

Joy's novel scoop on Limerick 'royals'

By PATRICIA FEEHILY

IT HAD to happen. Some of the far flung descendants of Brian Boru, still harbouring racial memories of "greatness", have proved a scoop for first time romantic novelist and former Limerick journalist, Joy Martin.

Joy, the former Joy Greene of Knockalishen, who set out on her first journalistic assignment on a bicycle to Glenstal for the former *Limerick Weekly Echo* nearly three decades ago, has based her first work of fiction on the imaginary goings-on of a local branch of the O'Briens at the end of the last century.

Paperback rights

Since the book, *A Wrong To Sweeten*, was published in hardback by Widenfeld and Nicolson, London publishing houses have been fighting for the paperback rights. Now the story, based in Clare and Limerick, is to be published next year as a major paperback title by Grafton Books.

With deference to Ireland's "Royal family", *A Wrong To Sweeten* is full of the things that saw the downfall of aristocratic families from the Ukraine to Cratloe — romance, philandering, feasting and feuding. Although it has to be said that while the theme of the book is based on "a major land feud" over a 5,000-acre estate, some of us have known more exciting feuds over a couple of acres. And don't be put off by the 'Mills and Boon' like title. It was none other than Yeats himself who "sang to sweeten Ireland's wrong".

The acceptance and success of her first novel hasn't really taken the author by surprise. A veteran of two



Limerick-born novelist Joy Martin.

works of non-fiction, one on life in the black townships around Johannesburg and the other on the Shona culture of the old Rhodesia, Joy Martin went into a world of non-fiction with her eyes wide open, secured a good agent and avoided all the trauma faced by first novelists.

Now she has been commissioned to write two more novels on Ireland, one of which will be based on the 'Wild Geese'.

She has O'Brien blood in her own veins. Her mother was an O'Brien Kelly and she has two aunts and two uncles still living here — the O'Brien Kellys, George, Harriet, Frances and Bob of Oakfield House, Redgate.

A past pupil of Laurel Hill, the school figures prominently in her novel. It was at a garden fete in Laurel Hill that the hero and heroine met and fell in love, just like her own grandmother and grandfather.

"But that," she says adamantly, "is where any similarity ends."

Every inch of East Clare, from Killaloe to Limerick, is mentioned faithfully, and you can almost pick out the spot where the hero jumps to his death from O'Briens Bridge. The historical background also took many months of research in the National Library and among local historians.

Joy Martin had a colourful career in journalism after leaving her £6 a week job in the *Weekly Echo*. She went from the *Evening Press* to the BBC as a news reporter and then to Rhodesia and from there to the *Rand Daily Mail*, the liberal press of Johannesburg.

Life in Johannesburg among the whites she describes as "a bit like the series Dallas".

"You get the feeling that everyone is living for the day — big cars, beautiful women, money and clothes."

She went into the townships herself to produce "Twelve Shades of Black". "I think it would be dangerous now for a white woman to attempt anything like that."

Life ambition

But her whole life ambition was to write a novel. "Being born in Ireland gives you a feeling for writing. It gets even stronger when you go away."

In any case she was tired of the distorted images of Ireland appearing in English novels: "I thought, I'm going to show them . . ."

By all accounts she has done just that.

CONV OF MA BOGU FIRE C

By LEADER REPORTER

A CHARLEVILLE man has been convicted of making a bogus call to the local fire brigade and has been told to bring £250 to the next sitting of the local court.

Thomas Bourke, aged 50, of The Turrets, Charleville, denied the charge.

Donal Forde, part-time fireman, said that there had been about ten bogus calls up to March of this year. He instanced one such, on February 28th at 11 p.m. when the brigade was called to an alleged fire at Newtownshandrum. He himself had not taken the call, and could not say who the caller was.

Records

John O'Brien, Cork county assistant chief fire officer, said that the records for February 21 showed that the caller had given the name, "John Murphy", that a tender with nine firemen had gone to the scene, and that it had cost the council £201.20p for the turnout. Mr. O'Brien said that he was not aware that Mr. Burke had tried to join the fire brigade, when asked by Inspector Frank McDonough, prosecuting.

Garda Jeremiah O'Neill, Charleville, said that the defendant, when questioned at the gard station, admitted making two bogus calls to the brigade from that outset. He admitted one about a car at Ballyhea and one about a car at Newtownshandrum.

The garda did not accept the suggestion from Mr. Robin Lee, solicitor, that the defendant knew nothing about these calls until the list was read out to him, and in his confusion he may have appeared to admit to two of them.

The garda said that the defendant was a quiet man.

Garda G. Lowe said that the defendant was interested in the fire service. Mr. Lee said however, that one of the firemen, a M Coughlan, was cousin and friend and that the two men spend a lot of time together and that it would not be unreasonable to find Mr. Burke in the vicinity of the fire station when he had been with Mr. Coughlan when the siren was sounded.

The garda said that was reasonable. The garda said that Mr. Burke had been told that when he signed the statement which had been written, he would be free to go. He had been in the station from 12.45 to 4.45 p.m.

When the garda remarked that Mr. Burke had admitted to making a bogus call two months before Christmas, Mr. Lee suggested that that referred to a genuine fire

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NO DOG LICENCE, JUSTICE CONFESSES

By LEADER REPORTER

A DOG LICENCE case against a Charleville man was struck out at the local court when Justice Mary Martin admitted that she too had an unlicensed dog, and remarked

licence," she remarked, and added, "I must admit that I've a dog at home and I haven't got a licence for it. I feel I can't be a hypocrite and impose a penalty in this case, especially as it is the first case of its kind. But things will be different in future."

The case was struck from the list



Celebrating the release of their hit single, "Blue Blue Monday," in Northern Ireland last week in Changers night club in the Pacemaker Bar, Thomas Street, were top Limerick-based group, "The Groove". Also included in the picture is Donncha Reidy, proprietor of the Pacemaker Bar and Changers night club.

