

My grandfather, my hero

SURREY-based Jim Corbett, has spent two years researching the life and times of his grandfather Cornelius McNamara who showed remarkable bravery in the Civil War and War of Independence.

By John O'Shaughnessy

A FASCINATION with the exploits of his grandfather Cornelius McNamara during the War of Independence and Civil War, influenced Jim Corbett into researching the man and the role he played in a turbulent period in Irish history for a new book titled 'Not While I Have Ammo', due to be published next March.

Jim is the youngest of six surviving children, and brother to Tommy, Derry, Sarah, Neil and Dan, born to Thomas and Patricia (nee McNamara) Corbett, both of whom were pharmacists.

Explained Jim: "All through my life, stories about my grandfather, a member of the Old IRA, were relayed to me. We had his war medal, a picture and an old bullet from a battle in the Strand Barracks, from the Civil War days, where Connie and his comrades made a heroic stand.

"That bullet was fired at him as he made a telephone call on the final day of battle and pierced the ear-piece. He was a very lucky man. Also in our possession was an autograph book, with some strange illustrations and poems from his time as a prisoner of war at Gormonston.

"My mother told me stories of Republican prisoners he was interned with, fellow

Volunteers compelled to run over broken glass, and of him having to sleep in graveyards when he was on the run from the British.

"But apart from that, we never knew the full background to our grandfather, who, as it transpired, had a very interesting story to tell".

After almost two years of research, both in Ireland and the UK, Jim has put together a fascinating book and this week, received the good news that leading publishing company Nonsuch, were excited enough about the project to take it on board.

Back to Jim: "As I researched Connie's contribution to Irish history, the desire grew to have his life documented for posterity.

"He was one of a golden generation of unselfish Irishmen with high ideals who were prepared to risk and endure everything for the sake of



This photograph was taken outside the Strand Barracks, Limerick.

he deserved, and to give back to the people of Limerick, the story of one of her gallant sons. "This is the 50th anniversary of Connie's death and I felt the time was opportune to present the story of this fascinating man, born in Thomondgate, was twice married, later lived in Clanmaurice Avenue and who was employed as a

Commandant Liam Campbell, of Military Archives, Cathal Brugha Barracks Carolyn Crawley, of the

Veterans Administration section Department of Defence in Renmore. Lar Joyce, of the National Museum,

Michael Collins Barracks, Deirdre Griffin of Limerick City Registrars, St Camillus Hospital, Limerick, for the

McNamara, Maokley and Corbett birth, marriage and death certificates, allowing me to build a family tree.

Sharon Clancy, who kindly obtained a copy of his obituary.

Des Long, of the Limerick Republican Graves Association,

Tom Toomey, for his clarification on various Volunteers activities

Natalie Murray, for her excellent illustration of the Limerick City Battalion crest.

Phillip Turner, for drawing the map of the Strand Barracks

Mike Ratcliffe of Snappy Snaps, Croydon, James McMahon and Rodger Boulter for helping me with their research.

And last but not least, the various members of the Corbett, Mokeley and McNamara families whose family records and first hand information were invaluable".

The book will be launched at the Hilton Hotel, Limerick, in March 2008.

HE was one of a golden generation of unselfish Irishmen with high ideals who were prepared to risk and endure everything for the sake of their country and countrymen. I wanted to give him a place in history that I felt he deserved, and to give back to the people of Limerick, the story of one of her gallant sons

their country and countrymen.

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collector with Limerick Corporation".

Cornelius McNamara became connected with the volunteer movement in early 1916, aged 20, together with friends Martin Barry, Peadar Dunn, Peadar McMahon and Arthur Johnson.

"In writing this history of my grandfather, there are a number of people I would like to thank for both their assistance and patience in dealing with often-difficult requests and never ending enquiries in my search for nuggets of information relating to him and the period covered.

"Without their support and encouragement, I would have been unable to compile this history and see my dream realise".

"These include: Rodger Black and the staff of his gallery,



Soldier Connie McNamara is pictured left.

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