value is priceless, and the records inscribed on its links date back to 1822. It has been present at every function of civic importance for over 140 years. It travelled with John Daly on his tour of impassioned speeches in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago. With him it participated in New York's great St. Patrick's Day parade of 1901, and with him was present at the great banquet of the Sons of St. Patrick to 450 guests.

The Mayoral Chain is of solid gold and was originally fashioned by a firm of London goldsmiths about 1820. In its early stages of growth the links from 1822 to 1842 were considerably smaller than at present and resemble a flat ring, in circumference not much larger than 1d. They had no room for elaborate engraving, and each merely carried the name of the holder of the office.

The links added by the Mayors of the Reformed Corporation, however, differed in format, were much greater in thickness and value, and carried a record of local, national and world events during each Mayor's term of office. They are mainly of the size of a five shilling piece with a circular piece taken out of the centre, thus turning what would otherwise be a medal into a link, attached to the other links by a small ring of gold. Other links have two holes diametrically apart and punched near the circumference.

IN three instances are the links wholly solid, or medal-like, and attached to the chain as pendants. One of these bears the crest of Martin Honan, the first Reform Mayor, with the City Arms on the other side. (Honan, by the way, contrived to have his representation on the chain as far removed as possible from those of the old corrupt Corporation, which went out of office in 1841.)

The other medallions, which are among the latest additions to the chain, were presented by Mr. Michael B. O'Malley, solicitor, and the late James M. Casey. The O'Malley medallion bears the family crest in relief with motto "Terra Marique Potens."

Casey's medallion commemorates the fact that he was elected first Mayor under the Limerick City Management Act and that he acted as Deputy Mayor from March 7 to 22, 1921, after the murder of George Clancy by British Forces.

Two links added by the representatives of Limerick's murdered Mayors, George Clancy and Michael O'Callaghan, commemorate the greatest tragedy in the city's 700 years municipal history.

The last Mayor to add a link to the chain was Ald. G. E. Russell, who occupied the office for the three consecutive terms, 1954/'5, 1955/'6 and 1956/'7. It commemorates a banquet given by Alderman Russell during his Mayoralty to the 16 surviving former Mayors of Limerick.

The following list of the inscriptions on the links of Limerick's Mayoral chain may be of more than usual interest.

THE INSCRIPTIONS UP TO 1842

Hon. J. P. Vereker, Mayor, Mayor, 1831-'32.

Ald. John Vereker, Mayor, 1833. (He was also Mayor in 1864).

1834.

Ald. John J. Pierce, Mayor, Garrett Hugh Fitzgerald, Mayor of Limerick, October 1, 1836.

Sir Richard Franklin, M.D., Mayor, 30th Sept., 1839. (He was knighted during his term of office by Earl Fortescue, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.)

Hon. Charles Smith Vereker, Mayor, 1841.

Martin Honan, the first of the Reform Mayors, initiated the practice of recording outstanding events during the Mayoral term of office. The inscription on each link down through the years to our own time is given below.

MUNICIPAL REFORM ACT PUT IN OPERATION

On a solid medal appears: Martin Honan, Mayor for the years 1842/'43. On the back: Municipal Reform Act became law in Limerick, Nov. 9, 1841.

DIED IN HIS MAYORALTY

Pierce Shannon, Corbally House; Mayor, Jan. 1st, 1844. On back: Died in Mayoralty, June 6th, 1844.

ABBEY RIVER BRIDGE

William J. Geary, M.D., 1844/'45. First arch stones of the Abbey River Bridge laid, 29th Nov., 1845.

THE FLOATING DOCKS— THE POTATO CROP FAILED

Edmund F. G. Ryan, Mayor, 1846, Floating Docks commenced. Total failure of the potato crop. £5,000 collected in the city for the poor.

LIBERATOR DIED

Thomas Wallnutt, Mayor, 1847. The Liberator died at Genoa, 15th of May. General Election. John O'Brien and J. O'Connell (son of the Liberator) returned.

ISLAND BANK FOR THE CITIZENS

Michael Quin, 1848. Got possession of the Island Bank for the citizens. Railway communication opened 9th May between Dublin and Limerick.

THE FLOATING DOCKS

Alderman John Boyce, J.P., 1849. Presented the Coroporation address to Her Majesty at the Levee in Dublin. Laid the foundation stone of the Floating Docks, on which occasion he was presented with a silver trowel.

GREAT INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION

Laurence Quinlivan, 1850. Presided at a banquet of the citizens to General Lord Gough on his return from India, 16th May. Attended Lord Mayor of London's banquet to Prince Albert and the Mayors of the United Kingdom in furtherance of the great industrial exhibition of all nations.

EARL OF ARUNDELL

Thaddeus McDonnell, J.P., 1851. The Earl of Arundell and Surrey was elected M.P. for the city.

LIMERICK M.P.s

Thomas Kane, M.D., J.P., 185[illegible] and 1857. Robert Potter and Francis W. Russell, Esq., returned as members for Limerick at the General Election.

FLOATING DOCKS OPENED

William Henry Hall elected Mayor, 1853. Great Munster Fair. New Cornmarket and Floating Docks opened by the Earl of St. Germaines.

PUBLIC FOUNTAINS

Henry O'Shea, 1855. Public fountains erected for the poor of the city.

CRIMEAN WAR

Henry Watson, Mayor, 1823 '24/'25/'26 and 1854. Irish Militia embodied. The Mayor this year traversed the land and water boundaries of the Corporation Municipality. War against Russia declared.

SIVER CRADLE

Michael Robert Ryan, J.P., 1859. General Election, 4th May. F. W. Russell elected third time. Major Galvin elected for the second time M.P. for the city. Silver cradle presented to Mrs. Ryan by the Town Council and Corporate officials of the city according to the ancient custom of the city to commemorate the birth of the son and heir on the 30th of January in the year of his Mayoralty. (Mayor Ryan omitted to record that he restored the ancient Arms of Limerick according to

red by the Crown to the Corporation, 20th November.

GAS WORKS

Eugene O'Callaghan, J.P., May, 1864. Presented address to Lord Lieutenant on assuming the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland. Birth of a son to the Prince of Wales. The Corporation Gas Works renovated. Bill for Corkanree embankment promoted by the Corporation.

TREATY STONE

Ald. J. R. Tinsley, J.P., Mayor, 1865. General Election—Russell and Gavin were elected for the city. £5,000 expended on sewerage. Distress among the working classes and outdoor re-

SCATTERY ISLAND

J. J. Cleary unanimously elected Mayor, 1873. Opening of Graving Docks by Earl Spencer, Lord Lieutenant, May 14. Vote by ballot became law in Ireland. Over 300 citizens invited by the Mayor to accompany his Excellency and Countess Spencer to Scattery Island. Dejeuner on board. Ashantee War broke out. The Irish Eight won the Shield at Wimbledon.

THE BALLOT ACT

J. J. Cleary elected for the third time, 1874. Gladstone's Ministry resigned. Mayor attended banquet June 2, to the Lord Mayor of London. Address of congratulation to his Grace the Duke of Abercorn, presented by Mayor and deputation of the Corporation at Vice Regal Lodge. First Parliamentary Election under the Ballot Act, Isaac Butt and R. O'Shaughnessy returned, February 8.

Councillor Vincent Feeney, Mayor of Limerick, wearing the Mayoral chain

the Corporate Seal of the City, over the City Jail and other public edifices, and had them engraved on the coat buttons of the sergeants-at-mace and city bailiffs).

DIED IN OFFICE

Alderman Wm. Fitzgerald, Mayor, 1860. Died during his Mayoralty, 26th October, aged 34. (His portrait, painted by Catterson Smith, was placed in the Town Hall).

COLLECTION FOR THE POOR

John Thomas MacSheehy, Shannon Lawn, Mayor of Limerick for the year 1861. Presented by the citizens with a valuable silver testimonial on leaving office. Civil War broke out this year in the hitherto United States of America. The Prince Consort died on the 14th December in this year. £1,100 collected for the purchase of fuel for the poor of the city.

FAMINE IN LANCASHIRE

Alderman W. Lane Joynt, Mayor 1862, appointed Clerk of the Crown for County Limerick. Great distress in Lancashire consequent on the Civil War of America.

CHURCH OF ST. ALPHONSUS

Robert McMahon, J.P., unanimously elected Mayor, 1st December, 1862, for the year 1863. New Church of St. Alphonsus dedicated 7th of the same month. The Prince of Wales married, 10th of March, 1863. An address of congratulation presented by the Mayor at Marlboro' House. The Mayor presented at the Queen's Levee at St. James' Palace, 8th June. Slobland of Corkanree transfer- lief obtained. The ancient

Treaty Stone raised on pedestal. Tait Testimonial Tower commenced. Jubilee fountain erected in St. John's Parish.

CHURCH OF IRELAND

Thomas Boyce, Mayor, 1869. Judges of Assize attended Mass in State, with the Mayor and Corporation in their robes, being the first occasion of the kind since the Reformation. Election petition against the city M.P. defeated. Protestant Church disestablished in Ireland.

FIRST PRESIDENT OF LIMERICK BOAT CLUB

William Spillane, J.P., Mayor, 1870. President of the Limerick Athenaeum and School of Art, Public Free Library and Limerick Boat Club, unanimously elected to each office. Declaration of war between France and Prussia, July 15. Irish Land Act became law, August 1. Corkanree embankment opened Oct. 14, and the first Public Free Library in Limerick opened Dec. 15.

SIEGE OF PARIS

Robert MacDonnell, J.P., 1871. Siege and surrender of Paris and termination of the Franco-Prussian War. Visit of Earl Spencer, Lord Lieutenant, June 10. Presentation of an address at the Town Hall by the Mayor and Corporation to Colonel M. Maunsell, M.P. for Co. Limerick, on his appointment as Postmaster General.

DISRAELI'S GOVERNMENT

J. J. Cleary, Mayor, 1872. Visit of Earl and Countess Spencer Lord Lieutenant; address presented from Corporation. Resignation of the Ministry. The Formation of a Conservativ Government by Mr. Disraeli.

INTERNATIONAL MUNICIPAL FESTIVITIES

Ambrose Hall declared Mayor for the year 1875 by the Right Hon. Justice Keogh, after trial on petition in the Court of Queen's Bench. International rifle match between America and Ireland. Frightful inundations in France, Hungary, England and Ireland. International Municipal Festivities. O'Connell Centenary Celebration. Fancy Charity Ball organised by the Mayor by which £120 was realised for the poor.

REDEMPTORIST CHURCH

John Francis Walker, 1876. Thomas E. O'Brien, South Hill, first High Sheriff, elected by the reformed Corporation. Opening of Catholic Institute. Laying of the foundation stone of the tower and spire of the Redemptorist Church, Mount Saint Alphonsus, which is to be furnished with a grand peal of bells, all being the gift of Ald. Quin, ex-High Sheriff.

DEATH OF PIUS IX

Stephen Hastings, 1878; elected unanimously September 1, 1877. Death of His Holiness Pope Pius IX, in the 32nd year of his Pontificate. Congratulatory address to Pope Leo XIII on his ascension. Treaty of Berlin signed July 13. Invasion of Afghanistan.

DOCK CLOCK

The next record is so long that the edge of the link is utilised. It reads, under 1879: Michael O'Gorman, Mayor, 1879, and re-elected 1880. Saint Alphonsus Tower completed and bells blessed, the Mayor and Corporation attending the ceremony. Isaac Butt, M.P. for the city, died. Prince Imperial of France killed in Zululand. Limerick. Under 1880: Limerick Gas Company Works acquired by Corporation. General Election. Resignation of Beaconsfield. Gladstone appointed Prime Minister. Address to his Excellency Earl Cowper, Lord Lieutenant, presented by Mayor and Corporation. Foundation stone of the Clock Tower at the Dock laid by Miss O'Gorman, daughter of the Mayor. Great agitation for the reform of the Land Laws throughout Ireland.

FIRST TREE ON MILITARY ROAD

Alderman Jerome Counihan, Mayor 1882/'83. Address of welcome presented by the Mayor and Corporation in Dublin to Earl Spencer on his appointment as Lord Lieutenant. Opening of Dublin Exhibition attended by the Mayor and mace bearer. The new Church of St. Michael's built and St. John's Cathedral spire finished. Most Rev. Dr. Butler, Lord Bishop. The first tree in the Military Road planted by the Mayor. Wellesley Bridge opened free of toll. Gold key presented to Mayor by Harbour Board. Athlunkard Bridge opened. Waterworks taken over. Royal Agricultural Society show and exhibition opened during visit of Lord Lieutenant and Countess Spencer. Bill passed freeing Athlunkard Bridge from toll. Waterworks purchased and taken over by the Mayor.

FIRST NATIONALIST MAYOR

S. O'Meara, Mayor, 1885. Failure of Munster Bank. Visit of Prince of Wales to the Railway Station. Not received by the Mayor and citizens. Resistance to police tax brought to a successful issue. On a supplementary link appears: Stephen O'Mara, Mayor of Limerick, elected M.P. for Queen's County, Ossory division. Home Rule Bill introduced by W. E. Gladstone. The Most Rev. Dr. Butler, Bishop, died, and the Rev. Dr. O'Dwyer consecrated Bishop.

ARTIZANS' DWELLINGS

Francis O'Keeffe, Mayor of Limerick three years, 1887-8-9. Elected M.P. for the City of Limerick, 18th April, 1888. Introduced the Public Libraries Act into Limerick. Turned the first sod of the new Waterworks, 5th September, 1888. The Corporation Artizans' Dwellings first erected.

YOUNGEST MAYOR

William J. O'Donnell, J.P., Mayor, 1890. Sheriff, 1889. Youngest Mayor on record.

DEATH OF PARNELL

Alderman Patrick Riordan, 1891. The leader of the Irish people, Charles Stewart Parnell, died October 6, 1891. (The Treaty Stone is engraved on one side of this solid medal, Parnell's head being in relief on the other.)

DEATH OF CARDINAL MANNING

D. F. McNamara, 1892. Cardinal Manning died January 14, 1892. Gladstone elected to power on the Home Rule ticket.

NOLAN'S COTTAGES

William M. Nolan, High Sheriff, 1890. Mayor, 1895-1896. Chairman Committee of "Garryowen" Fete opened by the Countess of Dunraven, and realised £3,000 for Barrington's Hospital. Mayoress presided at "Colleen Bawn" stall. Nolan's Cottages built. School of Technical Instruction for the city initiated. Mayor went with deputation to Lord Lieutenant re endowment of Technical Instruction. Trade and Labour Congress in Limerick attended by Mayor in State. Band Stand in People's Park inaugurated by Mayor. Garryowen Football Club won Munster Cup, presented by Mayoress. On the other side is the Nolan Crest, with motto in Irish.

FIRST FENIAN MAYOR— JOHN DALY

Seaghan O Dalaigh do daoradh than ceann treasbin cun braigdeanas pionuis le linn a saoghail, 1884. Do agsoileadh saor as carcar Phortland, 1896. Do toghad d'eanguth na meire e 1899 agus 1900. Do bhuadh nigh ar an d-fearuidhe, an Ridire Tomas de Cliobh, 1901. (On the back, beautifully engraved by Stewart of Limerick, is a circle of shamrocks with the rising sun in centre, a gun and pike crossed, and a pair of handcuffs below.)

YOUNGEST MAYOR?

James F. Barry, 1902. Seamus F. de Barra, I. na S., a bhi 'na Ard Sirriam Meire Luimnighe, 1902. (Though he does not claim the fact, Barry displaced Wm. J. O'Donnell as "youngest Mayor on record.")

EXHIBITION

John Kerr, 1907. Opened All-Ireland Industrial Conference in the Town Hall, Nov. 28. Opened the Tuberculosis Exhibition in the Athenaeum, Nov. 30. Attended the consecration of the Most Rev. Dr. Boylan as Bishop of Kilmore in Cavan Cathedral with sword and mace bearers, also Ald. Mac Neice and J. H. Roche, Esq., J.P.

ISLAND FIELD HOUSING

P. F. Quinlan, Mayor, 1933-'34, elected Mayor of Limerick 24th June, 1933. Inaugurated poor children's excursion to Youghal, 20th July, 1933. Pres. de Valera opened Civic Carnival 2nd Oct. 1933. Entertained Atlantic flyers, Capt. Pond, Lieut. Sabelli, 17th May, 1934, who conveyed Mayor's petition to Holy Father, Pope Pius XI. G.A.A. Jubilee Year. Limerick City. Turned sod Limerick's largest housing scheme (380 houses), Island Field, 7th June, '34. Messrs. P. Molloy and Sons and M. Doyle and Son, Builders. Entertained French engineers 3rd July, 1934. Unanimously re-elected Mayor, 9th July, '34. Apostolic Benediction received from Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, 13th July, 1934. Mayoral Banquet, 25th Oct., '34, to Limerick's team on victory All-Ireland Hurling Final. Management Act became law, 6th September, 1934. This link has the Quinlan Arms in enamel on the back.

MICHAEL B. O'MALLEY

Michael B. O'Malley, Meire, 1948-'49. Dligheadoir. On the opposite side of his handsome medallion the family crest is magnificently worked in relief, with the motto "Terra Marique Potens."

FIRST MAYOR UNDER THE LIMERICK CITY MANAGEMENT ACT

Clr. James M. Casey, elected first Mayor under the Limerick City Management Act, 1934-'35. Clr. James M. Casey acted as Deputy Mayor from 7th to 22nd March, 1921, after the murder of the Mayor by British Crown Forces.

LIMERICK'S MURDERED MAYORS: MICHAEL O'CALLAGHAN

Micheal O Ceallachain, Meire, 1920. Go stuama calma, stiurtaigh se gnothac na cathrach sa blian ba deine comhrad agus ba mho ufas i gcocaidh na Saoirse. Bliain glormhar a chruthaigh do claoiteacht agus co-anniact. I gcoim na hoice, Marta 7, 1921, in a thigh fein, dun mharbaidh e ag Gallaigh i lathair a bhaincelle. Beidh buan-chuimhne ar a ainm-sean a oidhe i measc na ndaoine.

1879/1921. SEOIRSE CLANCY

Do bhuanu cuimhne Seoirse Mhic Fhlanncadha. Oglach agus Oifgeach d'arm na Poblachta. Meire Luimni, 1921, a dun marbhu adh le Gallaigh in a thigh fein i lathair na bheancelle, an 7udh Marta, 1921. Cuimhnigidh ar Luimnig.

G. E. RUSSELL

Seoirse E. Russell, 1934/'5, 1955/'6, 1956/'7. "By the 16 surviving former Mayors."

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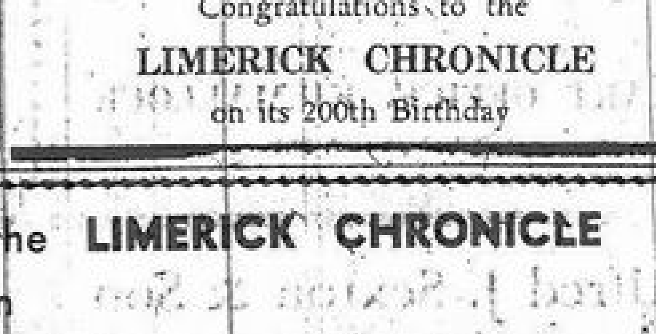
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