

## News

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## COMMEMORATION

# Blackwater tribute to Limerick teens killed in RIC ambush

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NINETY-one years after two Limerick city teenagers were shot dead by the RIC and Black and Tans in a South East Clare ambush, a memorial is to be erected to their memory.

Known locally as the 'Blackwater tragedy', the deaths of Thomondgate brothers Aidan and Cecil O'Donovan are the subject of a detailed study by Limerick historian Tom Toomey who will give a public lecture at Browne's pub in Parteen at 7.30pm on Wednesday, February 20.

A commemorative scroll has been produced to help defray the cost of the memorial stone that will be unveiled at the site of the tragedy on Easter weekend by the Meelick/Parteen and Cratloe War of Independence Commemoration Committee who is trying to make contact with any living relatives of the O'Donovans to invite them to the ceremony. Recalling the details of the event, Tom Toomey said that on the morning of Sunday, February 20, 1921, the O'Donovan brothers, Cecil (18) Thomas (17) and Aidan (14) left their home at 3pm, Emma Villas in Thomondgate to walk to Blackwater Mill in Parteen along with their cousin Brendan O'Donovan (19) to search for birds' nests in the ruins of the mill.

Neither the O'Donovans nor their cousin had any involvement in politics or political

movements.

Arriving at the mill around noon, they were seen moving around the ruins by a person who mistook them for IRA men on a training exercise.

They didn't notice the approach of a convoy of RIC policemen and Black and Tans that stopped near where McMahon's public house and mortuary now stands.

Captain David Sturrock, the Intelligence office accompanying the convoy, later stated that he had received information that the IRA was drilling at the mill and it was on the foot of this information that the convoy was sent out. The two men in charge, Inspector John Grealley and Captain Sturrock, moved up to investigate. Sturrock stated that he saw seven to nine men streaming out from the mill.

While the officers were still investigating, shots were fired from the convoy and Aidan O'Donovan fell mortally wounded after being hit in the chest. Cecil O'Donovan was hit by a bullet between the eyes and was killed instantly.

Their cousin Brendan managed to escape through the grounds of the mill and a badly shocked Thomas O'Donovan surrendered to Captain Sturrock.

A military inquiry and court inquiry left many unanswered questions over what happened including the identity of the person who gave the order to fire while the officers in charge were still



Thomondgate brothers Aidan and Cecil O'Donovan

investigating.

Cecil and Aidan's father, Thomas (Snr) died in 1927 when he was about 59 years of age and his wife Alice lived on until 1959 when she was well into her eighties.

Thomas, who survived the tragedy, subsequently moved to England and lost contact with the family.

Francis, who was the seventh of the O'Donovan's

nine children, joined the British Army during the second World War. He died in London in 1943 from illness picked up while serving in Aden, Yemen. He was only 34 and unmarried when he died.

Anyone wishing to contribute to the memorial or with information on the O'Donovans can contact Tom Toomey at 086-3114867 or Padraig Og O Ruairc at 086-3148496.

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