

the excitement into three parts. The Way... afternoon. from the... towards... The... ability... conviction... nature. from Jim... Ro-

fascinating reading, though much of it has been heard many times over, as is customary in a case which grips the public's and the media's attention for years.

With no other person ever charged with her murder, and his nephew's recent failed attempt to claim £1.4m in compensation over lost earnings, the book may have added appeal.

Where it becomes most insightful, however, is

the trauma that relatives of an accused undergo when their loved ones are brought before the court on the most heinous of charges.

Mike, like George, was the subject of unwanted press attention to a much lesser degree. At one stage he recalled putting a notice on his door in Limerick, advising: "No Photos No Story So Don't Offer."

He says he declined "substantial monies" from one British newspaper

was, he said, "like a prisoner in her house" in East Acton.

He believes the family's phones were tapped during that period, and was frequently forced to unplug the phone from the socket due to the volume of calls he received.

When he first heard that this nephew was arrested for the murder, he said he was shocked but did not think that he was guilty.

"I was puzzled, why would the police be interested in him, surely

would need all the help he could get, Mr Bourke claims he helped organise a good defence team and began to write to him in prison "in an effort to keep his hopes alive."

"I would try to support Barry in the assumption that he was innocent. It was to be an unpopular decision but Barry is a relative and as deserving of my support as any other. I also knew that he would not have any great family support beyond sympathy and he would need help. I

herrings leaving the trail go cold."

Later on his feelings toward Mr George would turn again, as Margaret was hospitalised.

"I felt a real anger towards him for all of this horror which had fallen on the family. He always wanted to be famous, and now he was, sort of, but for all the wrong reasons."

**'Mike's Story: The Battle to Clear Barry George of the Jill Dando Murder' is available on Amazon**

director in March after three successful years in the venue, and who decided at the end of her contract to pursue other projects.

"I would like to congratulate Joanne Beirne on a very lively programme, I think she has animated the place very well with a great spread of work. I worked with her in Cork and around the country, so I wish her well," said Mr Barnes.

"My own approach is

look at what is on the ground, because Limerick is an incredibly important hub in terms of the work that spins around the country, and I think it has a very fertile arts tradition," he said.

"I think it is very exciting for everyone in the Belltable and the audience that it has had a makeover. The community groups are the anchor upon which the whole thing will be built. It is a challenge, but it is a good time to start," he added.

# IRA ambush of train at Meelick to be commemorated

Mike Dwane

**HISTORIAN** Tom Toomey says it was an "act of heroism" that led to the death of IRA volunteer Michael Gleeson at Meelick in the dying days of the War of Independence.

The actions of the Clondrinagh man and of his comrades during a failed ambush on a train on June 15, 1921, are to be commemorated in Meelick next weekend. Mr Toomey, author of "The War Of Independence In Limerick 1912-1921", said that many of the actions of the East Clare IRA during the conflict were carried out so close the city that they could equally be regarded as Limerick actions.

It was Michael Gleeson's Caherdavin company who planned to raid the train from Limerick to Ennis

that day. They had hoped to intercept mail that might reveal the identity of a suspected spy.

Further background was the death in Spike Island two weeks before of an IRA captain from Meelick, Patrick White.

"Men were playing hurling in the yard and he went to retrieve a sliothar that went too close to the wire. He asked a sentry if he could get the ball; your man told him go ahead, but when he did he opened fire and shot him," said Mr Toomey.

Decided on raiding the train, the one thing the IRA men could not be certain of was whether there would be British soldiers on board. Tom Bentley from Cratloe rode the train and was to wave his cap out the window to warn the IRA.

Thirty soldiers from the Royal Scots boarded

at Limerick; Bentley gave the warning; and the train driver, an IRA sympathiser, ploughed through the stone barricade laid across the track. At Cratloe, the driver was ordered to reverse back along the line and the IRA, realising they had been spotted, set about cutting communications.

"They should have all just got out of there but everything that could have gone wrong did go wrong," says Tom Toomey. "They tried to cut the wires and the wirecutters broke so they went looking for another. In the meantime, the train was back down on top of them and soldiers opened fire."

Christopher McCarthy, from Miltown Malbay, was felled in that burst and Gleeson, "who had actually found cover, ran



**Michael Gleeson, Clondrinagh, was killed in action for the IRA in the Meelick Ambush of 1921**

out to assist him. He was helping him back up the field to get away when he was himself seriously wounded. The British got to them and finished them

off and the two bodies were taken on to Ennis".

This, Tom Toomey says, was only one action of the East Clare brigade to have taken place within

a few miles of Limerick.

When a British plane crash-landed at Coonagh in November 1920, a detachment of soldiers was sent from the Strand Barracks to protect the site, near the north exit of the Limerick tunnel.

Two soldiers, Spackman and Robins, were killed by the IRA and in a reprisal the following night, soldiers from the same barracks trashed part of Limerick city centre.

Two police sergeants were also killed near the Limerick Inn when the IRA attacked an RIC lorry in January 1920.

While Kevin Myers and others have taken to writing that commemorations of the Old IRA are inappropriate in a new era for Anglo-Irish relations, Tom Toomey and the Meelick committee feel it is only right to honour them.

"We have got to move on, yes, but moving on does not mean you throw your history and your heritage into a bucket. This is what happened. Tom Gleeson on the committee is not out there ranting and raving about what the British did to his granduncle who was killed in Meelick. But this is our history and we should be proud of it."

The Meelick Ambush Commemoration Committee - which is non-political - is inviting people to attend the ceremony after 12 noon mass on Sunday, June 26 and a monument to McCarthy and Gleeson will also be unveiled at Woodcock Hill Road.

As well as Mr Toomey and Mr Gleeson, the committee includes Johnny White, Pdraig Og O Ruairc and Clr Cathal Crowe.

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