

Prisoner-of-war has 'honour restored' 56 years after siege

■ Fairgreen native Capt Noel Carey was platoon commander during Jadotville battle in 1961

FINTAN WALSH

E: fintan.walsh@limerickleader.ie

ON THE crown of the Virgin Mary who rests in the Redemptorist Church, gold remnants from Captain Noel Carey's life of medals are embedded along the statue's celestial headwear.

Noel, now 82, says this was a gesture carried out by his mother who — along with every family member — had been told that the platoon commander was killed by the Katangese during the notorious Siege of Jadotville in 1961.

Noel, who was awarded a medal of bravery by the Government on December 2, grew up in Fairgreen and was an avid athlete, playing for Pike Rovers, Young Munster and St Patrick's GAA.

Noel was one of the leading commanders during the September siege when the 150-strong UN Peacekeeping A Company was ambushed by some 2,000 Katangese soldiers.

On the morning of September 13, 1961, the 24-year-old Lieutenant and Commandant Pat Quinlan were tasked with responding to reported riots in the mining town of Jadotville. But upon their arrival, they had instead been lured into a battle against local forces.

For six days, the men — most of whom were 18 — were under siege and ambushed against the town's edge along the Lufira river.

With no transport of their own, there were two failed attempts to rescue the troops.

During this period, Noel and his platoon took cover from the machine gun- and bomb-armed Fouga Magister jet, mortars and more than 2,000 heavily-equipped mercenaries.

After six days, five injured UN troops and some-300 Katangese fatalities, the Irish men, who now exhausted their ammo, were ordered to put down their weapons. And for six weeks, the A Company was held hostage in a prisoner camp.

Katanga was an affluent breakaway state from the Republic of Congo, rich in copper and uranium, and supported by Belgian troops.

He said that a number of men had been beaten up at



Capt Noel Carey was a commander during the siege. Pictured, front row with beret, is a Lt Carey, aged 24, with a downed relief helicopter

PICTURE: WEXFORD PEOPLE



The Carey family at the ceremony: Declan, Col Paul Carey, Noel, Angela and Ronan

the prisoner camp following their transfer.

Noel said that there were fears that they would be killed, following the atrocities in the Niamba ambush, in which nine Irish UN peacekeepers were killed by the Baluba tribe in November in 1961.

"We were fortunate that that didn't happen. We thought that one of us would be taken out and shot and killed. That was a big worry.

"And communications were so bad at home that messages were sent through the BBC World Service that 40 of the troops had been killed. And my sister Mary, who was in the local convent in St Mary's, was called out by the headmistress to say that her brother had been killed in the Congo," said Noel, who now lives with his wife Angela in Blarney.

Noel was engaged to Angela as this incorrect news was being disseminated.

And he said that when he and his troops returned home, safe and unharmed, his wedding vows were all the more special when he married Angela on January 4, 1962 in Limerick.

However, he added, the "biggest injustice" was that his leader Pat Quinlan was not given a hero's welcome by the Defence Forces, after surrendering to the Katangese.

He said that there was no investigation into the siege

and no member of the company was quizzed about what had happened.

"Jadotville was only mentioned because Declan Power wrote a book and that was the first time anybody had ever heard about this situation."

Declan Power's book *The Siege of Jadotville: The Irish Army's Forgotten Battle* was published in 2005 and was later adapted into a Netflix film in 2016, starring Jamie Dornan who plays Commandant Pat Quinlan.

Pat Quinlan, whose surrender was seen as cowardly at the time, died in 1997 before he was to be officially recognised by the Government in 2005, when Willie O'Dea was Minister for Defence.

Noel, who retired from the army in 1974 after 20 years' service, described Comdt Quinlan as "a brave man" and said that he was delighted that "a lot of wrongdoing was finally put right. We still didn't believe it because it had gone through so many loops and processes over the years. It was long overdue, but we could now hold our heads up high and say that our honour has been restored at last after 56 years."

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COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION into Mother and Baby Homes a number of County

The Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation is currently investigating the burials of children who died while resident in Bessboro Mother and Baby Home in Cork between 1922 and 1998.

The Commission would like to hear from anyone with knowledge, documentation or any other information relating to the burials of children who died while resident in Bessboro Mother and Baby Home in this time period. We welcome written submissions before 1st April 2018 by post or email to:

By email at: info@mbhcoi.ie

By post: **Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation**
73 Lower Baggot St, I
or P.O. Box 12626, Du

Please see the Commission's website (www.mbhcoi.ie) Terms of Reference and a list of institutions u

Our terms of reference do not allow us to assist in resolving their identity or in tracing a birth relative. We are unable to investigate any institution that does not provide terms of reference.

www.mbhcoi.ie

Broadford Julia to receive Papal honour

NORMA PRENDIVILLE

E: normap@limerickleader.ie

THE Benemerenti Medal is one of the highest honours the Catholic Church can bestow and this weekend, it will be presented to Julia Duggan of Broadford.

She will become the second West Limerick in the past three years to be awarded this honour. In 2015, Margaret Keating was presented with the medal "for her humble and quiet service to the parish and com-

from Limerick have ever received the Bene Merenti Medal which is awarded by the Pope.

This Saturday, at a special Mass in Broadford, the Bishop of Limerick, Dr Brendan Leahy will present Ms Duggan with the Papal medal in honour of her work for many years as sacristan at Our Lady of the Snows church in Broadford.

Ms Duggan succeeded her father Paddy Duggan as sacristan in the late 1950s and continued in the post for nearly half a century until it was

The Benemerenti Medal is an honour awarded by the Pope to members of the clergy and laity for service to the Catholic Church.

It was originally established as an award to soldiers in the Papal Army by Pope Pius VI in the 18th century but in 1925, the concept of awarding the medal as a mark of recognition was extended to the clergy and the laity for service to the church.

Members of the Swiss Guard may receive it for three years of faithful service.

Pope Paul VI. The medal is a gold, Greek cross depicting Christ with his hand raised in blessing. On the left arm of the cross is the tiara and crossed keys symbol of the papacy. On the right arm is the coat of arms of the current Pope.

The medal is suspended from a yellow and white ribbon, the colors of the Papacy.

Bishop Leahy is expected to be the chief concelebrant at Saturday's special Mass in Broadford which be-

