

# Garda hunt to capture Jerry McCabe's killers took two years

THE Garda investigation into the killing of Det Garda Jerry McCabe in 1996 was one of the biggest ever in the history of the State.

It took two years to bring the men involved to court—the last was not captured until March 1998.

The intense investigation received a major early breakthrough when fire bombs placed in the Pajero jeep and the getaway car, a Mitsubishi Lancer failed to detonate. This car was abandoned six miles from Adare in a wooded area near Croom. Forensic examinations of both vehicles yielded valuable evidence.

Kevin Walsh of Lisheen Park, Patrickswell, was the last of the five to be caught when a team from the Emergency Response Unit swooped on an isolated IRA safe-

house in County Cavan.

As well as Mr Walsh, the others involved, Jeremiah Sheehy of Abbey Park, Rathkeale; Michael O'Neill of Lisheen Park, Patrickswell, and Pearse McCauley of Strabane, Tyrone, were members of the IRA's Munster battalion, a notorious unit which carried out a number of armed robberies across North Munster.

Mr Walsh headed up the gang and is believed by gardai to have been the gunman who fired the fatal shots which killed Jerry McCabe and badly injured Det Garda Ben O'Sullivan.

Mr Walsh was involved in a previous robbery in 1994 in Kilmallock when he fired on gardai as his gang escaped. He is also believed to be linked to the IRA's ruling

army council. Jeremiah Sheehy is believed to have been a low ranking IRA figure who was present in Adare to provide muscle if needed.

Michael O'Neill, a labourer, was a neighbour and right-hand man of Mr Walsh. He was one of the getaway drivers during the Adare raid.

Pearse McCauley was a hardened IRA veteran from campaigns in the North and Britain. He had previously benefited from early release for the first IRA ceasefire after receiving a seven-year sentence for being arrested with a handgun in 1993.

The trial of the four men charged with the capital murder of Garda McCabe opened in the Special Criminal Court in January 1999. Punishment under that con-

viction carried a mandatory 40-year sentence.

However, on the seventh day of the trial, Patrick Harty, a 53-year-old farmer from Toomevara in North Tipperary, was jailed for 18 months for contempt of court after refusing to give evidence at the trial. Two other witnesses also later refused to give evidence. Gardai believe all three individuals were intimidated by the IRA.

Then followed a sensational development when the State's prosecuting counsel indicated they were prepared to accept pleas of guilty to manslaughter.

In February 1999, Mr McCauley and Mr Walsh were sentenced to 14 years sentence for manslaughter.

Mr Sheehy received a 12-year sentence for manslaughter while

Mr O'Neill was jailed for 11 years.

A fifth man, John Quinn, of Faha, Patrickswell, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit a robbery and received a six-year sentence.

After initially being sentenced to Portlaoise Prison, concern about a possible early release of the four, grew among the Garda Representative Association and the McCabe family when the IRA men were moved to the low-security prison at Castlereagh, Roscommon, in 1999. As a result of this, Ann McCabe met the then Minister for Justice, John O'Donoghue, in December 1999, who reassured her that there would be no early release for the four.

The following year, the four were transferred back to Portlaoise along with six other republican

prisoners following an incident at Castlereagh when a prison officer was detained against his will.

They were later brought back to Castlereagh where they posed for pictures with Sinn Féin TDs in 2003.

Here the men have enjoyed relative luxurious surroundings in a bungalow complex called The Grove. Each has their own front door keys and is able to order take-away food and have personal shopping lists. They also avail of microwaves, cd players, televisions, videos and washing machines.

At the moment, Mr O'Neill is due to be released in May 2007, Sheehy in February 2008, while Mr Walsh and Mr McCauley are not due to be freed until August 2009.

## The McCabe controversy



## Bright summer's day casts a long, dark shadow

DET Garda Jerry McCabe died on the bright, sunny morning of June 7, 1996 in Adare.

Det McCabe accompanied by his colleague, Det Garda Ben O'Sullivan left Limerick escorting a post office lorry driven by Willie Jackson.

After completing the 10-mile journey to Adare, the lorry stopped outside the small post office in Adare near the bus stop. The unmarked navy blue 1993 Ford Mondeo squad car driven by Garda O'Sullivan stopped a small distance behind it.

Seconds later a stolen Pajero jeep rammed into the back of the patrol car. A number of men brandishing AK47 Kalashnikov assault rifles surrounded the car, a hail of gunfire ripped through the car's metal and shattered the windows.

Sitting in the passenger seat, Garda McCabe died immediately. Garda O'Sullivan was seriously wounded, but managed to reach across to his colleague's hand to try and feel a pulse. He knew that Garda McCabe was dead.

The postal bags which contained a prisoner's cash—estimated value of £100,000—were in secure metal baskets which made it impossible for the gang involved to make a quick snatch and getaway. They drove off at speed without attempting to take anything from the post office lorry.

First at the scene was local curate Fr Denis Mullane, who whispered the Last Rites to Garda McCabe. He was accompanied by local doctor Nick Van Kuyik, who gave medical assistance to the wounded Det O'Sullivan.

## Special Report By BARRY DUGGAN

livan. Twelve empty gun shells were later recovered at the scene.

Jerry McCabe was 52 years old when he was killed. Originally from Ballylongford, he attended Rockwell College before joining the Garda at the age of 20.

Jerry was based in Dundrum, Tipperary, before moving to Limerick where he spent the remainder of his service. In June 1973 he joined the detective branch in Limerick and was teamed up with Ben O'Sullivan, his partner for the remainder of his career.

Garda McCabe married a Limerick hairdresser, Ann, and they had five children—four boys, John, Mark, Ian and Ross and one girl, Stacy, all now aged from 24 to 36. John, the eldest followed his father's footsteps and joined the Gardaí and serves in Clare.

Garda McCabe became a familiar and popular figure in Limerick during his 23 years in the Special Branch. He took part in many high profile investigations and his work led to the recovery of a baby snatched from her parents in England and brought to Limerick by a babysitter. The story of baby Farrah Quli was national news in August 1992.

Among Jerry's interests included working under car bonnets or fiddling with electrical gadgetry. He protected many high profile visitors to

Limerick, and in the House of Commons, former Northern Secretary, Tom King paid a moving tribute to the dead garda whom he had befriended while attending a meeting of the British and Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body in Adare. He had also served as bodyguard for former Minister for Industry and Commerce Des O'Malley for five years.

On Sunday, June 9, 1996, an estimated 20,000 queued outside Thompson's Funeral Home on Thomas Street to sympathise with the bereaved family. It was one of the biggest funerals ever in the city.

One of the many journalists who came to Limerick to cover the story was Veronica Guerin who a few weeks later was shot dead at Newlands Cross on the southside of the capital by a Dublin drugs gang.

The US Ambassador, Jean Kennedy Smith, visited the McCabe home and gave Ann McCabe rosary beads which had belonged to her late mother, Rose Kennedy, who had died at the age of 103. Mrs McCabe later told the Limerick Leader she "prayed with them ever since".

President Mary Robinson and the then Taoiseach, John Bruton, along with thousands of mourners attended the funeral Mass at the Holy Rosary Church, Ennis Road, on Monday, June 10.

Garda John McCabe.

gave a message on behalf of his family in which he said: "Dad's deep and abiding love for his children was obvious to everybody. Each one of us always felt very special to him and as we grew, our relationships with him developed into ones of friendship as well as family. I know that I speak for my sister and brothers, when I say that we have a tremendous pride in everything dad did."

When Sep O'Sullivan was rushed to Limerick Regional Hospital, his wife, Ann, a nurse at the hospital was not on duty, but rushed across town from the family home in Corbally to Dooradoyle.

He had bullet wounds to his upper body and he required emergency surgery. He was transferred to Croom Orthopaedic Hospital and was later transferred by Air Corps helicopter for further treatment in Belfast. A robust physique, developed through his involvement of top-of-war competitions, had managed to save his life.

In 1994 Garda O'Sullivan received a gold Scott Medal for disarming a man who stood at Children's Road and pointed a loaded shotgun at motorists.

Following the Adare attack, he received a second gold Scott Medal and at the time was the only officer ever in the Garda Síochána to receive two gold Scott Medals.

Ben O'Sullivan is a native of Mounseabey near Mallow. He joined the force in 1961 and has been based in Limerick since then. The O'Sullivan's have four children, John, Marianne, Evelyn and Aoife.



Gardaí meet in Adare: Paul Browne, left, GRA Central Executive Council, and Kevin McCarthy, GRA regional chairman, speaking to the media after their meeting in the Woodlands Hotel, Adare, this Monday (LL) Pic Owen South

## Gardaí not happy after meeting

### TDs pictured with Provos in prison

Family of shot garda 'shattered' at photo of Dail deputies with the men convicted of detective's death

LIMERICK Gardaí said they are "less than happy" following a showdown with Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and Justice Minister Michael McDowell this week concerning the early release of the killers of Det Garda Jerry McCabe.

"There was no absolute commitment to us that the release of the killers would not take place," said GRA Central Executive Council member, Limerick Garda Paul Browne.

Limerick members of the GRA spent an hour-and-a-quarter with the Taoiseach and Justice Minister at the Dail. "We outlined our position specifically. They went into a lot of political stuff. In fairness to the Taoiseach, he was very forthcoming. There is a lot of political connotations. The release will not happen today or tomorrow so we are not dealing with what might be," said Mr Browne.

He also made it clear that the GRA were not considering a strike action. "We are the national police force and are there

to serve the public who are fully behind us on this. We have never said we would not provide or stop Garda services," he said.

On Monday, 20 GRA representatives of the 400-strong Limerick Garda Division met in Adare, where Garda McCabe was gunned down in 1996, for an "angry and emotional" meeting.

After the meeting, GRA regional chairman Kevin McCarthy said: "These people should not be released. We are totally against the release of these killers. They acted as common criminals when they cold-bloodedly slaughtered our colleague. Our demands stand. Members are genuinely upset."

Mr Browne said in his 34 years' service, he had never experienced such a reaction from Limerick Garda members.

"We are of the opinion that if Sinn Féin withdraw their demand for the early release of those convicted of Jerry's killing, our position will not change," said Mr Browne.

The Minister for Defence, Willie O'Dea, who was due to attend a Teagasc meeting at the Woodlands House Hotel on Monday failed to turn up.

Meanwhile, Junior Minister Tim O'Malley broke his silence on the issue this Wednesday and said questions should be directed at Sinn Féin as to why they want the killers released.

"I have refrained from comment in public due to negotiations behind the



The report and picture in the Sunday Independent on the Sinn Féin TD's visit to Castlereagh Prison

scenes with the Tánaiste and Justice Minister," he said.

On Monday, the Limerick Leader learned that the killers had vital information linking leading members of Sinn Féin to the IRA's army council.

Kevin Walsh could embarrass a lot of people with information he has and that is one of the reasons that Sinn Féin are pushing for the four men's release, a leading political source claimed. Despite numerous attempts to contact Sinn Féin, no comment has been forthcoming.

They were convicted of manslaughter even though they were guilty of murder. Sinn Féin should be asked why these men are so important to the deal. Gerry Adams could solve this

for everyone by taking it off the agenda," said Deputy O'Malley.

"How Sinn Féin got the release of Jerry McCabe's murder onto the agenda and that this has been debated in public has appalled me."

"Anything that I would have said would have only added to the hurt felt by the McCabe family and the Gardaí in Limerick. It appears now that an agreement will not be concluded. For future negotiations, I ask that Sinn Féin withdraw their demand for the killers to be released," said Deputy O'Malley.

When asked would the PD's withdraw from Government if the killers were released, Deputy O'Malley replied: "I am not going to speculate on what will happen in the future."

## Finucane opposes release of killers

By MARTIN BYRNES

SEN Michael Finucane, Newcastle West, has expressed his opposition to the early release of the killers of Det Garda Jerry McCabe, who was shot dead in Adare in June 1996.

A joint statement from Sen Finucane with the Fine Gael leader in the County Council, Cllr Patrick O'Donovan, also Newcastle West, described Taoiseach Bertie Ahern's statement to the Dail as a "slap in the face to the McCabe family, to the Gardaí and to the citizens of our State who place their faith in unarmed gardai to police our streets and whose only protection is the rule of law".

"Sinn Féin and the IRA told us in 1996 that the killers of Jerry McCabe were not on active service at the time as the IRA was on ceasefire. If this is the case then they cannot be released, as this was not a politically motivated crime, unlike the other acts which the parties to

the Good Friday Agreement agreed were and resulted in other early releases.

"This was nothing short of common criminals, who happen to be members of an illegal organisation, carrying out a robbery of the Post Office in Adare and killing a member of the Gardaí in the process," the statement says.

"In 1996 the Taoiseach of the day, John Bruton, assured the nation that when the killers were brought to justice they would serve their full sentence."

"His successor, Bertie Ahern, gave the same assurance, as this was not a politically motivated crime. The statement by the Taoiseach last week undermines the very Agreement which the people of Ireland voted for in 1998."

"Any deviation from that position is a betrayal by Bertie Ahern and his Government of the trust and confidence which the Irish people bestowed on them," said Sen Finucane.



Michael O'Neill



Jeremiah Sheehy



Pearse McCauley



Kevin Walsh

THE killers of Det Garda Jerry McCabe have vital information linking leading members of Sinn Féin to the IRA's army council, the Limerick Leader was told this week.

"Kevin Walsh could embarrass a lot of people with information he has and that is one of the reasons that Sinn Féin are pushing for the four men's release," a leading political source claimed this Monday.

It was also revealed this week that leading Sinn Féin members met secretly with Kevin Walsh, leader of the gang responsible for Garda McCabe's death in a Cavan safehouse in Cavan to carry out an internal inquiry.

The killers were threatening to reveal information which could have major ramifications for the peace process and possible political deals if they were not included for early release deal," said the source.

Jeremiah Sheehy of Rathkeale, Michael O'Neill and Kevin Walsh both from Patrickswell and Pearse McCauley from Strabane, Tyrone were all jailed for the manslaughter of Det Garda McCabe by the Special Criminal Court in 1999.

They were moved from Portlaoise to Castlereagh—a low security prison because of the information that Walsh has. He could seriously affect any deal if their release is not secured," said the source.

The Limerick Leader has also learned senior Sinn Féin leaders met with Mr Walsh in an IRA safehouse in Cavan shortly before he was captured. Sinn Féin chief negotiator and member of the Ard Chomhairle, Martin McGuinness has previously denied meeting the men in the house after the killing.

It is believed the Sinn Féin leaders met Walsh in hiding as part of an internal inquiry they were carrying out following Garda McCabe's killing. It is believed that the Adare incident had not received an official sanction from the IRA's army council and that the internal inquiry concluded that it was a go-it-alone operation by the IRA's main Munster unit.

Despite numerous attempts by the Limerick Leader for comment from Sinn Féin, nothing has been received. Deputy Peter Power met the Taoiseach on Tuesday "to express the

outright opposition of Limerick people to the proposed release of the killers of Gerry McCabe."

"I have had a series of meetings with the Taoiseach going back over a period of six weeks—well before the Taoiseach's statements last week. During those meetings, I expressed to the Taoiseach in clear terms the depth of feeling amongst Limerick people in relation to this matter."

"I explained to him that this was a highly emotive issue for the people of Limerick and especially for the McCabe family. Anybody who attended Jerry McCabe's funeral could be left in no doubt about the strength and depth of emotive in Limerick concerning this issue," said Deputy Power.