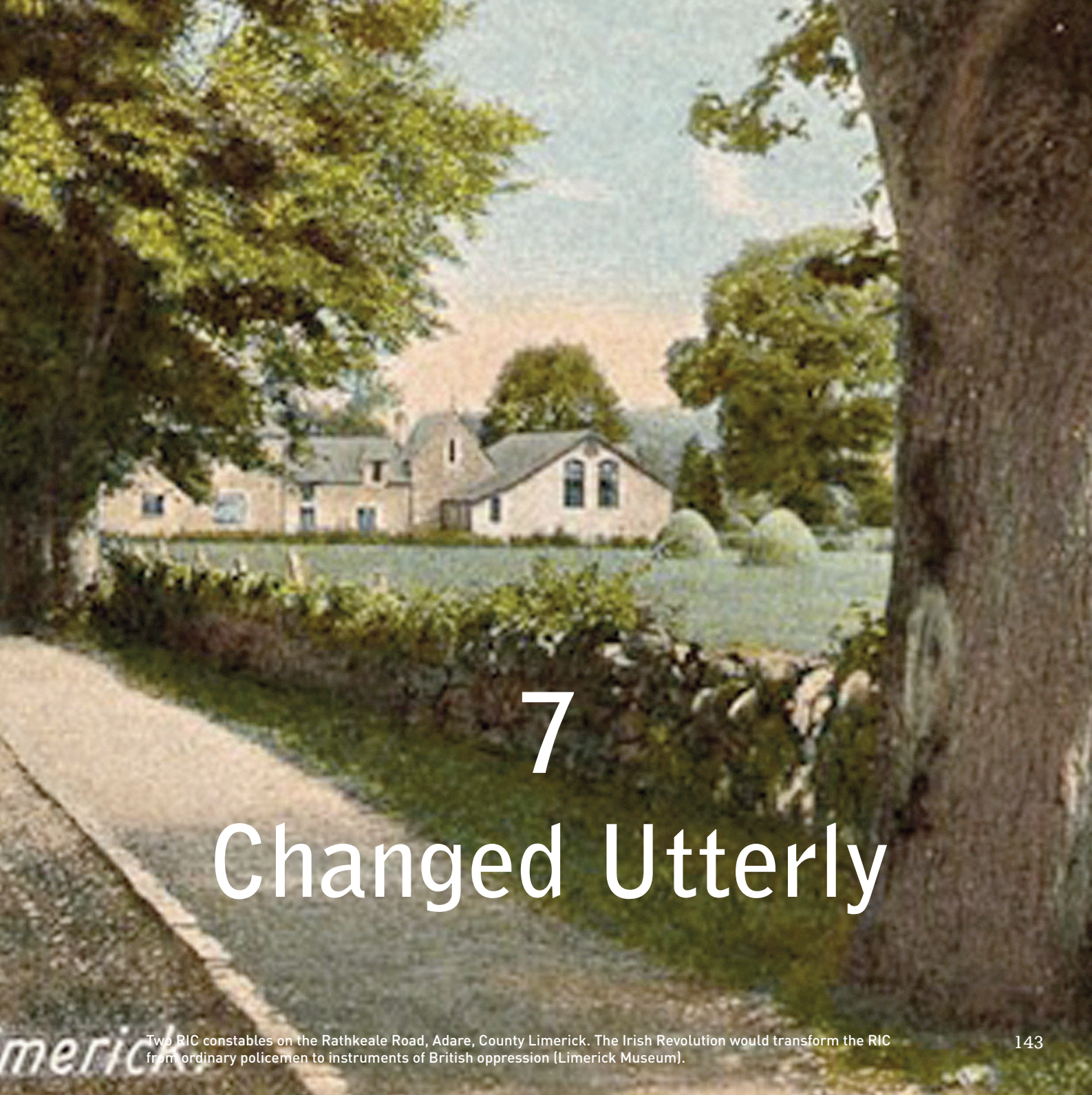




Rathkeale Road Adare Co. Li



7

Changed Utterly

Initially, the Easter Rising was almost universally condemned in Ireland, though few went as far as the unionist *Cork Constitution* newspaper which advocated 'the penalty of the hangman's rope for the ring-leaders.'²⁶⁴ Limerick was no exception, and the *Limerick Leader's* editorial of 10 May referred to the insurrection as a 'stunning blow of horror' and a 'wholly insane enterprise.'²⁶⁵

By contrast, the unionist *Limerick Chronicle*, while publishing detailed reports of the rebellion, refrained from any criticism in the aftermath, confining its editorials to comments on the First World War.²⁶⁶

Further condemnation was voiced in letters published by the *Limerick Leader*. An unarmed Irish officer in the British army wrote that the Rising 'puts Ireland back a generation. It was cruel and foolish... Violence of arms – what a

terrible thing it is and how hard to find it justified by moral law.'²⁶⁷ A Limerick man, living in London, described how 'I am sorry that some of my misguided countrymen have in open rebellion played into the enemy's hands.'²⁶⁸ The National Volunteers in Limerick adopted a motion 'once more renewing our implicit confidence in the Irish leader and his colleagues and that we express our absolute and unqualified determination to follow the leadership of Mr. Redmond.'²⁶⁹

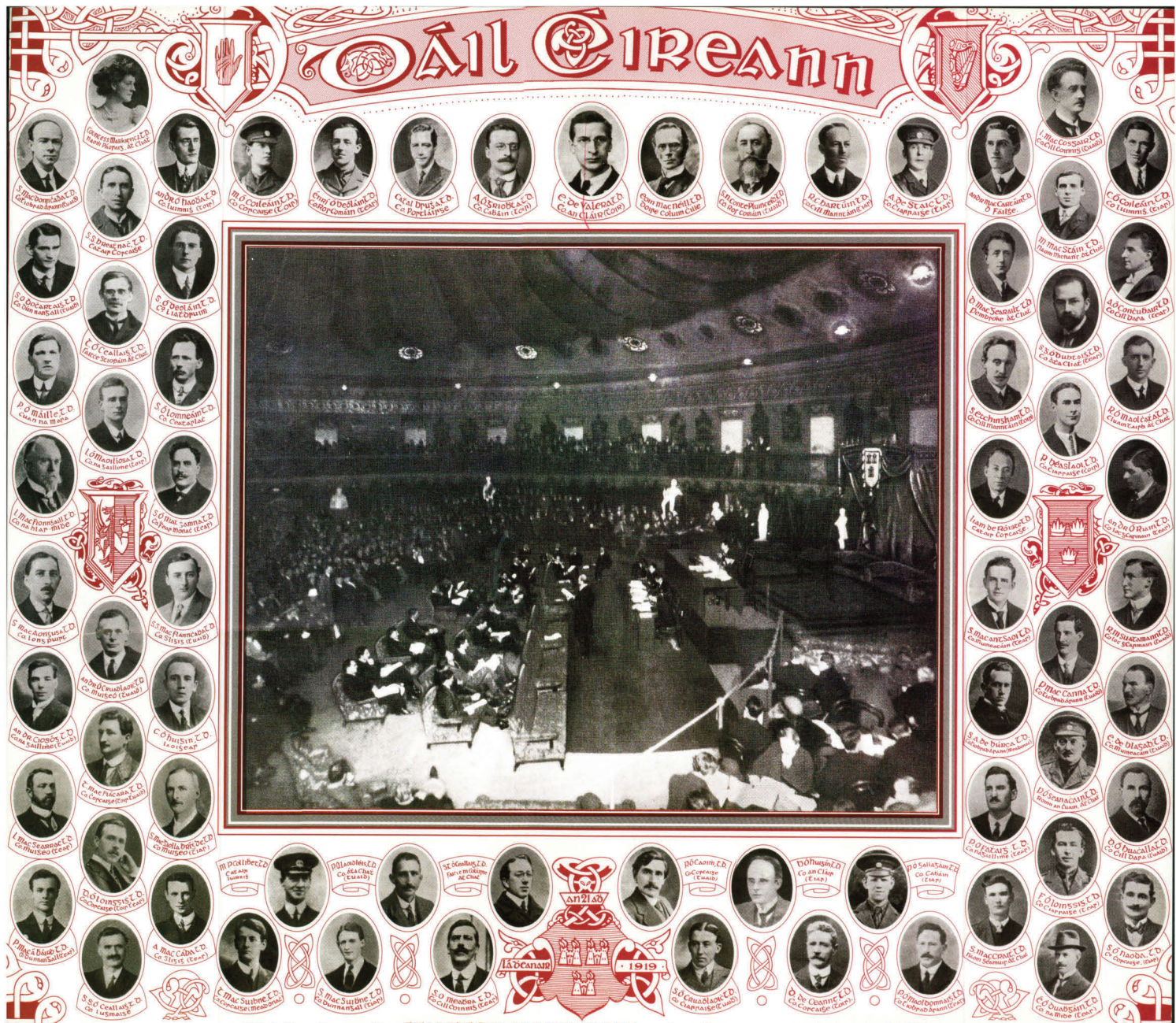
Limerick Corporation made no official statement throughout the crisis, while Limerick County Council adopted a motion stating their desire to 'renew our confidence in the Irish Party and Mr. Redmond, and earnestly appeal to the Government to deal leniently with our misguided fellow countrymen who took part in the late rebellion.'²⁷⁰

DISARMING THE VOLUNTEERS

The Mayor of Limerick, Stephen Quin (a moderate nationalist with unionist leanings) played a central role in orchestrating the disarmament of the Irish Volunteers in Limerick city. To overcome their natural reluctance to hand over their weapons directly to the Crown forces, Mayor Quin agreed to accept the arms from Colivet, and in turn, pass them onto the British garrison in Limerick. The bulk of the arms were handed into the Town Hall on 5 May 1916. One of the Limerick Volunteers described the night in vivid detail:

A dark evening; RIC men posted singly in the streets adjacent to the Town Hall; curiously silent knots of onlookers stood at corners. British military patrols were posted outside and





The first Dáil of 1919 was the first Irish parliament to convene since 1800 (Courtesy John Collins).

inside the building. The men arrived singly or in small groups. They had been instructed to render the arms useless, and this order was effectively carried out. The rifle bolts were missing in most cases; corrosive acid had been poured down the barrels, some of the barrels were bent into half hoops; some were so thoroughly destroyed that they had to be surrendered in haversacks. Each man handed his rifle to Colivet, who then laid it before the Mayor. He in turn handed it to the officer in charge of the British military.²⁷¹

By contrast, the county battalions such as Galbally and Ballylanders handed in their arms directly to the RIC, although they broke most of them beforehand.²⁷²



DETAINING THE VOLUN- TEERS

In the aftermath of the 1916 Rising, a total of 1,862 men and five women were served with internment orders under Regulation 14(b) of the Defence of the Realm Act 1914.²⁷³ They were sent to a number of prisons across Ireland, England and Wales, such as Dartmoor, Wakefield prison and Richmond Barracks. These men and women were interned for hours, days or even weeks, depending on the severity of the charges. However, most of the captured Limerick men were sent to Frongoch internment camp, in North Wales.²⁷⁴

Frongoch became a veritable 'University of Revolution', where prisoners became radicalised and hardened. They learned guerrilla warfare and military tactics from each other as well as more innocu-

ous subjects like Latin and mathematics. Tomas O Maoi leoin, Vice-Commandant of the East Limerick Brigade recalled that he and others were:

taken to Frongoch sometime about June. There were a good many fellows there before us but some came after us. We were in the South Camp... There was a camp council of officers. Anybody with a rank was on it, and I was on this camp council. I think the IRB was very active in Frongoch because everyone who was on the Camp Council was an IRB man.²⁷⁵

In December 1916, Frongoch camp was closed and the Irish prisoners released. The British had made a serious error in interning so many revolutionaries in one place as the contacts made there were to be used against them with devastating effect during the War of Independence.



Bishop E T O'Dwyer

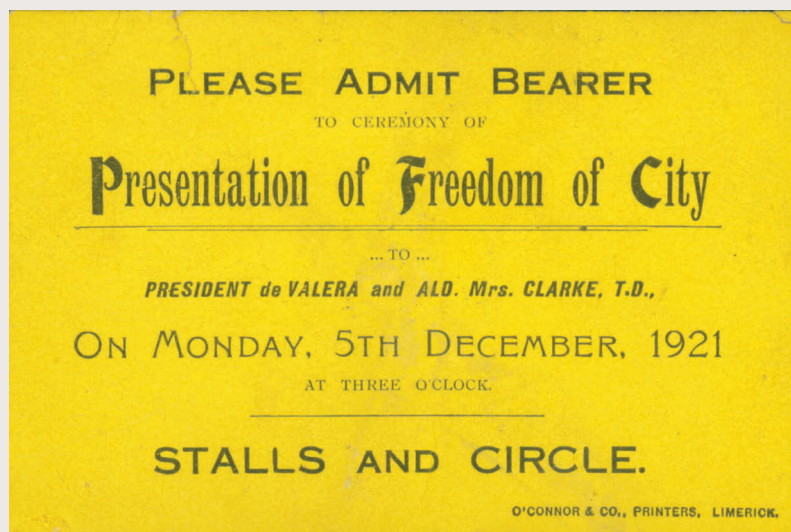
Following the execution of their leaders in May 1916, public opinion began to move in favour of the rebels. In Limerick, the lead was taken by the formidable Catholic Bishop, Edward T O'Dwyer (1842-1917), who wielded enormous authority at a time when the Catholic Church was all-powerful in Limerick.²⁷⁶ By 1916, O'Dwyer had become

very disillusioned with Ireland's participation in the war, and Redmond's support for it. The Bishop was furious when General Sir John Maxwell, who had ordered the post-Rising executions, wrote to him, asking him to discipline two of his priests for alleged involvement in subversive activities. The Bishop's reply, dated 17 May, 1916, which he published in a number of newspapers, condemned Maxwell's repressive measures as 'wantonly cruel and oppressive', bluntly told him

that 'personally, I regard your action with horror', and concluded by telling him that 'your regime has been one of the worst and blackest chapters in the history of the misgovernment of this country'.²⁷⁷

Limerick Corporation was radicalised by O'Dwyer's letter and on 3 September voted unanimously to grant him the honorary freedom of the city. On 14 September, a huge crowd attended the official conferral ceremony in the Town Hall. The Bishop made a fiery speech, in which he condemned British rule, and stated that 'Ireland will never be content as a province. God has made her a nation and while grass grows and water runs there will be men in Ireland to dare and die for her.'²⁷⁸

James Maloney later recalled the significance of O'Dwyer's intervention which he claimed 'did more to awaken the



sympathy of the Irish people for the rebels and the rebellion than any other such happening.' In succeeding weeks:

Sympathy turned to admiration, admiration to pride and we began to square our shoulders. Photographs of the dead leaders appeared in the shops. The mists cleared and we saw these men as the true inheritors of our nation's struggle. We spoke with admiration of this noble effort of scarcely one thousand men.²⁷⁹

Another influential clergyman, Monsignor Michael O'Riordan (1857-1919) from Kilmurry, near Limerick city, was Rector of the Irish College in Rome at this time. He was able to use his close connections with Pope Benedict XV to prevent the Vatican from condemning the Rising, to the intense anger of the British and French governments.²⁸⁰

THE RISE OF SEPARATISM

After 1916, the revival of sepa-

ratism was led by Cumann na mBan, which did not suffer the same degree of official repression as the Volunteers did. Indeed, its members were able to move centre stage briefly, while their male colleagues were languishing in British jails and detention centres. Cumann na mBan acted through two organisations which its members helped to establish in May 1916.

The Volunteer Dependents' Fund was set up by Kathleen Clarke and others to support the families of the Volunteers who had died or were imprisoned. Its committee was comprised of the widows of the executed 1916 leaders. The Irish National Aid Association was set up for the same purpose. Limerick Cumann na mBan worked for these funds, arranging Requiem Masses for the 1916 dead, holding commemorations, sending food parcels to prisoners and generally working for their welfare.²⁸¹

Associations such as these provided a cover behind which rebels who escaped arrest could begin rebuilding the Volunteers, which from 1918 became known as the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The work of Cumann na mBan and its offshoots helped to earn sympathy as well as money for separatism. Nearly forty years later, Madge Daly recalled that:

Every week we received considerable sums from the employees of Messrs. Clunes Factory, Dennys Factory, Evans and Company, Limerick Wagon Builders and Railway men, Bannatyne and Company, Abbey Boatmen, Shaws and Company, McMahan and Son, carmen at Messrs. Russells, and the workers at the Limerick Clothing Factory.²⁸²

In December 1916, the return to Ireland of the Frongoch detainees prepared the way for the rebuilding of all the sepa-

ratist movements.²⁸³ Ironically, the failure of the Limerick Volunteers to rise in 1916 and Colivet's surrender of their arms made the task of rebuilding much easier as the subsequent British crackdown had been relatively restrained and separatist organisations had remained intact. James Dore remembered how the Volunteers in Newcastle West ceased drilling after the surrender of arms in 1916:

But we kept together and met occasionally until after the general release in 1917. Shortly after, a general mobilisation of Volunteers was held in Newcastle West. Con Collins and other speakers addressed the Volunteers on the occasion. Routine drilling continued during the year.²⁸⁴

The membership of the Limerick Volunteers rose from 943 in June 1917 to 2,600 in January 1919.²⁸⁵ Early in 1917, it was decided to establish a second battalion of Volunteers in the city in opposition to the existing battalion commanded by Colivet. This was done at the instigation of the Daly sisters and with the strong support of Ernest Blythe, all of whom regarded Colivet's actions in 1916 with deep dislike. Peadar Dunne, a protégé of the Dalys who worked in their bakery, was named Officer Commanding of the new battalion.²⁸⁶ Each company of the new battalion was linked with a Sinn Fein Club named after a Rising leader and a club of the increasingly radical GAA.²⁸⁷



GAA Club	Sinn Fein Club	Company
Treaty Sarsfields	Ned Daly Club	A
St Patricks; Cloughaun	Thomas Ashe Club	B
Star	Roger Casement Club	C
Shamrocks	Con Colbert Club	D
Faughs	Tom Clarke Club	E

It is particularly requested that no writing or figures be made in this Book, except by the Officials of the Bank; and that it may be presented once a fortnight at least, in order to be written up from the Bank's Ledger.

The Munster & Leinster Bank, Ltd.

William St Limerick

Dr In Acc't with

1934

June 20	To Thrift of	314	12	5
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Miss Madge Daly
Eamonn T Dore Esq
David Dundon Esq
a/c "Memorial to Limerick Men
Executed 1916."

Cr

1934

June 20	By Honor of	348	13	6
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Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP)

IN 1916, IRELAND HAD TWO POLICE FORCES: THE DUBLIN METROPOLITAN POLICE AND THE ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY. EXCEPT IN TIMES OF DISTURBANCE SUCH AS THE LAND WAR, THEY FILLED THE ROLE OF THE PRESENT GARDA SIOCHANA AND CARRIED OUT ROUTINE POLICE WORK. THEIR RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION WAS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POPULATION, WITH MORE THAN 75 PER CENT OF THE RIC BEING CATHOLIC.²⁸⁸

NEW FIGURES WERE NOW COMING TO THE FORE

A builder from Bruff, Sean Wall (1882-1921) was heavily involved in the Gaelic League and the Volunteers. In 1918, he was put in command of the newly created East Limerick Brigade which established the IRA's first flying column (a small mobile independent military unit) with his full support. He served as Chairman of Limerick County Council (1920-21) and was killed by the Black and Tans at Newtown, Annacarty, Co. Tipperary on 6 May 1921.²⁸⁹

From Rathkeale, Sean Finn (1898-1921) was a member of the Fianna who served as a captain of the Irish Volunteers. In 1918, he was put in charge of the newly created West Limerick Brigade. He also set up a flying column

and was killed by the Black and Tans near Foynes, on 30 March 1921.²⁹⁰

The Fianna also revived after 1917. Although their father served in the British army in the war, Thomas and John Dargan became involved in the Fianna. Thomas joined in 1917 and later remembered that:

Meetings were held in the rooms of the Railwaymen's Society at Lower Hartstonge Street. The strength at the time was about 25 and did not improve very much numerically for a long time. Regular meetings were held each week at which signalling and scouting classes were held.²⁹¹

Another member was Kevin Bradshaw from Rutland Street, who, while in his early teens, was imprisoned for seven months in Cork Prison).²⁹²



Return this album
to
James Ledden. Limerick
as it's a keepsake of Worm
wood Scrubs prison Hunger
strike
May 1920

St. Mary Solington Infirmary
Highgate, London.
15th May, 1920.

Let me carry your Cross for Ireland, Lord
Let me suffer the pain & shame,
I bow my head to their rage & hate
And I take on myself the blame
Let them do with my body what they will
My Spirit I offer to you
That the faithful few who heard her call
May be spared to Rossmó Dubh.

Tomás a'Ghas,
Brian J. O'Brien,
on Henry Street,
Limerick.

Armed members of the Irish Volunteers in Adare, County Limerick (Courtesy Healy family).

Autograph book kept by senior Limerick IRB and Volunteer activist James Ledden (1864-1927), while he was in Wormwood Scrubs Prison, 1920. After twenty-one days on hunger strike, he was released due to the collapse of his health, an ordeal from which he never fully recovered. He took the Treaty side during the Civil War and served as Cumann na nGaedheal TD for Limerick (1923-27) (Limerick Archives).

RISE OF SINN FEIN

Recalling the aftermath of the executions, James Maloney bluntly stated that 'gone was our allegiance to the Irish Party.'²⁹³ In 1917, the Sinn Fein party was reorganised, with Eamon de Valera as its leader. Its aims were to bring about independence through the secession of the Irish members from the British Parliament, and the establishment of an Irish Parliament in Dublin. Although Sinn Fein proclaimed themselves the heirs of 1916, they made no reference to using force.

Seventy Sinn Fein clubs were established in Limerick between May and September 1917.²⁹⁴ Local authorities also became radicalised. On 29 April 1917, Limerick County Council condemned the death of Thomas Ashe as a result of being force-fed while on hunger strike in prison and

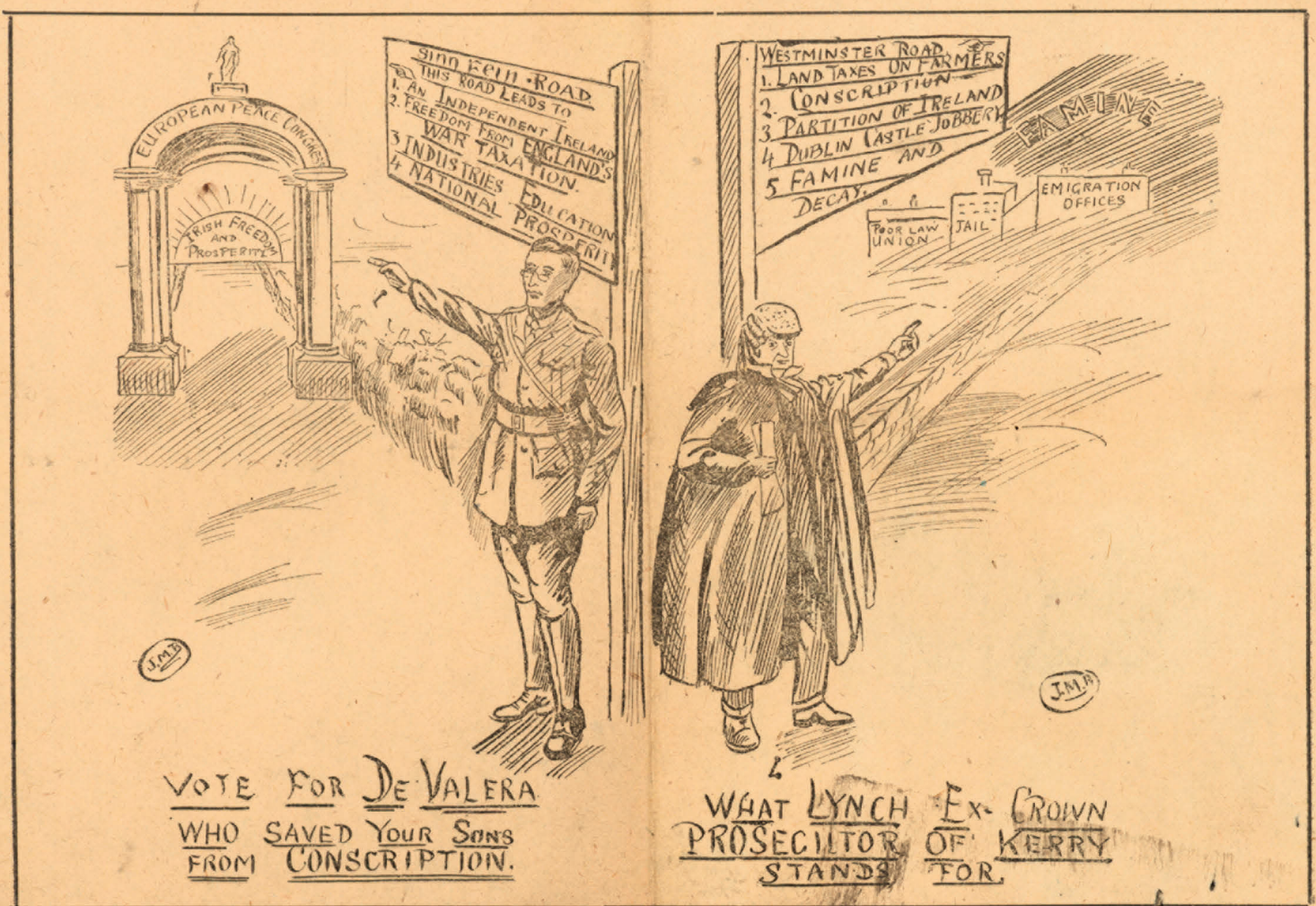
sent four of their number to his funeral.²⁹⁵ On 18 January 1918, Alphonsus O'Mara became the first Sinn Fein Mayor of Limerick.²⁹⁶

After the post-Rising executions, the most important boost to Irish separatism was the British government's decision in April 1918 to extend conscription to Ireland. This provoked a massive campaign uniting all the nationalist political parties, the trade union movement and the Catholic Church against its introduction. All over the country, meetings were held and thousands signed an anti-conscription pledge. Limerick County Council adopted a motion describing the proposal as 'tyrannical and unconstitutional to the highest degree.'²⁹⁷ Protest meetings were held all over Limerick including one in Ballybrown near the city, chaired by local parish priest Canon Robert Kirby, where a resolution was carried 'to resist such a tyrannical measure by every means in our

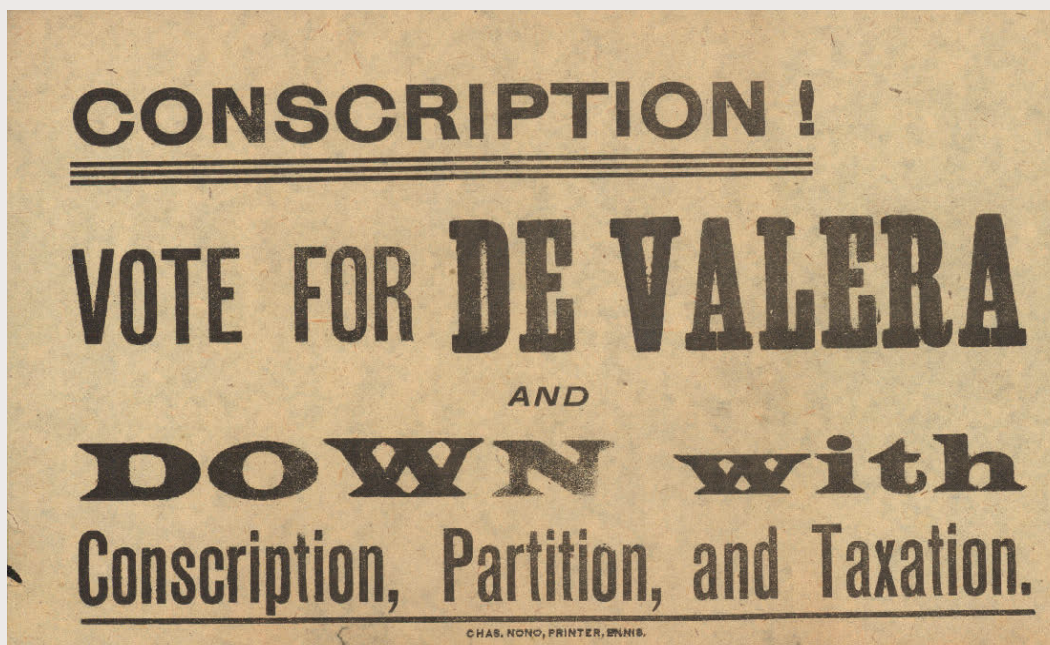


power until it becomes a dead letter.'²⁹⁸

On Tuesday 23 April 1918, a twenty-four hour general strike was held throughout Ireland, outside of North-East Ulster. In Limerick, virtually the entire city was closed down for the day, and a huge procession of about 10,000 marched through the streets for a mass meeting at Bank Place. The campaign was a success, and the British government did not introduce conscription in Ireland.²⁹⁹



Cartoon depicting the two candidates in the 1917 East Clare bye election. Eamon de Valera of Sinn Féin is pointing to a bright future, while Patrick Lynch of the Irish Party, who was a barrister, points towards famine and emigration. De Valera won a crushing victory, gaining 71 per cent of the votes cast (Limerick Museum).



Later in the same year, the British Government's action in banning Cumann na nBan, the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin resulted in the Freedom of Limerick being conferred on representations of each, respectively Kathleen Clarke, Eoin MacNeill and Eamon de Valera on 7 November 1918. Only MacNeill could attend, for the other two were in prison. Tom and Kathleen Clarke are the only husband and wife to be

given the Freedom of Limerick.³⁰⁰

THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1918

On 14 December 1918, Ireland and Britain voted in the first general election since 1910. At the beginning of 1918, women had been given the vote, which

A Sinn Féin leaflet from the 1917 East Clare bye election (Limerick Museum).

Commemorative Easter Rising postcard of 1918. Catholic and republican iconography are fused to form a potent image (Limerick Museum).



DAIL EIREANN, AN TARN-IONOL, 10 ABRAN, 1919.

SREATH 1.—(i dtosach)—L. MacFhionnghail, M. O'Coileain, C. Brugha, A. O'Griobhtha, E. de Bhailera, S. Conte Pluingcéad, E. MacNéill, L. MacCosgair, E. de Blaghd. SREATH 2.—P. O'Maoldhomhnaigh, T. MacSuibhne, R. O'Maolchatha, S. O'Dochartaigh, S. O'Mathghamhna, S. O'Deolain, S. MacAonghusa, P. O'Caomh, M. MacStain, S. MacCraith, An Dr. B. O'Ciosog, L. de Roiste, L. Colibhet, An tA. M. O'Flannagain. SREATH 3.—P. Mac an Bhaird, A. MacCaba, D. MacGearailt, S. MacSuibhne, An Dr. R. O hAodha, C. O'Coileain, P. O'Maille, S. O'Meadhra, B. O hUigin, S. de Burea, C. O hUigin. SREATH 4.—S. MacDonnchadha, S. Mac an tSaoi. SREATH 5.—P. Beaslaoi, R. Bartuin, P. O'Gallagain, SREATH 6.—P. O'Seanachain, S. Etchingham.

trebled the electorate. In Limerick, the number of voters increased from 21,297 to 60,778. In Ireland, Sinn Fein won a crushing victory winning seventy-three seats, while the Irish Party was decimated and won only six.³⁰¹



In 1916 women were campaigning for the right to vote and achieved this shortly after the Easter Rising in the General Election of 1918. Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, one of Ireland's most famous suffragettes, and the daughter of a Limerickman, declared that:

until the women of
Ireland are free, the
men will not achieve
emancipation.

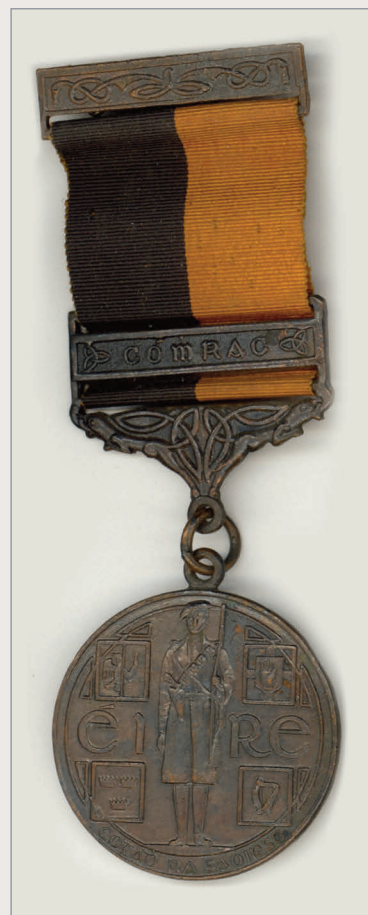
All three Limerick constituencies changed from Irish Party to Sinn Fein. Both Michael Colivet in Limerick city and Con Collins in West Limerick were returned unopposed,

while in East Limerick, Dr Richard Hayes defeated Thomas Lundon, having received 78 per cent of votes cast.³⁰² The decisive nature of the Sinn Fein victory was confirmed when the *Limerick Leader* accepted the election results and shifted its allegiance from the Irish Party to Sinn Fein.³⁰³

The Sinn Fein MPs refused to take their seats in the British House of Commons and constituted the first Dáil, which assembled in the Mansion House, the official residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin, on 21 January 1919. Only twenty-seven TDs attended, with most of the rest being in prison or on the run.³⁰⁴

Con Collins was the only Limerick TD to attend, as both Colivet and Hayes were detained in British jails. The first Dáil issued a Declaration of Independence, passed a temporary constitution, and set up a government. On the same

day, the War of Independence began, at Soloheadbeg, near Tipperary Town when two RIC constables were ambushed and killed by local IRA men. A new chapter in Irish history had begun.³⁰⁵





A group of Volunteers from Ardagh and Croagh arrested at a 'safe house' at Milltown Croagh, 1921 (Courtesy Dan Neville).
Michael Conway of Patrickswell, former Irish Volunteer at a commemorative event in 1966 (Limerick Museum).



CONCLUSION

It has been said that commemoration tells us more about the society that is doing the commemorating than the event being commemorated. The manner in which the Easter Rising has been remembered in Limerick is a case study of how the independent Irish state has memorialised its difficult and bloody birth.

Limerick city commemorated 1916 in two principal ways. In 1940, eight avenues in Janesboro were named after Pearse, Clarke, McDonagh, Daly, Colbert, McDermott, Connolly and Casement.³⁰⁶ The 1916 Memorial on Sarsfield Bridge was unveiled in 1956 after many years of planning and fund raising.³⁰⁷

The twenty-fifth anniversary (1941) and seventy-fifth anniversary (1991) of the Rising were low-key events, as they coincided with the Second World War and North-

ern Ireland Troubles. By contrast, the Rising's Golden Jubilee was commemorated with a lavish year-long programme of events, including parades, pageants and public readings of the Proclamation all over Limerick city and county. Now, the wheel has come full circle and the success of the Northern Ireland peace process has enabled the Rising's centenary to be marked in a manner befitting the birth of the modern Irish state.

In 1916, Limerick simultaneously was at the vanguard of Irish nationalism and a major recruiting area for the British armed forces. It was both a bastion of Irish cultural nationalism and a globalised, technologically advanced English - speaking region. Staunch Catholicism and social conservatism co-existed with a growing trade union movement. Major

Fenian leaders like John Daly and prominent cultural nationalists such as the Joyce Brothers sprang from its soil.

It is no surprise then, that Limerick was at the forefront of the Irish experience in 1916. It featured strongly in the Rising plans. Its sons and daughters organised, financed, and participated in its implementation. In its aftermath, they suffered imprisonment and death. Later they regrouped and took up the fight again. Meanwhile, an even larger number of Limerick men and women took part in the First World War, fighting and dying on fronts from the Somme to Salonika, waiting anxiously at home for loved ones to return, nursing the injured and mourning the dead. In the final analysis, all of Limerick, city and county, male and female, nationalist and unionist, dreamed and many died in 1916.



THE 1916 MEMORIAL ON SARSFIELD BRIDGE, LIMERICK ERECTED BETWEEN 1931 AND 1956. IN 1930, A MONUMENT TO CRIMEAN MILITARY HERO VISCOUNT FITZGIBBON, BUILT BY THE LOCAL UNIONIST COMMUNITY IN 1857, WAS BLOWN UP, LEAVING ONLY THE PEDESTAL INTACT. A COMMITTEE, OF WHICH EAMONN DORE WAS BOTH SECRETARY AND ALONG WITH MADGE DALY, JOINT TREASURER, WAS ESTABLISHED TO CONVERT WHAT REMAINED INTO A 1916 MEMORIAL. THE NEW MONUMENT WAS UNVEILED IN 1956 BY GPO CUMANN NA MBAN VETERAN LESLIE BAN DE BARRA.

(Limerick Museum).



