

Limerick remembering the Golden Jubilee of the Easter Rising in 1966

by Annette and Des Long

In December 1964 the Old IRA approached the Republican Movement in Limerick City with the view of holding a single united Easter commemoration instead of the two which were usually held. Three members of the Old IRA met with two members of the Republican Movement to discuss the details. The two representatives of the Republican Movement welcomed the proposal on one condition that the Old IRA would not carry rifles as they usually did.

At the annual meeting of the Old IRA held on 17 January 1965 a discussion was held on the recent meeting between the two bodies and the effort to have only one Easter commemoration in the city in future. The meeting was informed of the objection of Sinn Fein had to carrying of rifles, and the meeting decided not to carry the rifles in future. "The Old IRA committee agreed to the formation of a single

Easter Commemoration committee for the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising".⁽¹⁾

As a result of this agreement on Easter 1965 the commemoration in Limerick was a joint effort between the Republican movement and the Old IRA for the first time in twenty years. "This unity was achieved by a committee which had met previously and was reflected in the large number participating in the parade. Those taking part in the parade were the Mayor and members of the Corporation, the Republican Movement, Old IRA, Old Fianna, Boherbuoy and St. John's Bands, Knights of Malta and St. John's Ambulance Brigade."⁽²⁾

After that very successful commemoration the organisers decided that the committee which was called Coiste Cuimneacháin na Cásga should be expanded to include cultural and



Na Fianna Éireann badge

sporting bodies and would meet weekly in Arus an Connradh, Sraid Thomais weekly. The committee appointed Comdt. Davey Dundon as president, Paddy Mulcahy chairman, Pat Moloney secretary and Susie Mulcahy as treasurer. The following people were members also, and the organisation they represented is in brackets. T. Dargáin; S. Mason (Sean Fianna), G De Baltuin; T. O Loinsig; P. Mac Giolla Loscaidh (Sean Oglagh), Bean Mic Spiolláin, (Sean Cumann na mBan),



Na Fianna Éireann Boy Scouts in 1913



Na Fianna Éireann group outside Na Fianna Hall, Barrington Street, Limerick.
 Front row (L-R): Susie Mulcahy, Paddy Mulcahy, Mrs Spillane, Davey Dundon, Pat Moloney.
 Second row (L-R): Des Long, Ger Wharton, Annette Long, Peggy O'Sullivan, Tommy Lynch, Pat O'Shea.
 Back Row (L-R): Sean O'Grady, Sean McNamara, Joe Quinn, Joe Manning, T O Dalaigh, Tony Nolan, Sean Mason, Alf Larkin, Dan Hickey.

S. O Gráda; D O Hicada, (Cumann Luth-Cleas Gael, M. MacCormaic; P O Dálaig, (Connradh na Gaedilge), S Mac Conmara; P O Se, (Comhairle na Gceard Cumann), Bean Ui Suilleabháin; Bean Ui Longáin, (Cumann na mBan), A O Lorcáin; D O Longáin; S O Cuinn; S O Mainnin; A O Nualláin, (Gluaiseacht na Poblachta). This committee met regularly to plan for a fitting tribute at Easter 1966 to those who fought and died in the cause of Irish freedom in 1916.

The committee felt that a historical publication should be produced so that people of Limerick would have a souvenir of that very important time in our history and would be available to future generations. They decided on a 1916 commemorative book which they named *Cuimhniúinn Luimneach*. It consists of the following fifteen articles: Mary Spring Rice, Ag ullmhu don Éire Amach, Donal Sheehan, Limerick and the Easter Week Rising, Thomas J. Clarke, Edward Daly and The Four Courts, Con Colbárd, Edward O'Dwyer Bishop of Limerick, Fianna

Éireann 1911-1916, Gallant Cumann na mBan of Limerick, Native Games and National ideals, Labour—Foes to British Tyranny, A Memory of 1916, Recollections of Easter Week, and The Seven who Signed for death. This publication sold out very quickly and has since become a book collector's item. Its very low cost price of two shillings and sixpence (12.5 cent) was only possible because of the generous financial support received from the Limerick business community to help in its production. This support is obvious and can be gauged when one sees there are 88 advertisements from various businesses in the city. Four of these advertisements are reproduced below.

While the members of Coiste Cuimneacháin na Cásca were actively working to have a fitting tribute for the Golden Jubilee of the Rising there were those in the background who were trying to disrupt the work of the committee. To overcome the confusion being created by those who were attempting this for their own political motives, Mr Tony Nolan P.R.O. of the committee issued a press statement condemning their actions. He stated "Following the report in the weekend of the *Limerick Leader* on the holding of two parades in the city on Easter Sunday the President of the Old IRA Comdt. David Dundon and the Chairman of the Old IRA Mr Ger Wharton, through the Limerick

cuimhniúinn luimneac



CÁSG 1966

Commemorative booklet published in 1966.

EASTER COMMEMORATION
MIDNIGHT CONCERT

SAVOY CINEMA

— ON —

EASTER SUNDAY NIGHT

AT 11.30 P.M.

ARTISTES TAKING PART INCLUDE
THE FOLLOWING :

- Peggy and Bobby Clancy
- C.B.S. Band
- Breda Gorey (Munster Belt Champion)
- Penny School of Dancing
- Limerick Singers Group
- Tony Lynch (Seanachie)
- Tom Sweeney (Comedian)
- Michael Meaney (Accordionist)
- Charles Sciascia at the Organ

Schedule of events for midnight concert in the Savoy Cinema on Easter Sunday.

SQUADRON

The All-Irish shoes made
by an All-Irish firm



SQUADRON

Ireland's most popular shoes
—backed by a

6 MONTHS GUARANTEE

Squadron everyday shoes for work or play
Squadron Leader—for the man-about-town
Squadron Cadets—for youths and boys

LIMERICK SHOES LTD., Mulgrave St., Limerick.

Advertisement for Squadron Shoes, Mulgrave Street, Limerick.

As it WAS 1916—so it IS 1966
SAME OLD FIRM

O'SULLIVAN'S

(Newsagent, Tobacconist,
Sweets, Etc.),

THE PARK KIOSK, LIMERICK

Goods always fresh—
Never a complaint

OUR PRICES IN 1916—

Woodbines	- - -	10 for 2½d.
Gold Flake & Player's	- - -	10 for 4d.
Plug Tobacco	- - -	7d. per oz.

Do gach custaiméir idir nuad is seann gach budeacas
agus rath De.

committee of which they are both active members and official representatives of their organisations wish to make it known to the general public that they deplore the actions of those who wish to disrupt the work of the committee"⁽³⁾ The statement continues that the decision to have a second parade "was made by a small dissident group of Old IRA members at a private meeting to which the Chairman was not invited"⁽⁴⁾

Despite these efforts to disrupt the committee, it continued to plan a fitting commemoration. In the weeks leading up to Easter the committee published their arrangements for the commemoration. They announced that the annual parade to the Republican plot would start from Henry Street at one o'clock after a Mass in Irish at nine o'clock and another in the Dominican church at twelve noon. A wreath would be laid at the Republican Memorial on Sarsfield Bridge. The parade was to consist of a colour party followed by the Mayor and Councillors in their robes. A midnight concert was fixed for the Savoy Cinema on Easter Sunday night with a star studded cast with Peg and Bobby Clancy and a full supporting programme.

During the following week there was to be lectures and a historical exhibition. The organisers invited the public to attend and take part in the commemoration and listen to the oration which was to be delivered by Mr Liam Liddy (Vocational teacher) from Cork. Comdt. Dundon (Old

MORNING, NOON OR NIGHT
visit

CAFE CAPRI

Ireland's Gayest Cafe

1 O'CONNELL ST., LIMERICK

Above: Advertisement for Cafe Capri
'Ireland's Gayest Cafe'.

Left: Advertisement for O'Sullivan's Kiosk in
the People's Park, Limerick.

IRA) President of the Coiste asked the business community and householders to decorate the route of the parade with the National Flag and bunting. He made a special appeal to the citizens to attend and participate in the parade.

As part of the parade all the bodies participating were invited to lay wreaths. Cumann na mBan volunteered to make and supply these wreaths, of which there was to be over a dozen. In the days before the commemoration some of the members went to Cappanty Woods and gathered sufficient moss and laurel leaves for the task. As this would have been too big a task for any one person most of the members of Cumann na mBan met in their premises at 46 Thomas Street and made all the wreaths required.

A report entitled 'Historic Easter Tribute' in the *Limerick Leader* stated:

Thousands took part in the parade organised by the 1916 Commemoration Committee to the Republican Plot in Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery, which included four city bands headed by a colour party of young men wearing tricolour flashes followed by the Republican Movement, Old IRA, the Mayor and Corporation in their robes, cultural and sporting organisations.⁽⁵⁾

The parade was most dignified and was watched by thousands of citizens. Earlier that morning two Masses were celebrated for all those who died in the

struggle for Irish Freedom. The first Mass, in Irish was held in St. Michael's Church at 9 a.m., the second was held at twelve noon in the Dominican Church. Those present assembled in Henry St. where they were joined by other organisations. They then marched to Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery. At the Republican plot a decade of the Rosary was recited in Irish by Rev. Father Aengus Buckley, O.P. and an oration was delivered by Mr Liam Liddy. Twelve wreaths were laid, and the Last Post sounded.⁽⁶⁾ Later to conclude the ceremony the parade led by the colour party marched to the 1916 Memorial on Sarsfield Bridge where a wreath was laid in memory of the men and women of the Easter Rising.

At the meeting of the committee which was held two weeks after Easter, all present expressed their total satisfaction with the commemoration and weeks events and decided to continue the work to ensure that in future years Easter Rising events would be held.

The committee continued to meet and on the 18 March 1967 an invitation was sent to all bodies who had attended the 50th anniversary commemoration to do so at Easter 1967. In that invitation Comdt. Davie Dundon wrote:

Last year throughout Ireland commemorations were held in honour of the Easter Rising, this year it is a certainty that the occasion will pass unobserved in many of those areas. It is our sincere wish that Limerick will not be



Annette Long with the Cumann na mBan group carrying one of the wreaths made by the group.

found wanting in this respect, and will again pay suitable tribute to our patriot dead.⁽⁷⁾

Again that year a very successful commemoration was held. On the following Easter 1968 the committee again held a fitting parade and commemoration.

However the interference which had been attempted in 1966 was not over. At a special meeting of the Old IRA committee, held on 9 May 1968, under the chairmanship of Mr. Gerry Wharton, Mr Paul Shinnors informed the meeting that he intended to propose the following resolution at the next meeting fixed for March 1969: "That they (Old IRA) go back to the old system of carrying rifles in the parade, even if this meant that they would have to march on their own".⁽⁸⁾

On the 16 February 1969 the annual meeting of the Mid Limerick Brigade Old IRA was held in the Mechanics Institute Hall. During the meeting

Mr. Paddy Wharton proposed the following resolution: "we recant the minutes of the 17th January 1965 AGM and carry rifles". This resolution was seconded by Mr. J. Moloney who said; "We should never have handed it (Easter Commemoration) to another organisation".⁽⁹⁾ The resolution was passed by the committee.

After that the Old IRA, Old Cumann na mBan and Old Fianna left the Coiste Cuimneacháin na Cásca committee. The remaining members of the committee at the next meeting decided to disband, what was up to then, a very successful organisation, much to the regret of all present.

At the time of writing this article we learned with sadness that D. O Hiceada (Dan Hickey) who represented the GAA on the committee had died. With his death there are now only five members of Coiste Cuimneacháin na Cásca still alive, they are S. Ó Gráda who represented the GAA, Bean Ui Longáin

and Bean Ui Suilleabháin (Cumann na mBan) and A. O Nualláin and D. O Longáin (Republican Movement).

Sources:

- (1) Old IRA minute book 17-1-1965: Special Collection Library at UL.
- (2) *Limerick Leader* 24-4-1965.
- (3) Press statement by Tony Nolan PRO for committee issued 2-4-1966.
- (4) *ibid.*
- (5) *Limerick Leader* 16-4-1966.
- (6) *ibid.*
- (7) Invitation issued by Comdt. David Dundon President of committee: Copy in authors collection.
- (8) Old IRA Minute book 9-5-1968: Special Collection Library at UL.
- (9) Old IRA minute book 16-2-1969: Special Collection Library at UL.



A 50th anniversary of 1916; parade of veterans; Michael Conway carrying a tricolour at the head of Patrickswell C Company 3rd Battalion Old IRA. (Courtesy of Limerick Museum)