

EDITORIAL

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Going North

THE Drumcree Orange protest received plenty of headlines this week.

But little mention was given of a visit of a of a Limerick delegation to observe the Twelfth celebrations in the North.

The Irish Peace Institute, based at the University of Limerick organised the visit to Enniskillen to observe the celebrations.

It has been a fact finding mission; educational and very worthy.

Most of us here in the South tend to frame our opinions on the North through television and what we read in the newspapers.

But how many of us go North? How many of us try to find out both sides of the story?

Politicians ranting on television can be off-putting. Are all people in the North like them?

Dr Brendan O'Regan and former MEP Tom O'Donnell have been to the forefront in promoting the Peace Institute.

Quietly and diligently they go about their job of developing cross border relations.

The mission statement of the Irish Peace Institute is to contribute to the process of peace building through programmes of education, research and outreach directed to the development of mutual understanding and co-operation between the people of the North and South.

The Peace Institute have initiated numerous projects including ongoing community-to-



Dr Brendan O'Regan

community links programmes. One of these involved a group of 12 from the Southill and St Mary's Parishes who travelled to the North.

There have been sporting links and last March the Crimson Players from Derry staged a re-enactment of the Siege of Derry in King John's Castle, Limerick.

The Peace Institute have done much more and deserve more public and local government support in their efforts.

There were once very close relations between Limerick and Derry, and while we see the Mayor of that great Northern city down here for the odd St Patrick's Day parade it is surely time to build up stronger and more fruitful relationships with our Northern brothers.

Maybe it is time for both local authorities, Limerick County Council and Corporation to

Story of 27 policemen shot here in Limerick

By MARTIN BYRNES

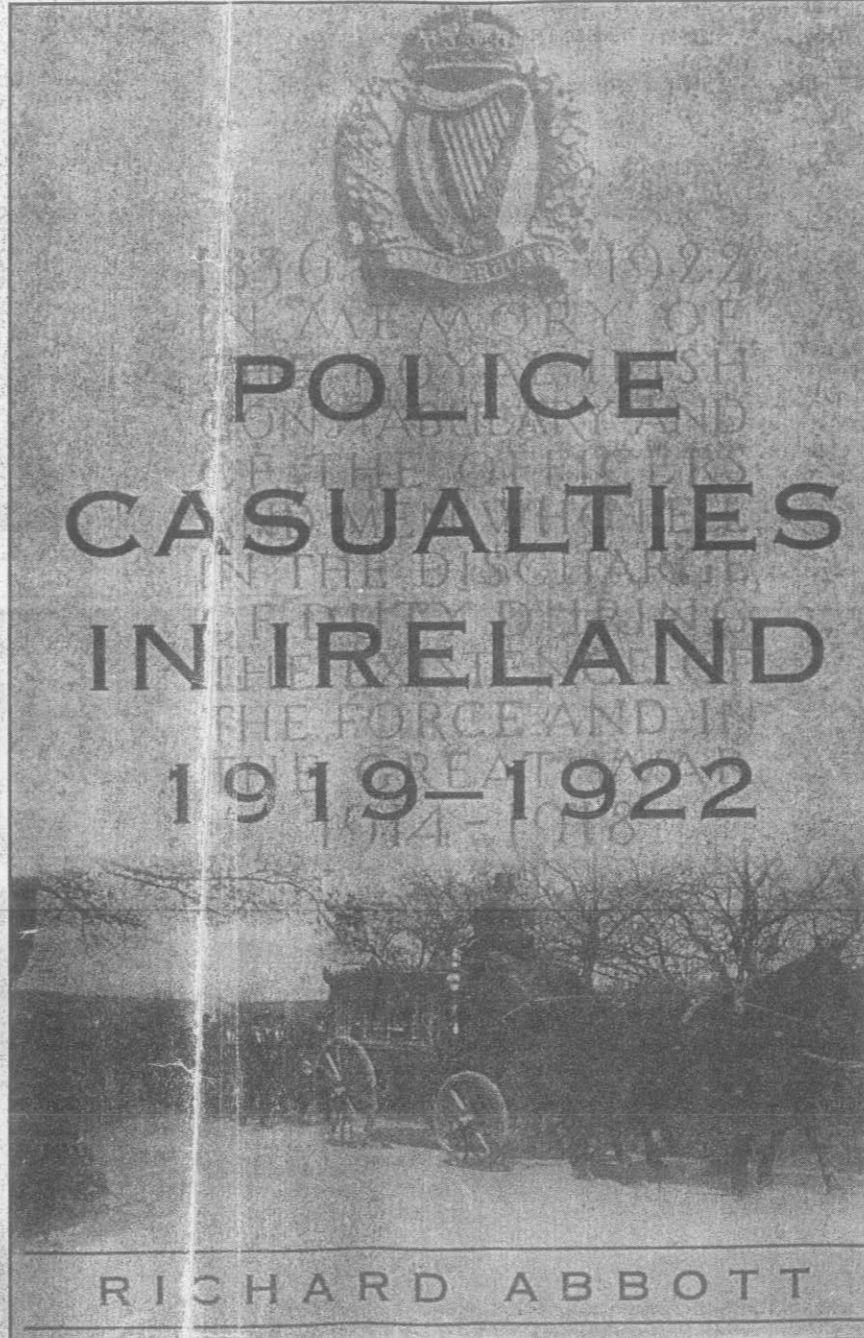
TWENTY seven serving members of the Royal Irish Constabulary were shot dead in ambushes in Limerick City and County in the years 1919 to 1922.

In fact, 25 of them were killed in 1920 and 1921, and all of those deaths were in Limerick county.

Almost all of the dead were Irishmen and Catholic. Most of them were young. Many of them were not on active duties at the time of their being slain. Most were shot in the back by snipers. One was merely taking a greyhound to a track.

Official Ireland (South) after 1922 decided to do one of two things in each case: (a) either these killings were air-brushed from the record, that is to say that they never happened or (b) the facts were distorted to suggest that it was the police who were attacking the irregulars, and that the deaths occurred in justifiable self defence. Nobody any longer accepted that the RIC were, or ever had been, a disciplined police force, dedicated in the first instance to the maintenance of proper order within the communities which they were detailed to serve.

Conversely, as soon as the Northern Ireland Parliament was created, its new establishment did the exact opposite, glorifying the bravery of all slain



Twenty seven policemen were killed in Limerick during the height of the Troubles

RIC men and exorciating those who had seen reason to rebel against the Crown (and pro-

voking an inevitable 'Chinese wall' response among the Nationalists remain-

ing within the border of the Six Counties. But twenty seven policemen died in Lim-

erick: eleven in Dromkeen, four in Kilmallock, two in Knocklong, one each in Garryowen, Abbeyfeale town, Mountmahon, Bruff, Fedamore, Dromcollogher, Hospital, Foynes, Rathkeale and Newcastle West.

In 1990, the internationally famous writer, John McGahern won worldwide acclaim for his book of that year, 'Amongst Women', in which two of his old man characters have little in common apart from the fact that one had been an IRA brigade leader during the Troubles, and the other had been his lieutenant. They had subsequently fought on separate sides during the Civil War. In their reminiscences, they openly admit that they had been cold-blooded killers, and disagree as to whether all the effort had been worth it, or even justified, if only on balance. The description of an ambush at a

A work-in-progress by this reviewer seeks to depict the nature and effect of the changed attitude to the simple infantrymen from every part of Limerick city and county upon their return from the horror of the trenches, as opposed to the almost studied indifference accorded them on their departure years before.

And now we have what appears to be a quite definitive book, written by a 43-year-old serving Inspector with the RUC, entitled "Police Casualties in Ireland 1919-1922".

It catalogues in a clinical and unemotional way each of the fatal events. Richard Abbott's book sets out to aid historians, descendants of the deceased and both police and ordinary readers who would wish to put the events of those days in context. It contains harrowing details of the backgrounds of the victims, and does not flinch to describe the innocent ages and occupations of those who shot them and, in some cases, were themselves shot.

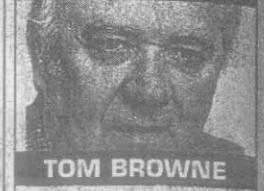
In this week of the "Twelfth", more so than in the 51 other weeks of the year, when the RUC are reeling under the rejection by elements of what most of them would consider to be their cultural and professional tradition, such a book is timely.

As we looked at the weekend at the annual Drumcree events, we, in the South (and very many in the North) ask why it is that the two factions cannot forget the past and get on with life.

But the sad fact is that it is not possible to forget that which was not properly and openly described to either side to begin with. The half-truth and the work of the propagandist exists to this day, unextinguished in some hearts after the passage of four generations.

Police Casualties in Ireland is published by Mercier Press in Cork, and is generally available with a cover price of £15.

FEAR TUAITHE



A RECENT correspondence from that eminent Co. Limerick

centenarian, William Geary, long resident in New York, regrets the decline in the wildbird population in his native country. "As a native of Ballyagran, born in Cloonee Cottage, on a ninety three acre dairy farm, I am sure you would like to be informed of the birds I knew locally", he writes. "I imagine you shall like to hear there is a reader of your column in the Limerick Leader, in New York", he adds. "I'm delighted, of course."

Mr Geary, lists the native and migratory birds seen around Ballyagran, early in the last century. Some such as the golden wren, I hadn't heard of before but many of the others are still about though regretfully much fewer in number.

Mr Geary, names the species that were around in his native parish about a hundred years ago and because of this it is important that they should be recorded.

The list (native) blackbird, thrush, wood thrush, robin, wren, golden wren, lark, linnet, grey linnet, goldfinch, bullfinch, yellowhammer, magpie, wood pigeon, crow, house sparrow, starling, chaffinch, pheasant, coot, heron, hawk, mallard duck, Willie wagtail; (migratory) sallow, corncrake, curlew, lapwing, cuckoo, snipe and woodcock.

Referring to the Willie wagtail, William Geary, recalls "This very beautiful bird about the size of a sparrow, wagging its long tail used to fly into the yard, peak around, then fly away (only one ever seen at one time). As no one knew where it came from or went but on thinking it over I must incline to the belief, since it came only in summer, it must have been migratory. As far as I'm aware

Author writes of ignorance of history

AS A returned exile I find it annoying that so many of our people are ignorant of the basic history of Limerick. Our city

trivial could be tomorrow's history. Such words, deeds and adventures that are good and profitable to know should

the Celtic Tiger we are wont to dim such values, such heritage to our cost. The old songs die out because nobody is now

tival last week where the girls were wearing traditional dress. I went to one festival last week where the girls were wearing

