

Major Spanish Civil War archive for city

By DENIS O'SHAUGHNESSY

A FASCINATION with Limerickmen's involvement in the Spanish Civil War has resulted in a major archive of that bloody conflict being set up in the University of Limerick.

About a decade ago, local historian Des Ryan first became interested in the participation of Limerickmen in the war. They had joined General Eoin Duffy's Irish Brigade to fight on General Franco's side against the socialist forces in the 1930s.

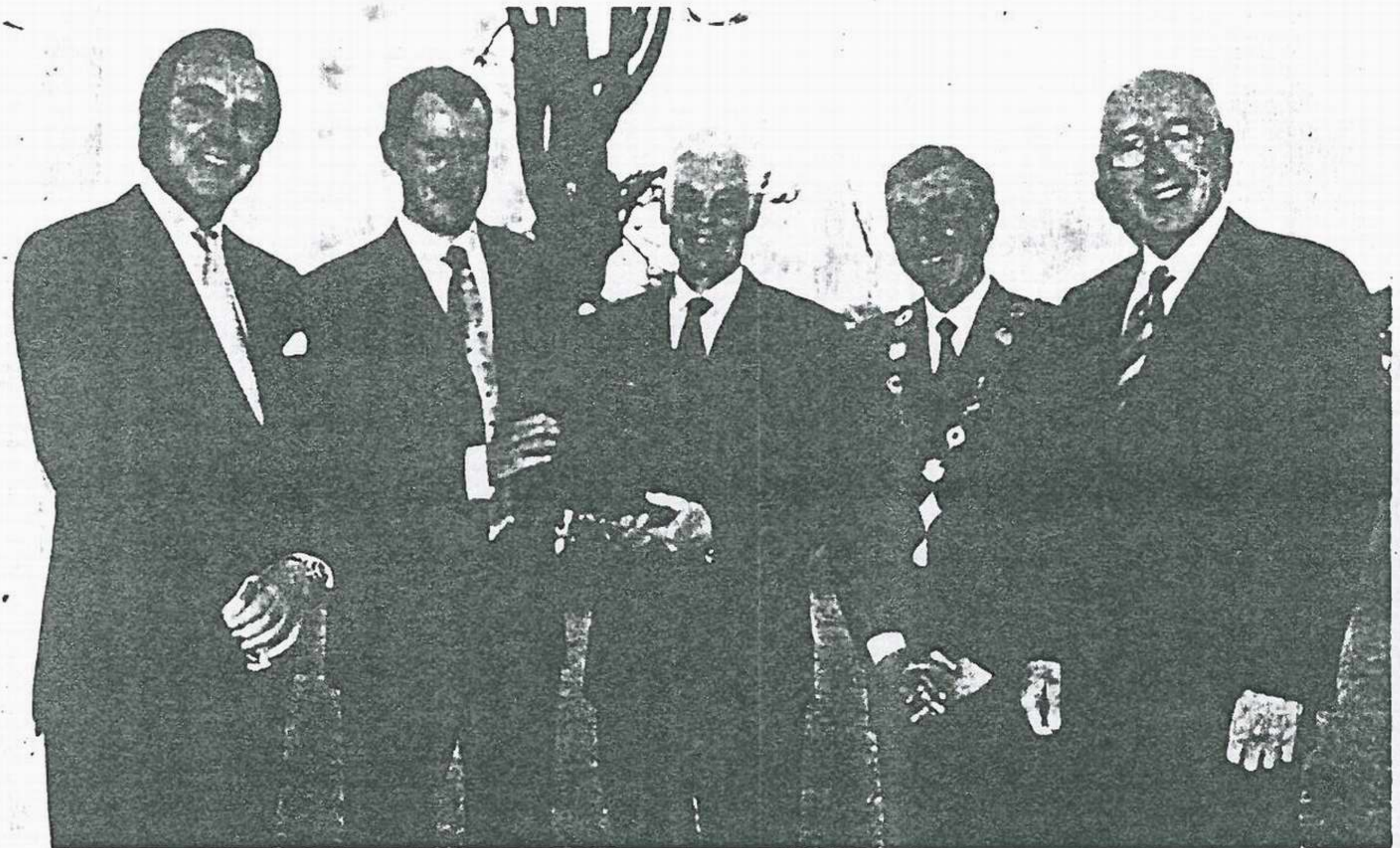
His first article on the subject was printed in the Limerick Chronicle in 1995 and his research led him to the homes of many of the relatives of volunteers not alone in Limerick but in neighbouring counties as well. From these families he collected valuable material, in the form of memories of the participants, letters and photographs. Apart from the historical perspective, the biographies of the volunteers, addresses, etc, give a very interesting socio-political view of Limerick of the 1930s.

Des also built up a major

file from local and national newspapers, all of which he has donated to the university. Some time back his work came to the attention of acknowledged civil war expert Dr Robert Stradling of Cardiff University whose book Ireland and the Spanish Civil War has been much acclaimed. In recognition of the Limerickman's work, Dr Stradling donated his entire collection and papers to UL despite stiff competition for their procurement from the Imperial War Museum and several universities in Ireland and England.

The archive was officially launched by the Spanish Ambassador to Ireland, Enrique Pastor de Gana, with Mayor John Cronin, president of UL, Dr Roger Downer, and other officials in attendance. The collection will also be displayed in diverse locations such as Salamanca, Avila, Madrid, and Institute Cervantes, Dublin.

Editor of the archive is Dr Barrie Wharton, Dublin born but who grew up in Limerick. He is Lecturer in the department of languages and cultural studies at UL. Des Ryan's enthusiasm for his subject infused Dr Wharton with such interest that he eventually published a book on the Civil War, amongst others. He spent several years in Spain researching the pro-



At the opening of the Spanish Civil War archive in Limerick University, the Spanish Ambassador, Enrique Pastor de Gana; Dr Barrie Wharton, UL; Des Ryan; Mayor John Cronin; and Dr Roger Downer, president of UL

ject. He has also lectured in Europe and the Middle East on Islam and European/Islamic fundamentalism.

Dr Wharton stated that the university now holds the largest and most signif-

icant Spanish Civil War collection in Ireland. "Most of the material in the archive is unique and has never appeared before in published form. It has aroused great interest in Spain, particularly the

photographs. Des' contribution has been outstanding and has led to several other valuable donations, particularly that of Dr Stradling" said Dr Wharton.

Des Ryan, a City Hall

employee, has also researched Limerickmen's involvement in the First World War, particularly that of the Munster Fusiliers, and the stories have been published in the Old Limerick Journal.