

The Brutal Murder of Denis O'Donovan

(By WILLIE W. GLEESON)

WHAT must rank as the most brutal, callous, cold-blooded murder, perpetuated by Forces of the Crown, throughout the Anglo-Irish War, 1919-21, took place in the otherwise peaceful County Limerick village of Castleconnell, in April, 1921.

On that occasion, in the public bar of the Shannon Hotel, which overlooked the main street, three members of the Royal Irish Constabulary, dressed in civilian attire, were regaling their thirst, after having previously cycled from Newport, across the Tipperary border.

At the same time, three members of the Auxiliary Force (military), also in civilian dress, were approaching the hotel. On observing the three civilians, whom they believed to belong to the I.R.A., immediately opened fire on the "enemy".

Killed

Sergeant Hughes, R.I.C., was killed outright. Constable Morrison was next to fall, and though fatally wounded, sent a bullet through the corner of the window pane, and which found its fatal mark through the eye of Captain Pringle, who was peeping in. The third member of the R.I.C. and the two other "Auxies"—one of whom was the notorious Captain Nathan—escaped unscathed.

On hearing the shots, a group of auxiliaries raced up the street in a Crossley tender and, without bothering to investigate the cause, plastered the hotel front (doors and windows) with machine-gun fire.

Rushed

Dismounting, they next rushed the building, seized the proprietor, Mr. O'Donovan, whom they took to the rear of the premises where, after charging him with harbouring rebels, forced

him to face the wall, after which they shot him to death, in the presence of his wife and four children: May (13½), Dermot (12), Donal (10) and Una (5).

Mr. O'Donovan, who was 46 when he died, was manager of Lady Well Brewery, Limerick Branch, and was very popular among all classes.

Ties

Of Fenian stock, his family ties were deeply rooted in Bru Ri, he being closely related to O'Donovan Rossa, to whose funeral in Glasnevin in May, 1915, he was specially invited to attend by none other than Padraig Pearse.

"I robbed no man, I spilled no blood, though they sent me to gaol;

Because I was O'Donovan Rossa and son of Granuaile."

The Castleconnell murders, by the Auxiliaries, took place six weeks after Mayor Clancy, ex-Mayor O'Callaghan and Volunteer O'Donoghue had been most foully done to death in Limerick City on the night of March 6.

On the day of O'Donovan's death, Stephen O'Mara, who had just returned from America to succeed Clancy as Mayor, was, above all places, staying at the Shannon Hotel. Oh, had the Auxiliaries but known—?

Pringle, who was also killed, is buried in the Soldiers' Cemetery, Island Field, now St. Mary's Park.

Died

And what of Nathan? Before he, too, died fighting while serving with the Red International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, wrote in his memoirs, published in a well-known English newspaper, that he was "an English Jew, a sadist, homo-sexual, murderer, and a participant in the Limerick and Castleconnell shootings . . ." (call them what you will).

And there ends the story which, alas, I remember only too well.

Linn

WHAT THEY THINK



Jim Sadler, who played right full back on the last Limerick team to win a National Hurling League in 1948, says: "Tipperary are a tough proposition in a final, but I think Limerick have now the confidence and ability to win."



Jim O'Brien, the left-corner back, interrupted his daily farm chores to tell us that: "It will be a close game, and Limerick have a 50/50 chance."

RICHMOND R.F.C.

Annual General Meeting will take place at the Parkway Motel, on Wednesday, May 26, at 8 p.m. Members and intending members invited to attend.

M. G. MOCRE,
Hon Secretary.
(22-24c)