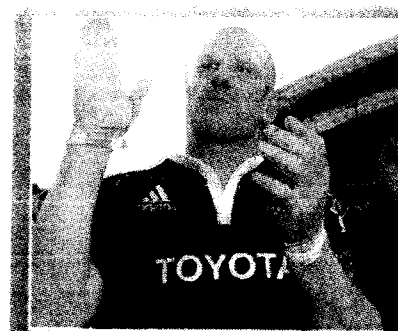




MAKING A SPLASH

Riverfest was launched this week and this year's festival will feature a round of the Irish Powerboat championships among its many attractions **BACK PAGE**



Paul O'Connell to be honoured with Freedom of Limerick distinction

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Drug dealers get off lightly as just 1 in 40 is hit with 'minimum' 10 years in jail

Mike Dwane
mike.dwane@limerickleader.ie

ONLY one of almost 40 Limerick drug dealers and couriers convicted of having commercial quantities of narcotics for sale or supply has received the "minimum" 10-year sentence since the law was amended in 2007, figures have revealed.

That change required that those caught with drugs with a street value of over €13,000 – an indictable offence – serve 10 years behind bars. But the average jail term imposed in Limerick between 2007 and 2011 was just four years.

The figures were released to the Irish Independent following a Freedom of Information request and a regional breakdown was published this week on the website thestory.ie. They show that of 39 people convicted in Limerick courts since



Ted McCarthy: Addicts being 'preyed upon'

2007, only one has been sentenced to 10 years.

But solicitor Ted McCarthy said behind that raw data were numerous stories of addicts and "minnows" being exploited by the very people the 10-year terms were meant to target.

"The reason it was brought in was to deal with the serious criminals, the drug lords and the top-of-the-chain suppliers. Unfortunately, in that net are being

caught the minnows, which are the little people, the drug addicts who are under obligation to the suppliers by way of debt or otherwise and they are being forced to either hold drugs on behalf of these people or carry them as couriers from A to B," Mr McCarthy said.

"It's clear to all when they are brought before the courts that that is the situation. These are not people who are making money out of drugs. Most of these people are indigent, living from hand from mouth, taking drugs almost in preference to food – and they are being preyed upon."

Judges had every right to take such backgrounds into consideration when imposing sentence, just as they had discretion when an accused person enters an early plea or co-operates with gardai.

"They often can co-operate to a certain

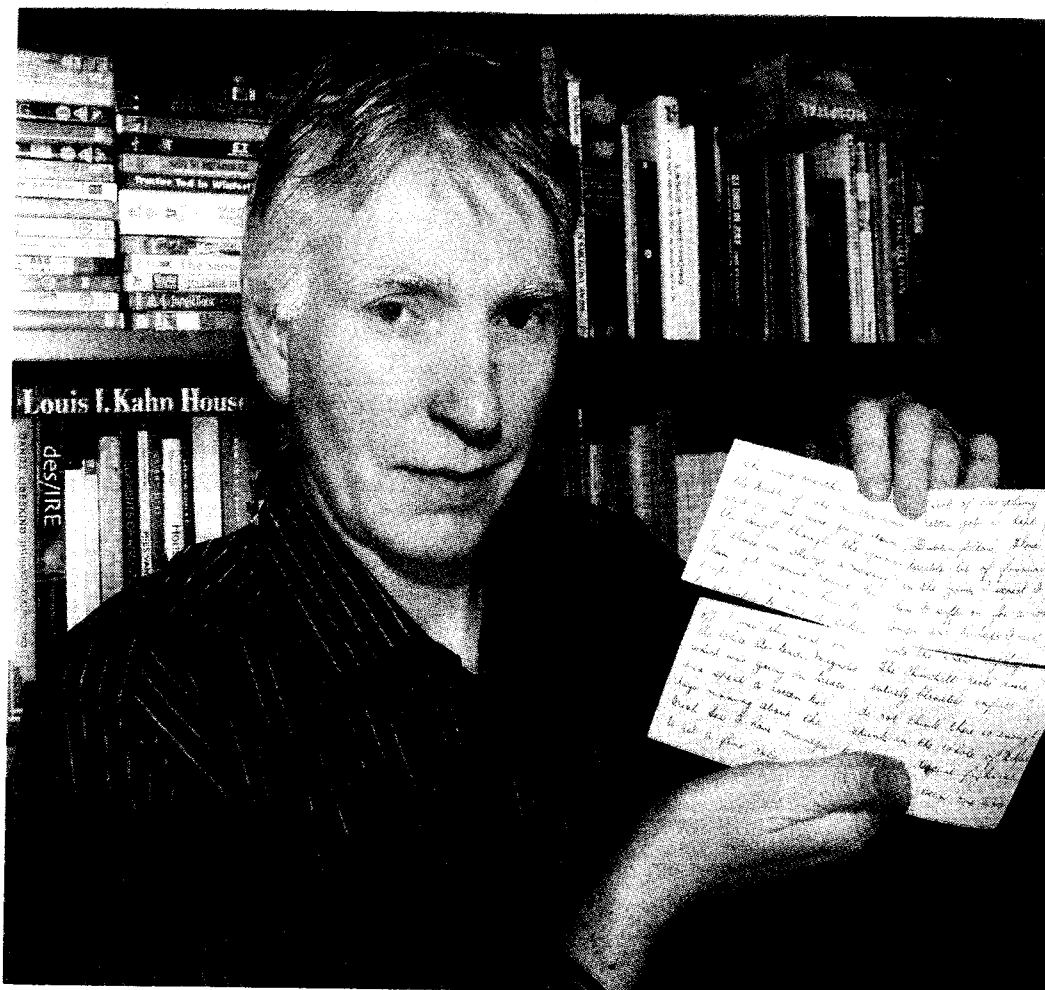
point but, beyond that, if they do co-operate by naming names, they put themselves, their families and others in peril. It is no coincidence that certain of the more serious criminals in this country are now dealt with by way of the Special Criminal Court rather than the ordinary courts for fear of jury intimidation. And if somebody in a jury is at risk of being intimidated, what chance your small drug addict who lives on a street corner?" said Mr McCarthy.

Sinn Féin's Cllr Maurice Quinlivan said he was "opposed to mandatory sentencing because there can always be mitigating circumstances".

"People are often forced to carry drugs under duress. They might be addicts. They might owe a bill or a family member might owe a bill. I'm involved with a

Continues on page 2

Letters from the Titanic: 100 years on, a Limerick family shares prized heirloom



Hugh Kelly, from the North Circular Road, displays a letter sent from a relative on the Titanic 100 years ago, who toiled to work on the famous ship in its final hours

Picture: Adrian Butler

Anne Sheridan

anne.sheridan@limerickleader.ie

FOR ONE hundred years letters written on board the Titanic revealing life on the luxury liner were privately kept and rarely discussed by relatives of one its fatal passengers.

But now a Limerick family want to share their relative's letters with the world, as the centenary of the disaster occurs this week.

For the first time, the letters that were sent to Dublin in 1912 from engineer William Kelly who died when the famous liner sank, have come to public light.

In the letters, he writes that the language used against the Pope

was enough to "sink the ship", and also makes another foreboding reference to its eventual sinking.

"I hope when the Titanic gets hold of me I won't be sorry I ate so much," he wrote to his mother a week before it sank.

North Circular Road resident Hugh Kelly, 47, an architect in the city, said he only became aware of the letters from his grand-uncle – and indeed their family's connection to the Titanic – in recent years.

For many years the historical items were kept in a chest in an attic in the family's Glasnevin home, by his mother Ethna, now 79, after they were passed to her for safe-keeping 50 years ago.

Mr Kelly, a father of two who moved to Limerick nearly 20 years ago to work with Murray O'Laoire architects, said his family "never really spoke about it" and when he did learn of it, it was "played down".

"The family have now decided that these letters really need a home. We're looking at the best use for them, instead of throwing them into a drawer. We were thinking maybe the Titanic Centre in Belfast or the engineering institute in Glasgow would like them. We have been trying to decide what to do with them," he told the Limerick Leader.

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Regional nurses in plea for more help

Mike Dwane

mike.dwane@limerickleader.ie

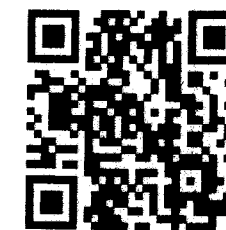
AT least 20 more nurses need to be hired to safely get through the working week at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital, according to the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation.

The call comes after a number of surgical procedures were cancelled this Wednesday as 35 patients were left waiting on trolleys in the emergency department. And INMO industrial relations officer Mary Fogarty said there were an additional 39 patients dispersed around the hospital without a designated inpatient bed or adequate nursing cover.

Unsafe levels of overcrowding were "now a regular occurrence at the hospital and tonight the ward known as 1B, which is to be the new acute medical assessment once that is up and running, will be accommodating some of the overflow", she said.

"This is being staffed through overtime, agency staff and pulling in nurses

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ISSN 1649-8992



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LIMERICK LEADER 14-04-2012

As Limerick's leading newspaper group, we have been serving generations of readers throughout the city and county since 1889. We are immensely proud of the Limerick Leader's heritage and tradition - and that of its sister paper the Limerick Chronicle - in reporting local life. Both in print and online, we continue to be the market leaders for news, sport and much more - so if you've got something to say or a business to promote there is no bigger audience in any medium in Limerick than our newspapers. And that's a fact. **We have more readers than anyone else.** To get in touch, see our contact details below.

Editor: **Alan English**

061-214567

alan.english@limerickleader.ie

Deputy Editor: **Eugene Phelan**

061-214503

eugene.phelan@limerickleader.ie

Sports Editor: **Steven Miller**

061-214514

steven.miller@limerickleader.ie

Advertising manager: **Bobby Power**

061-214527

bobby.power@limerickleader.ie

Main switchboard for our office
at 54 O'Connell Street, Limerick

061-214500

Editorial email

news@limerickleader.ie

Advertising email

advertising@limerickleader.ie

Circulation email

circulation@limerickleader.ie

Family share letters from historic Titanic

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"I've managed to get a

'Huge support' Flannery in Lir

■ Fr Adrian Egan speaks in support of frie

Alan Owens

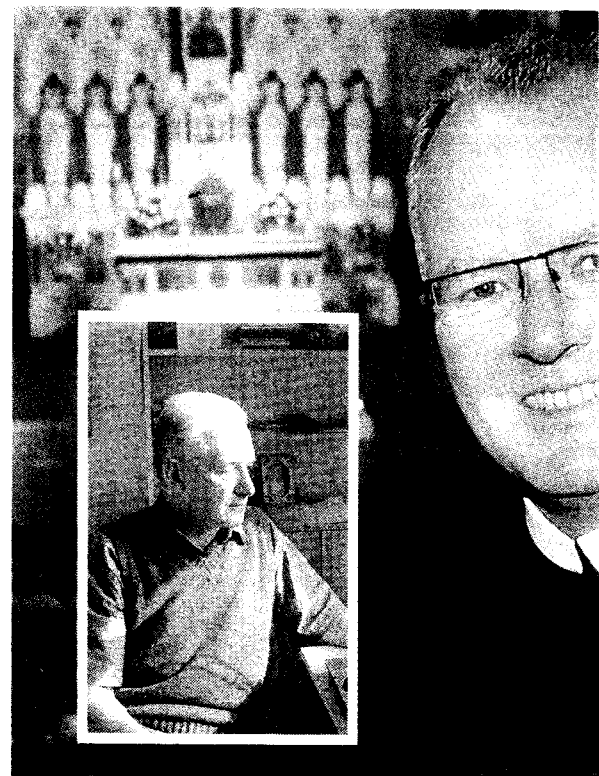
THE HEAD of the Redemptorist Order in Limerick has said he is "sad" and "disappointed" at the action taken against fellow priest Fr Tony Flannery by the Vatican.

Fr Flannery - who was himself rector in Limerick for six years in the mid-90s - has been silenced by the Vatican for his outspoken views on reform in the Catholic Church. The Athenry-based priest, who wrote a column in the Redemptorists' Reality magazine for 14 years, has now been advised to go to a monastery and "reflect on his situation" for a six-week period.

Rome had earlier put an end to Fr Flannery's monthly column in Reality, which is edited by Doon priest, Fr Gerry Moloney, who is also allegedly the subject of scrutiny from the Vatican. Fr Moloney is believed to have been told not to print any articles on celibacy, the use of contraception and the involvement of women in the clergy, for an unspecified period.

Fr Egan spoke to the Limerick Leader this Wednesday as the furore continued. While he stressed that he was "speaking on my own behalf", he expressed disappointment at how the situation had been handled.

"I am sad to see what is happening because Tony and also Gerry Moloney in Reality - although their situations are different



Fr Adrian Egan, head of the Redemptorist Order in Limerick, a former rector in Limerick in the mid-1990s for

- I have lived and worked with them, prayed and studied with them, given missions with them. They are two very fine priests, very compassionate men, very pastoral men and excellent preachers who have given their lives in this work and service and done a huge amount of good for thousands of people," he explained.

"To see that being called into question now is very disappointing and unfortunate and not necessarily the way I would want things to

happen.

"However, there would be some who are glad to see what is happening to these men because there is an element within the church that feels that we need to return to orthodoxy and a black and white, non-questioning, non-challenging position, and that is reflected a bit in what is going on."

Fr Egan added that he has received an overwhelming amount of messages of support both for Fr Flannery and the stance he has taken in

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 Mr Kelly said all they "knew until recently was that he [William Kelly] didn't survive".

However, a film entitled *Saving the Titanic*, recently shed light for them on the efforts the engineers and other crew made to keep the ship afloat - ultimately sacrificing their lives to allow others to live.

"All we knew was that he went down on the boat. But this has all come out eventually over time. I have to say that naturally you'd be very proud of the connection, especially when we really didn't know too much about it.

"The letters are interesting from the point of view of a Catholic working in Harland & Wolff at the time, which was very rare. We didn't realise that they had made the choice to stay below deck and keep the lighting going and so on. That was only a recent discovery," he said.

He only fully realised the family's connection to the Titanic when the subject of the Titanic was mentioned some years ago and his mother casually remarked, 'Oh, we have letters from the Titanic upstairs'.

His grand-uncle, William Kelly, 23, from Drumcondra in Dublin, made the fateful decision to join the famous shipyard in January 1912 - just a few months before the Titanic finally set sail. It was the first time the assistant electrician had ever been to sea.

One of five children, William Kelly was born in Glasgow on June 19, 1888 to William and Annie, and the family later lived in Dublin, hailing originally from Dungannon in county Tyrone. William's older brother Peter - Hugh's grandfather - also went to sea on the *Oceanic*, another White Star liner and encouraged his brother to go to sea.

The first letter, posted from Belfast to a friend in Dublin on March 10, 1912, gives a flavour of the hardships on the workyard and the political atmosphere of

the time.

"I've managed to get a fine cold and I'm sick of everything. Every rotten job is kept for the Dublin fellow. There's a terrible lot of favouritism in the yard. I expect I'll have to suffer on for a while longer, and perhaps I'll get to know myself," he wrote.

William, a Catholic, also writes: "The Churchill riots were entirely bloodless, in fact. I do not think there's enough spunk in the whole of Belfast to cause a decent fight, so I have never seen one since I came up here. One person they are terribly afraid of is the Pope. On the saloon bulkheads before the fannelling was put up the language they used against him in writing was enough to sink the ship. They must think I am a relation of his because I got a good share of it too. I will now conclude my giving you advice - never come to Belfast."

His second letter is written on April 9, 1912 from the Titanic to his "dear mother" Annie at home on the Claude Road, Drumcondra. Here he writes poignantly that this will be "the last opportunity I will have of writing home for some time."

"We are just after leaving Cherburgh [sic], after a wild passage across the English channel. We have a large crowd of passengers on board, the 1st and 2nd class are just what you would expect but the third class are terrible. They include everything from Christians to Jews, not excluding Chinese and Japanese with children of all ages."

"We're living like a prince now. We had lunch a one o'clock, I thought it was dinner and we dined at seven o'clock. I hope when the Titanic gets hold of me I won't be sorry I ate so much."

At the end of his final letter - his last contact with his parents, then aged 50, he said he intended to send them money for an item "but I forgot to get to the PO [post office] before coming on board."

See editorial, page 16, and Leader 2 cover story