

EX-MAYOR ADDS LINK TO MAYORAL CHAIN

BY RICHARD NAUGHTON

A NEW link has been added to Limerick's historic mayoral chain and it will commemorate the terms of office of Councillor J. P. Rory Liddy in 1958-59 and 1970-71.

In the form of a massive medallion of solid gold, and far exceeding in size and value any that has been affixed in the chain's century and a half history, it has been presented by four prominent citizens who desire to remain anonymous as a token of their admiration of the manner in which Councillor Liddy carried out the duties of the mayoralty.

In line with tradition, the link commemorates the principal events during the term of the mayoralty. Engraved on one side is the Arms of Limerick, with the motto: "Urbs Antiqua Fuit Studiisque Asperima Belli," and on the other, the following:

1958-59 — Consecration of Bishop Murphy; Inauguration of President de Valera.

1970-71 Freedom of the City conferred on Bishop Wyse-Jackson; Received President Nixon in Limerick; Enthronement of Bishop Caird; Civic Reception for Apollo 13 astronauts, James Lovell, Jack Swigert, Fred Haise; Visit to U.S.A.; Received by President Nixon at White House; 50th anniversary of deaths of civic leaders, O'Callaghan, Clancy, Wall, and Vol. O'Donoghue; Attended funeral of Cardinal Michael Browne, O.P.; Visit of Lord Mayor and Mayoress of London, Sir Peter, and Lady Studd and party; Opening of Watergate Housing Scheme.

Longest ?

The list is probably the longest of any recorded on the chain, but Councillor Liddy, had he space, might well have added other major sporting happenings: the victory of the Limerick minor team in the All-Ireland championships, in 1958; and in 1970, Limerick's victory in the National Hurling League and in the F.A.I. Cup.

The link is also of particular interest, in that it recalls a long and heated controversy, which raged over the mayoral chain in 1870. Sir Peter Tail had been Mayor of Limerick for the three consecutive terms, 1866, 1867, and 1868, and was the first mayor to fill the

office for such a long period, since the Municipal Reform Act came into operation. He felt, therefore, that the link, commemorating his office, should be three times larger than any other link on the chain.

The Corporation, however, thought otherwise, and decreed that the link—a magnificently wrought medallion, inlaid with enamel, and worth, in present money value, a few thousand pounds—be removed.

They gave Sir Peter the option of adding three smaller links, each representing a year of his mayoralty. And, in October, 1870, a resolution was proposed by the Mayor, William Spillane, and unanimously adopted, that "future Mayors of Limerick who add their memorials to the chain must ensure they are in uniformity with the other rings."

Sir Peter indignantly refused the concession, and his memorial was never re-affixed.

It is not likely that our City Council will put this century-old resolution into effect and request Councillor Liddy to replace his medallion with three smaller ones!

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 circumference not much larger than a new two-penny piece. They had no room for elaborate engraving, and each merely carried the name of the holder of the office.

World events

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.

The Mayoral Chain is one of the city's most treasured possessions, and its historic value is priceless.

Councillor Liddy, a member of an old Limerick family, is son of the late Joseph P. Liddy, who was chief accountant of Messrs. J. & G. Boyd Ltd. After completing his schooling at Limerick C.B.S., he went into insurance for a number of years and subsequently worked with BOAC in Foynes from 1944 to 1946; American Overseas Airlines at Shannon, 1946 to 1950, and Pan American Airways from 1950 to 1970. He is at present employed with Messrs Well-trade Ltd., Shannon.

He was born into a family who had a great nationalist tradition. His father, a fluent Irish speaker, was, with all the other members of his

family, involved in Ireland's struggle for independence, and his home was known as Tig an Fhainne. From there Volunteer, Joseph O'Donoghue, was taken on the night of March 6th, 1921, and shot by Crown Forces.

Two of Councillor Liddy's brothers were involved in the struggles of those early years—one, Gerard, in the War of Independence, and the other, Jim, in the Civil War on the Republican side.

Councillor Liddy's involvement in politics began in 1927, when, as a schoolboy, he joined the Fianna Fail party on its foundation. Since then, he has been prominently identified with the party, acting in various capacities, including director of canvass, in the 1952 by-election; director of publicity in several general elections, and, in the recent Presidential election, assistant director of elections. On the appointment of Donogh O'Malley as Parliamentary Secretary in 1961, he was made leader of the Fianna Fail party in Limerick. He became a member of the Limerick City Council in April, 1952, when he was co-opted, following the death of Alderman Dan Bourke, TD. He has been re-elected at every successive local election.

He is chairman of the Limerick City Health Authority Advisory Committee; a member of the Mid-Western Regional Tourism Organisation, and, since 1955, a member of the Vocational Education Committee.

He is the present chairman of the Limerick City Committee of Fianna Fail. He was an intimate friend of the late Donogh O'Malley, whom he proposed in the by-election of 1952. Mr. O'Malley was defeated on that occasion, but Councillor Liddy proposed him again in 1954, when he was elected to the Dail.

Captained

Prominent too as a sportsman, he captained Limerick's first minor hurling team, in 1929. The side was beaten by Waterford, who went on to win the All-Ireland title. A team mate of his was Mick Mackey.

He was also a member of the Limerick Handball Committee of 1930, with such famous players as "Soaker" Ryan, J. J. Bowles, and Garda Jack Dempsey.

Councillor Liddy's wife, the former Miss Garry Vaughan, was an interprovincial hockey player. They have three sons, Cormac, a journalist with the "Limerick Leader," Peter, a commercial traveller, and Garry, a buyer for McInerney Properties Ltd.