

# Gleanings from Easter Week

by Denis O'Shaughnessy

**R**eading the newspapers during Easter Week gives a general feeling for events as they happened both in Dublin and the rest of the country. The following gleanings give a flavour of stories reported during that fateful week.

## Freak casualty

The edition of the *Limerick Leader* on 6 May brought news of possibly the most freakish casualty that occurred during the Easter Week Rising. It concerned Mr. William Moore, Limerick District Auditor of the Great Southern and Western Railway, and a resident of Limerick for many years. Mr. Moore and his wife had gone to Belfast the Thursday before Easter for a brief holiday. They arrived in Dublin on Easter Monday evening when the outbreak was at its highest and seeking a place of safety went to a friend's house at Fairview.

The rebels, however, had been sniping in the locality and on Wednesday night, while passing through the hall with the master of the house, a bullet came through the premises, hitting Mr. Moore through the heart. On being brought to hospital, he died. Deceased, who was in the prime of life, was a native of Cavan and his first connection with the Great Southern and Western Railway dated back twenty years.

## Close call

Limerick County Court Judge, Law Smith, had a close call when driving past the GPO at 3 p.m. on Easter Monday. Accompanied by two other gentlemen, their car was stopped by a Volunteer officer who ordered the occupants to leave the car at gunpoint, which they did. One of the Volunteers then took the car and drove into the GPO mail van yard in Prince's Street. The judge and his friends were allowed to walk along the street without further molestation.

## Club occupied

During Easter Week, the premises of Shannon Rowing Club, was commandeered by the military, who held it for several weeks. A notice in the *Limerick Leader* of 15 May, stated that the military were handing back the premises that day and that the club was now open to members from then on.



Shannon Rowing Club

## Irishwoman's appeal

Annie Roberta Sprake, with an address in London, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Limerick Leader* on 10 May, from which the paper published the following quote:

I am sorry that some of my misguided countrymen have in open rebellion played into the enemy's hands. As an Irishwoman, believing in the justice of Home Rule, and resident in London for many years, you will credit me with some experience both of England and Ireland. I think that much of Ireland's troubles are caused by living in a narrow groove day after day. Dwelling too much on memories of the past, and dreadful though they may have been, tends of narrowness of vision and self centred views.

Oh my dear fellow country men and women, stand on the clear heights where wisdom dwells, and

looking from there over the battle fields of Europe, join heart and soul with the boys who are fighting and dying for you. If England's misrule was unjust and bitter, none but the most drivelling idiot would expect a better time under the Hun. Forget your wrong. Join in spirit with the battalions of the glorious, unforgettable dead, help, cheer and march beside the brave heroes of every nation who stand between the dastardly foe and those fair isles of the West.

## Prisoners taken

On 9 May, a large number of prisoners, estimated to be in the region of 150, were taken by train from Limerick and transported under heavy military escort to Dublin, where they will be tried. A large number of Limerick and Clare men were amongst their ranks.

The inevitable retribution came when 28 men were arrested in Limerick and the report in the *Limerick Chronicle* dated 11 May listed the names of those taken prisoner.

## 28 Arrests in Limerick

No small surprise was caused in city circles today by the announcement that numerous arrests of persons suspected of being concerned in the Sinn Fein organisation had been made by the military and police force in the early hours of this morning. The number of persons arrested was large, but it did not run in to three figures, as was first reported. It subsequently became known that not less than 28 citizens had been placed under arrest. It was not long after daybreak this morning when the force assembled for the purpose commenced their operations. It was stated the arrests included three females, but such was not the case, and the men taken into custody,

and removed under escort to the Ordnance Barracks, totalled in all, as stated, twenty-eight, as follows; John Dalton, B.C. (Irishtown Ward); Joseph Dalton, James Dalton, E. O'Toole (City Treasurer), Joseph Purcell, John E. Cashin, James Kirby, Alphonsus Kivelihan, John O'Hurley (Irish Language Organiser), Michael Colivet, James Ledden, Edward Fitzgibbon, Patrick Whelan, James McInerney, John Troy, Martin Stapleton, George Clancy, William Forde, Martin F. Fitzpatrick, James Gubbins, R.P. O'Connor, B.C. (Glentworth Ward), James McAnulty, J. L. Connaghton, P. Walshe, J. O'Donnell, P. O'Halloran, F. O'Shaughnessy, Alphonsus O'Halloran.

Late in the forenoon, Colonel Sir Anthony A. Weldon, in command of the troops, attended at the Barracks, and as a result of the inquiry discharged three of the prisoners, John Troy, Martin Stapleton, and Joseph Dalton. The accused were detained in the Barracks all through the day, and were allowed to be visited by their relatives. There were large crowds outside the Barracks, but everything was quiet, and there was no demonstration of any kind. It is stated that the 25 persons are to be removed to the Limerick Prison pending the decision to be come to as to how their cases will be dealt with by the authorities. The prisoners were conveyed to the County Gaol this evening, and it is understood on authority that they are to be sent to Dublin for trial by Courtmartial.

### The Munster's revenge

News travelled fast in the theatre of World War One and just forty hours after the outbreak of the Insurrection in Dublin, German troops taunted Irish Battalions from the trenches immediately opposite them with placards saying that English soldiers were shooting down their wives and sisters in Dublin. The Irish troops responded by singing Irish songs and 'Rule Britannia' accompanied by melodeons and mouth organs.

The incident had a remarkable sequel when Lieut. Col. Williamson, commanding a battalion of the Munster

Fusiliers, ordered 25 men and two officers to capture the offending placards and after nightfall they proceeded to cut their own wire entanglements and to crawl out into 'no man's land'. When they were about halfway across the German searchlights found them and immediately two machine guns were trained on them.

Some were badly wounded but some of them stirred and lay lying there for hours. By degrees they crept on and at last reached the German entanglements, which they cut, and then sprang up and charged the Germans,

The German soldiers apparently thought they (the enemy) had been destroyed or driven back by the machine guns, and were so startled by their appearance that they turned and evacuated the trenches. The placards were then seized and brought back in triumph to the British trenches, to the intense delight of the Battalion. These boards were taken to London, and photographs showing their bullet marks and the rough treatment they received from the Irish troops even before the Munsters so daringly took possession of them, were taken for publication.

### Lesser known victim

One of the lesser known casualties of Easter Week was Limerick man Charles O'Gorman. Described as a shoeing smith, O'Gorman was attached to the Reserve Regiment of Cavalry. He died in Mercer's Hospital from wounds received during the fighting.

### Life goes on

While the centre of Dublin lay in ruins during the height of the Insurrection, life went on as usual in Limerick. The Theatre Royal was presenting a play 'Peg O' My Heart', described by the *Limerick Chronicle* as the best seen at the theatre for many years. The Gaiety was showing a film, 'An Enemy to Society' in five reels. Admission prices were 3d, 6d, 9d.

The Brass and Reed Band attached to St. John's Temperance Society gave a recital on Barrington's Pier, which was attended and enjoyed by an appreciative audience despite the inclement weather.



Poster for film 'Peg O' My Heart'

### Death on the front

During the height of the Rising, Limerick men were also dying on the Western Front. On 30 April, the day after Padraig Pearse surrendered, Captain C.H.M. Furnell, R.G.A., son of Mrs. George Furnell, Ballyclough House, died of wounds received during action. The following telegram was received by Mrs. Furnell: 'Deeply regret to inform you Captain C.H.M. Furnell, R.G.A., died of wounds April 30. Lord Kitchener expresses his sympathy. Sec., War Office.'

Other Limerick men who were killed in action in the Great War during the week of the Rising were:

Private Patrick O'Grady, Old Pallas, Pallasgreen, 2nd Battn. Royal Irish Munster Fusiliers; Private John Best, Ballyorgan Kilmallock 7th Batt. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Private John Burke, 5 James' Street, Lt. Gerald Griffin St., Limerick, 1st Batt. Royal Irish Regiment; Lance Corporal William Burke, St. John's Limerick, 2nd Batt. Royal Munster Fusiliers; Private John Cunneen, 4 Wilkinsons' Row, Watergate, 7th Batt. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers; Private Peter Dolan, St. John's Limerick, 1st Batt. Royal Munster Fusiliers; Corp. Michael Enright,

Ardnaveigh, Reens, Ardagh, 8th Batt. Royal Munster Fusiliers; Private Patrick Greene, Doon, 8th Batt. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Lance Corporal Walter Mills, Limerick, 8th Batt. Royal Dublin Fusiliers; Private John Mooney, Limerick, 8th Batt. Royal Dublin Fusiliers; Christopher Powell, St. Munchin's, Limerick, drummer, 21st Batt. Royal Munster Fusiliers, Private John Ryan, Cussen's Bow, Nicholas St., Limerick, 1st Batt. Royal Munster Fusiliers; Richard Ryan, born Limerick, gunner, Royal Field Artillery. Private Edward Storan, Castleconnell, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers; William Treston, Abbeyfeale, Royal Field Artillery.

Two other Limerick men, Private P. Shine, Newcastle West, and Private J. Mulqueen, Kilfinane, both members of the Munster Fusiliers, were reported wounded in action the same week. It was reported that Private M. Quinn, Irish Guards, a native of Askeaton, was invalided home from the front. He contracted frostbite in the trenches at Ypress, with the result that parts of his feet had to be amputated.

#### Knight returns

The Knight of Glin, D.L., has returned to Adare, where he and Master Desmond Fitzgerald had been spending the Easter holidays.

#### Tenor's offer

Mr. John McCormack, the well-known Irish singer, has telegraphed from New York to the Lord Mayor of Dublin an offer to organise a concert in that city for the sufferers in Dublin. Cardinal Farley was treasurer of the concert. The Lord Mayor telegraphed a reply to Mr. McCormack in which he accepted his offer with heartiest gratitude.

#### Rising denounced

The Hon. J. J. Noonan, Attorney-General of British Guinea, a native of Limerick City, telegraphed from Georgetown, stating that, on receipt of the news of the Insurrection in Dublin, the Irishmen of British Guinea immediately dispatched a telegram to the King in which they denounced

the Rising and expressed their sincere loyalty to His Majesty.

#### Maxwell honoured

The Legion of Honour, Grand Officer, was conferred by the President of the French Republic on Lt. General (temp) Sir John Grenfell Maxwell, KCB, KCMG, CVO, DSO, Colonel, Royal Highlanders.

General Maxwell was Commander of British forces in Ireland during the Rising, and oversaw the execution of its leaders. 'There will not be a whisper of sedition in Ireland for another 100 years' he stated afterwards. His edict to the bishops of the country to remove seditious priests from their dioceses was denounced by the Bishop of Limerick, Dr. O'Dwyer, in a famous letter to the Commander.

#### Anti-gossip campaign

An irate reader wrote to the editor of the *Limerick Leader* during the week of the Rising, complaining of the incessant talk and giggling of the 'fair sex' at entertainments in the city. 'I don't want to muzzle them' the correspondent wrote, 'but if they gave their tongues a rest now and then, patrons attending the theatre and picture houses would be very glad. It is difficult to enjoy anything if there is a continuous babble of nonsensical female voices striking your ears, and the worse of these unquestionably are those who regard themselves as 'toffs'. What I would like to say to these 'toffees' would be too pungent for publication, and I would hope they would be good enough to take this hint before it becomes necessary to start an Anti-Gossip League in the city'.

#### The West asleep

On 12 May, the *Limerick Leader* reported that 'Abbeyfeale and adjoining districts have been completely tranquil during the recent rising. We are informed that the Sinn Fein Volunteers in Newcastle West, Dromcollogher, and surrounding districts, which places remain perfectly peaceful, surrendered their rifles in due course.'

#### Youthful sniper

In Amiens Street, a deadly rifle fire from one house was directed for days against the Military. It was eventually taken by machine guns and bombs, and on being searched, revealed the astonishing fact that all the sniping was the work of a mere lad, who was a crack shot. His exploits made the officer arresting him exclaim: 'I wish we had more of your kind at the front'.

The same issue of the paper reported that a boy, aged 11 years, who carried a rifle and surrendered to an officer in Richmond Barracks, remarked: 'I did my duty anyway'. The officer replied: 'Get a policeman to take him home to his mother'.

#### Limerick is the word and Limerick is the place

According to a London weekly newspaper the Sinn Feiners used the word 'Limerick' as a signal and password during the Insurrection. This story must have brought to mind another story of a password used during battle.

In 1690 Patrick Sarsfield became aware that the Williamite forces were using his name as a password. When Sarsfield reached the enemy camp, outside Limerick, he was challenged, gave the password, and was allowed to advance. A second guard challenged him nearer the camp. He exclaimed, "Sarsfield is the word, and Sarsfield is the man!" After he had killed the bemused sentry, he proceeded to destroy the armaments which were being brought to Limerick.

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