



There she goes! The silver dart that proclaims the suzerainty of the Mayor is released.

"MEMORIES"
TAKE on a different look this week, as we look back on just one incident — but one which had all the grandeur and the humour that our city could muster.

We tell of the day on which Ted Russell, in his second successive year as mayor, claimed to himself the ancient rights of Admiral of the Shannon — rights which had gone unclaimed for 45 years before him.

And he did it in style. Indeed, it could be argued that, having been chairman of the Harbour Board for over 20 years, he is Admiral of the Shannon today, if anyone is. But that's a look at a little of the background to the story.

"Admiral of the Shannon"

When Limerick ruled the waves . . .

A CLEAR UP OF THE PAST BY MARTIN STANLEY

is not just a title. It has had a very real meaning.

It dates back to the days when Limerick was the second city of Ireland, and by far the best-defended, and when the city was one of the great bastions of English rule in Ireland. Its position at the head of a great seaway and at the end of the navigable island Shannon, made it a natural crossroads and a centre for trade and for power — ecclesiastical, civil and military.

There were few towns left

in this region after the Geraldine dispossession. Newcastle West, and Johnstown were in ruins.

And so it was that on March 3, 1609, James I granted a charter to Limerick which conferred an exclusive admiralty jurisdiction (the right to try maritime cases, whether criminal or civil) in an area from a point upriver (just about where the university boat slip now is) to the sea off Ballybunion. The mayor of the day was to hold the title, "Admiral".

Prosperity

The theory was simply this: if the people of Limerick wanted to prosper from the river and its estuary, they had better be prepared to defend it.

The city was to hold a Court of Admiralty every Monday, at which the mayor, recorder and aldermen sat in judgement in order to keep the peace within the geographical limits set down. And they were empowered to deal with bail, fines, and writs, and to "take royal fish" (sturgeon), along with other prerogatives.

And there were sections to ensure that the powers did not overlap with other admiralty of England or Ireland.

Under other charters, the mayor is also entitled to certain dues from all cargoes of coal, salt, wine, etc. and, right into the early days of the 1900s, these rights were upheld in legal decisions, during the mayoralty of John Daly.

Indeed, in 1884, the then mayor, William Griffiths, asked permission to Seamen

to impose his jurisdiction on the herring fishmen, the city dues being 1,000 herring and 1,000 eysters from each boat. An unbearable imposition which was soon ended.

And here is one out of the back of the book:

The first of Seamen, the man who killed Ellen Finley, the Colleen Maids, was held in what was later to become

the Gerald Griffiths School on Bridge Street (in fact, today's Judge Michael Reilly has held court in the same room, at times, when the ordinary courthouse is in use by the superior courts).

Trials

But that trial was not held under the ordinary statute or common law. It was held under those very same charters which empowered the city to try cases — right up to murder most foul.

Now there were other powers and duties attaching to the admiralty of the Shannon. For example, the Royal Navy could not operate in the estuary without the mayor's express permission. At least that was the theory.

And this is where the "throwing of the dart" comes in.

Up to the year 1911, mayors occasionally symbolically claimed their rights by throwing a dart into the river "between the heads", that is, between Loop and Kerry Heads.

This ceremony generally followed a perambulation or beating of the bounds, the primary object of which was to re-establishing of the Corporation's jurisdiction, and the levelling of any

encroachments thereon.

In 1732, Philip Rowson, then mayor, made a very grand civic procession, accompanied by the whole city council in regalia, along with the city guild in costume with banners and badge, and the "rid the fringes", levelling such encroachments as had been

by bands of music belonging to the army, a sword-bearer and water bearer, with their proper ensigns, two sheriffs with their rods, and the Mayor, richly dressed with his rod in his hand, rode after, then followed the rest of the Corporation, followed by members of other gentlemen all having blue cockades in their hats. The four-and-twenty Trades rode after them — each Trade according to the antiquity of its charter and bearing its proper standard.

Then the traditionary show. On Tuesday, the 10th September, the Mayor, Sheriffs and the entire Corporation went down the river in the king's yacht, in order to assert and make good his right of being Admiral of the Shannon. A Court of Admiralty was held on the island of Scattery by the Mayor, who then sailed to the mouth of the Shannon where, between the Heads, he threw a dart into the sea to point out the limits of his jurisdiction. At the same time, it happened that a sloop of war entered the river, when the Mayor compelled to lower her colours and her foretop sail in acknowledgement of his power of admiralty in said River Shannon.

And in 1911, Mayor Timothy Ryan went downriver in Sir Thomas Clarke's yacht to claim his title, but nobody claimed it again until . . .

In 1956, on a grey, bleak, wintry mid-March day, Alderman Oester Edward Russell, Mayor of Limerick, together with everyone who was anyone, brought colour to the hazy, lower Shannon.

Revival

Declared in robes and wadding, the ancient city



Next year's Mayor, a then very youthful John Quinn (centre) was among those who attended the day's proceedings aboard the "Cannon".

made out the right words and commons of the Corporation.

Dart

In 1743, Thomas Smith beat the drum and threw the dart (legend). From the last occasion.

Servants, sailors, and mayor's men were on hand with their rods and their hats, and

made out the right words and commons of the Corporation.

Sean McElroy, stating if he could borrow a ship during the week of Fête Pascale (the forerunner of Civic Week, to be started later during the majority of Alkerman Gus O'Driscoll).

Then in March, the mayor wrote off to the many people who mattered, telling them that, in conjunction with the forthcoming festival, he was going to revive the centuries-old ceremony

"A naval corvette has been placed at my disposal by the Minister for Defence and it is intended to carry out the ceremony on Friday, 16th March at approximately 4 p.m.," went the message.

LIVE.
The official party, comprising members of the City Council, Harbour Board, Chamber of Commerce, Trades Council, and public representatives from the city and adjoining counties, was to leave by bus from Chelsea Road at 2pm.

But before that, a few gifts and sponsorships came in. One, a gift of some liquor, was delivered by Tom Cochrane, of White's Wine Merchants, as a recollection of the tribute which mayors had been entitled to exact from practitioners of the trade, and the mayor acknowledged the gift in reply.

me to make a grandeur as during my earlier long (in 1959) and undisturbed career in public life. I have manifestly refused to accept all salaries, thus preserving others as a number of possible. However, I do feel, on this occasion, that I have been justified in accepting my fishing on the subject and thinking that I have added to the world which is not the world of the 1950s. As a result, the Administration hopes to make during the next few years a complete re-organizing the Administration.

[illegible]

THE

Strong McMahon, oldest resident of the island, and spokesman for the little community, bade him welcome, whereupon Mayor Russell declared that he had come to proclaim his rights as admiral, and Mr. McMahon conceded that right on behalf of the islanders.

Then he told them that he had a right to 1,000 bearing and 1,000 oysters per boat, but immediately committed this to some product of the island.

Mr. McMillon then came forward with a cushion, on which rested a flat stone, and asked the mayor to except it as it was a stone from St. Serni's bed. That said the mayor, settled the claim in full. Then he announced that he was about to hold court.

He asked that those who had committed civil or criminal offences within the Estuary might be brought before him that judgement might be pronounced.

Mr. McElhannon stepped forward again, this time with a second cushion, on which lay a pair of white gloves, symbols, he said of the fact that the Espy was free of civil and criminal investigations.

Mayor Russell receives the white gloves, symbolic of the fact that there had been no crime committed on the Estuary. Mr Russell held court at Scattery Island, prior to casting the dart.

And to quote an account of the day (which might just be related to) the Japanese received from Mr. Cuyler of White's:

The Admiral then made a token presentation to the islanders. The nature of the present was not disclosed, but one might be enticed to guess that it was calculated to ward off the effects of standing in the cold breeze.

And the party went off, this time to the corvette which was standing off shore.

The mayor was picked aboard, and was greeted by the Officer Commanding, Hawthorne Naval Base, Commander Tommy Mc Kenna, and Lt Col Byrne, captain of the ship.

Around the dart was thrown from the deck.

The dart had been fast-
loosed at the Tipperary
Silvermines. And there was
a very curious story in this.

the Indian ship " "

anchor and chugged valiantly to the city, arriving a fortnight later. In view of the long and arduous journey, the three downriver boatsmen had been saluted on the shipping of the river and in part.

Mr Russell was afterwards, to be welcomed by "Vice admiral" Planchard and other pebble toy-~~toy~~ toys. There was a parade to end the day. The Admiral was driven in state through the city in an open

carriage was a two-wheeled horse, led by local bands and flanked by a motor cycle escort provided by the Dukessian motor cycle club. At the town hall, he spoke below the open window of his mayoral office.

last mayor to throw the dart. Others have done so at intervals during the succeeding 36 years. But none have

done so with the full cooperation of the management which was managed by Mr Russell.

Some have thrown the dart from Sunfield Bridge, from an assignment of boats and for a variety of reasons.

One was a silver-
brown, and another
finely bedded to the sur-
face a few feet after be-
ing exposed in the water, and
thereby returned to rock.

Because, decades later, Mr. Russell was to become the chairman of Silverman's public and investment company.

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