

LIMERICK CHRONICLE

Celebrating
250 years -
1768 - 2018

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Mowing machine prove
to be a cut above

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DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH THE COUNTRY'S OLDEST TITLE

Hangman's visit to Limerick



An illustration of the English executioner William Marwood - in his nine years as chief hangman Marwood hanged 176 men and women

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JOYCE'S impassioned address from the scaffold had an extraordinary effect on those who witnessed the scene, except for Marwood, who was interested only in the last word of the doomed man as a signal for him to pull the fatal lever.

The translation of his dying words, which were rendered in his native Gaelic, is as follows:

"I am going, why should I die? I am not guilty. I had neither hand nor foot in the murder. I know nothing about it but God forgive them that swore my life away. It is a poor thing to die on a stage for what I never did.

"God help my wife and my five orphans. I had no hand, act or part in it but I have my priest with me. I

am as innocent as the child in the cradle."

After the trap had been sprung, Marwood was seen to put his foot into the gaping hole which Joyce had disappeared and kick something very vigorously. It was thought at first that the victim was being kicked to death after some malfunctioning of the routing, but Marwood's explanation, which was generally accepted was that the victims elbow had fouled the rope and broken his fall and he used his both to kick it free. The inquest proved that the poor fellow was strangled to death.

The hanging of Myles Joyce had always been spoken of as a travesty, eve of the kind of justice meted out to the Irish peasantry during the

19th century.

Equally guilty with George Bolton for this miscarriage of justice was the crown prosecutor, Peter O'Brien (Peter the Packer) who made a special effort to live up to his evil reputation.

The case was subject of much debate and controversy in the following years. In his unfinished autobiography O'Brien made a poor enough effort of trying to wash his hands clean of the affair.

Marwood was no stranger to Limerick. In January, 1897, he came to the city to hang a young man T...C...who was convicted of murdering a young woman, Johana Hogan and her child. The Clare Journal of Monday evening January 12, 1879 noted.

"Marwood, the English hangman who was brought over specially for the purpose, went about his awful trade with all the imaginable coolness, openness and dexterity Marwood, we may remark, is a strongly built man of middle size, resolute, determined and sinister looking of about 55 or 60 years of age, who does not conceal his features or appear the slightest degree disconcerted and in the leaden and dismal dawn, Marwood might be seen adjusting the other preliminaries of his awful calling with a business like alacrity and calculation."

Marwood visited Limerick for the last time in 1892. On his way from Dublin, where he disembarked from the Liverpool boat, he again travelled on the mail train. As usual with

this service, there were few passengers, a young lady civil servant on her way to Limerick and the hangman. A friendly conversation between the two shortened the journey until the train arrived at Boher, about eight miles from Limerick where Marwood got off. A covered coach then conveyed him to the county gaol.

The poor girl only learned afterward that she had been keeping up a friendly chat with the executioner, who was on his way to Limerick to hang her brother, Francis Hynes, a handsome, magnificently built young man who had been convicted, on meagre evidence by a jury, again packed by Peter O'Brien, of the murder of one John Dooloughy, near the town of Ennis.