

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE GARDA SÍOCHÁNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# THE GARDA GAZETTE



Winter 2008

[www.policehistory.com](http://www.policehistory.com)

## Membership

Full Membership is available for those who may be in a position to avail of our annual list of events and attend the Annual General Meeting with entitlement to vote.

Associate Membership is available for persons not in category (a) - many of whom reside outside Ireland - is offered with an entitlement to receive the twice yearly newsletter and events programme.

All applications for membership must be proposed and seconded by an existing member. Written applications will be dealt with by the committee. All who are interested in membership of the Society should contact the Secretary, Garda Síochána Historical Society, The Garda Museum/Archives, Records Tower, Dublin Castle, Dublin 2. Tel: (01) 666 9998.

This year we will hold at least four lectures on topics such as 'The Phoenix Park Murders' and 'British Intelligence Operations in Ireland in the War Years'. We have some noted academics and journalists giving lectures and we also have a number of members who are noted authors and academics in their own right; Garda Jim Herlihy, Blarney Garda Station, has published a number of books on the DMP and the RIC.

Our membership fee is €12.70 per annum and offers members great value in terms of the service provided. We not only provide lecture evenings but we also assist in research projects, not least in terms of career details of past Garda, DMP and RIC members.

The Society re-launched last October 25th at Dublin Castle and membership has been steadily increasing. We offer membership to both serving and retired gardaí.

Our lecture evenings are held in the Garda Club Harrington Street and other appropriate venues. Forthcoming events will be announced in the *Garda Review* and on [www.policehistory.com](http://www.policehistory.com)

## Dear Friends and Colleagues,

**W**elcome to the re-launched Garda Gazette. I wish to welcome you back to the Historical Society and to invite you to attend our lectures and to visit our Garda Museum in Dublin Castle. Our website [www.policehistory.com](http://www.policehistory.com) is an excellent resource and one that is constantly updated and improved. Please feel free to contribute to the Garda Historical Society and to contribute your stories, letters and photographs to our Garda Gazette.

As you already know the Garda Síochána Historical Society was re-launched last October at the Bedford Tower in Dublin Castle. It was a welcome return for a much-loved society which has so much to offer not only our members but the organisation as a whole. It is with some regret that I say that we are losing so much of our written history with the advance of technology. Our records are more often electronic and what a shame it is not to see our station diaries filled with the wonderful handwriting that we all knew as young recruits. The Garda Síochána Historical Society aims to capture that history and to make it available to all.

An Garda Síochána has a proud history in which we all share. In many ways the history of policing in Ireland is a record of social history. Since our foundation we have always depended on our close bond with the community we serve and it is in this bond that we have placed the value of our history. We have experienced the best of times and the worst of times, we have seen the proudest times and the troubled times. But through it all An Garda Síochána and others have been relied upon to meet the challenges of every generation.

The events highlighted by the Garda Historical Society capture those moments in time. From the exploits of the Royal Irish Constabulary to the Dublin Metropolitan Police and An Garda Síochána evolving from the community.

It is in this tradition that we acknowledge our former Commissioner Mr. Noel Conroy. Commissioner Conroy was one of the last recruits to have trained at the Garda Depot in the Phoenix Park. With his retirement passed a link that we all shared between that era and ours.

We also welcome our new Garda Commissioner and Honorary President, Mr. Fachtna Murphy. We look forward to a busy and successful Garda Síochána Historical Society with Commissioner Murphy at the helm and no doubt the support and patronage of all our members.

### Chief Superintendent John Kelly

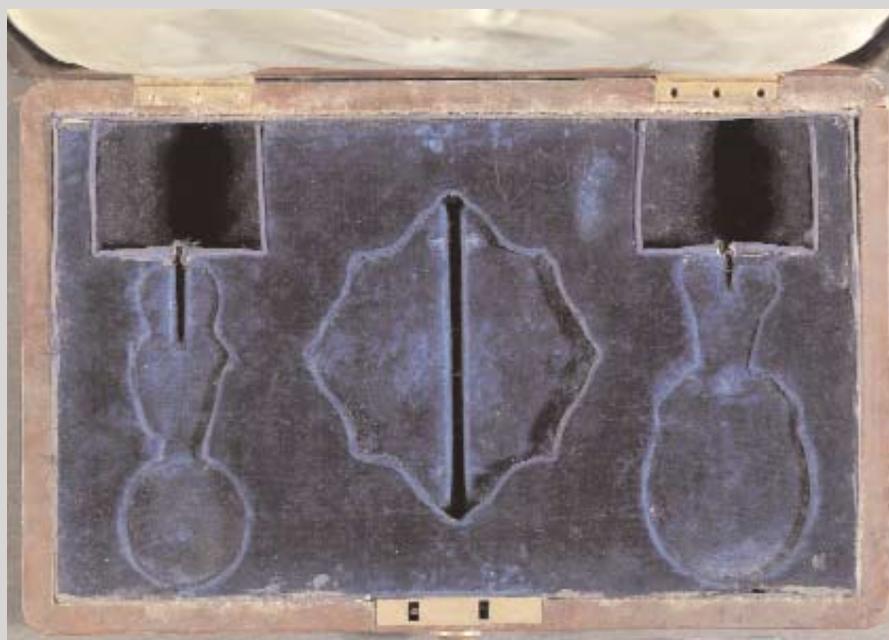
Honorary Chairperson

### Garda Síochána Historical Society Committee members for 2008

Hon. President	Fachtna Murphy	Commissioner
Chairperson	John Kelly	C/Supt
Vice-chair	Pat Doochie	retired
Treasurer	Mick Barrins	retired
Hon. Secretary	Paul Maher	Sgt
Assistant Secretary	John Duffy	retired
Ex-Officio	Pat McGee	Inspector: Museum
Membership Officer	Alan Bailey	D/Sgt
Southern Region	Jim Herlihy	Gda: Blarney
Garda College	John Reynold	Sgt
Committee Member	Tony Hickey	retired
Webmaster	Jim Croarke	Sgt: Anglesea St.

# The investigation of an office above suspicion?

## THE THEFT OF THE IRISH CROWN JEWELS



By Myles Dungan

**W**as it an unclaimed coup by an Irish revolutionary organisation? Or the work of experienced jewel thieves attracted by the opportunities presented by a royal visit? Or was it one of the most egregious inside jobs in Irish criminal history. Before you go any further down this page it is important to note (to avoid disappointment) that we do not know the answer and probably never will.

The Irish Crown Jewels were the regalia of the Order of St Patrick, kept in the Office of Arms in the Bedford Tower in Dublin Castle. The jewels consisted of the insignia of the Grand Master of the Order of St Patrick (the Lord Lieutenant) – a jeweled Star and Badge – (Brazilian white diamonds and emeralds - and the collars and badges of the Knights of St Patrick. They had been presented to the

Order in 1830 by King William IV – hence the description ‘crown’ jewels. On the basis of gem inflation they would be worth close to €5m today. They were stored in a safe in the Library of the Office of Arms. The safe should have been in the Strong room of the Office but a precursor of Murphy’s Law ensured that when it

**“He could have put it more concisely – ‘Inside job!’”**

came to be installed it proved to be too big to get through the strong room door.

The Office of Arms itself was the personal fiefdom of Sir Arthur Vicars, Ulster King of Arms (equivalent of the Chief Herald today) He was a fussy, prissy, aristocrat immersed in the minutiae of genealogy and heraldry –

ill fitted to being custodian, as it transpired, of such significant and valuable jewels. His two principal (unpaid) associates included Francis Richard Shackleton, Dublin Herald, brother of the explorer Ernest, a young Anglo-Irishman with a militia background. For Shackleton heraldry



was a hobby which verged on being a profession. He was also a businessman and well connected in the City of London. He shared accommodation with Vicars in Clonskeagh. Pierce Gun Mahony, Cork Herald, was a nephew of Vicars and an anglicized member of another well known Irish family. Vicars had fallen out with his half brother the former Parnellite M.P. Pierce O'Mahony when Pierce Gun Mahony had accepted the honorary position in the Office of Arms.

On 11 June 1907, Vicars showed the Crown Jewels to J.C. Hodgson, Librarian to the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, who was on a visit to Ireland. This was the last time that they were seen in public. On Wednesday 3 July, the cleaning lady, Mrs. Mary Farrell, found the front door of the Bedford Tower unlocked when she arrived for work. She reported this to William Stivey, the office messenger and he, in his turn, reported it to Vicars, who evinced little interest in the matter.

On Saturday 6 July, Mrs Farrell found the door of the strong-room open when she arrived for work. She locked the door and left the keys and a note for Stivey. Once again he informed Vicars, who, once again, ignored him.

Later that day a messenger arrived from West and Son with a gold collar of the Order which had been worn by the late Lord de Ros. It was needed for the investiture of a new Knight in a ceremony that would coincide with the royal visit of King Edward VII. Vicars asked Stivey to put the collar

**“This, according to the messenger, was unprecedented. Stivey discovered the safe was unlocked. The jewels and a number of collars were found to be missing”**

in the safe and gave him his own keys to open the safe door. This, according to the messenger, was unprecedented. Stivey discovered the safe was unlocked. The jewels and a number of collars were found to be missing.

Vicars did not assist the early moments of the police investigation by a) first sending, not for a detective, but for the DMP Commissioner and his Deputy, Sir John Ross and M.V. Harrell –both of whom operated, in

effect, as felony tourists and b) misleading the investigating detective, Superintendent John Lowe, when he asked had the strong room door been tampered with. Vicars replied ‘No’ – even though he’d been told a few hours before that it had been left open overnight. (This information came to the police via Mrs. Farrell, who emerges, all the way through the story as one of the heroes of the hour)

The thief had clearly taken his time. A piece of silk ribbon attached to the Star had been removed and left in the safe, an operation which would have taken about ten minutes.

Over the days that followed the discovery of the theft the manufacturers of the safe (it was a ‘Ratner’ manufactured by Radcliffe and Horner with a Milner lock) were queried as to how it could have been opened and Dublin locksmiths were interrogated as to duplicate keys.

The safe was found not to have been forced and no duplicate keys made from a wax impression had been used. This emerged through expert evidence at the subsequent Commission of Inquiry in January, 2008. It was accepted, however, that the safe could have been opened with a duplicate key made directly from the original. This suggested to the DMP that the thieves had assistance from within the Office of Arms. The discoveries of Mrs Farrell were judged by the detectives as attempts to draw attention to the theft in order to justify an alibi whose time was about to run out.

On 9th July Superintendent Lowe submitted a report on his investigation to the Lord Lieutenant in which he said ‘it appears improbable that any outside person who knew

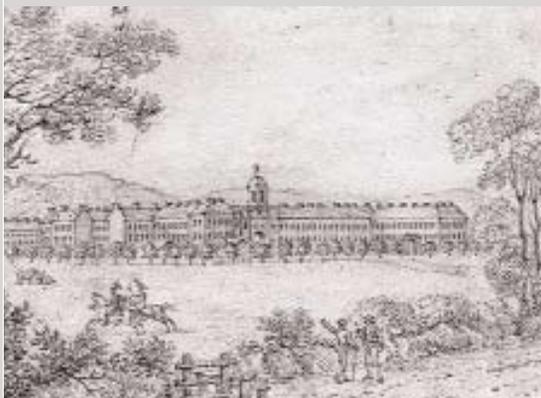


# A brief history of the Garda College

By Sergeant John Reynolds

## The Victorian era

The Garda Síochána College was originally constructed as Richmond barracks in 1815 on a fifty-seven acre site owned by Sir John Craven Garden (1757-1820) and when completed was one of the largest barracks in Ireland with accommodation for '54 officers, 1500 men and 30 horses, a hospital for 80 patients; a bridewell; a fever hospital and a dispensary, ball, news and reading rooms, and a public billiard table'. (Lewis, 1837)



Richmond barracks, Templemore 1829.

An intensive programme of barrack building took place in Ireland following the unsuccessful rebellions of 1798 and 1803. Aside from the fear of further uprisings taking place in Ireland, England was at war with France, and the threat of invasion from Napoleon's army was a possibility, given that French fleets had arrived at Bantry Bay in 1786 and Kilalla Bay in 1798. Several barracks were constructed in the county of Tipperary, which had a long tradition of rebellion and lawlessness. Robert Peel, chief secretary for Ireland, when writing to Whitworth, the lord lieutenant in 1813 commented that 'you can have no idea of the moral deprivation of the lower orders in that county [Tipperary]'. (Gash, 1976)

In 1847, Ensign Harry Loft of the 64th Regiment was garrisoned in Templemore, and while writing to his mother described Richmond as a 'splendid barracks, with two large squares, and all the buildings three

stories high.' The town itself he described as 'a wretched place...there is only one street with three or four respectable shops'. (Loft, 2003). The presence of a barracks in Templemore also provided the opportunity for local men to enlist, as Richmond was primarily a recruit-training depot, where regiments were stationed for a period of time to recruit, train and then depart on campaign throughout the British Empire. Irishmen were considered good recruits, being described by one military Surgeon as 'physically and morally the best adapted for service', and they signed up in large numbers to accept the 'Queens shilling' as shown in Table 1 below. (Bartlett and Jeffrey, 1996)

## Irishmen in the British army

Year	%	Year	%
1830	42.2%	1878	21.9%
1840	37.2%	1883	20.0%
1868	30.8%	1893	13.4%
1873	23.7%	1898	12.9%

## 1830-1898

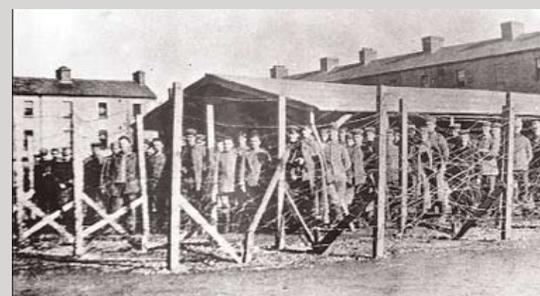
During the late 1850's when the Fenian movement was being structured, a large number of Irish soldiers were 'sworn in' as members of the movement. In Templemore, the 11th Depot Battalion was transferred from Templemore to Enniskillen and replaced by the 59th Regiment from Glasgow as it was 'strongly suspected that the regiment was tainted with Fenianism'. (Nenagh Guardian newspaper, 12 December 1865)

## World War 1

By 1909 Richmond barracks had been vacated, and Templemore town council were informed by the War Office that there was 'no prospect of troops being quartered there in the near future'. However, the outbreak of World War 1 in August 1914 brought a reversal of this policy, and between October 1914 and March

1915, Richmond became a prisoner of war camp, holding over 2,300 German soldiers who had been captured on the western front. The two barrack squares were divided into four huge cages, complete with searchlights, barbed wire and sentry towers. Two of the POW's died in captivity and were buried with full military honours in Templemore.

## German Prisoners of War in



Richmond Barracks 1914.

When the prisoners were transferred to a new camp in England, Richmond became a training depot for recruits to the Munster Fusiliers and the Leinster Regiment. In 1916, soldiers of the Leinsters were dispatched from Templemore to reinforce the Dublin garrison during the Easter rising.

## The Anglo-Irish War & Civil War

The outbreak of the Anglo-Irish war is conventionally dated from 21 January 1919 when a group of nine I.R.A Volunteers including Dan Breen and Sean Treacy of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade attacked a Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C) gelignite escort at Solohedbeg near Tipperary town. In the mêlée that followed, R.I.C Constables James McDonnell 50616, and Patrick O' Connell 61889 were killed.

Following the outbreak of the Anglo-Irish war, Templemore rapidly became heavily militarised, with the 1st Battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment garrisoned at Richmond barracks, a contingent of R.I.C Black & Tans based in the Police barracks, and 'B' company of the R.I.C Auxiliary Division (A.D.R.I.C) situated in the

vacated mansion of Sir John Carden at Templemore Abbey. The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were ex-servicemen that had been recruited in England early in 1920 to augment the regular R.I.C as the R.I.C were 'now useless as a civil police force'. (Hansard, 1920) The Black and Auxiliaries soon established a reputation for brutality, being described by the former Irish Member of Parliament William O' Brien as 'desperadoes of the vilest type.' (Holt, 1960)

On two occasions the military and Black and Tans carried out reprisal attacks in Templemore, once for the killing of R.I.C District Inspector Wilson by the I.R.A, following which the town hall was burnt down. Two members of the Northamptonshire Regiment were killed during this incident when they became trapped inside the town hall. Following this incident, reports of 'supernatural manifestations, accompanied by cures' occurring in Templemore and nearby Curraheen were carried by local and national newspapers. (Irish Times, 23 August 1920)

It was alleged that religious statues were shedding tears of blood, and a local youth, James Walsh claimed that he was receiving visitations from the Virgin Mary. Many people believed that 'our Lady saved Templemore', and that divine intervention had taken place to prevent the town being completely destroyed in revenge for the death of D.I Wilson, as the 'military swore to sack the town and make the Catholics pay for it' (Limerick Leader, 3 September 1920)

Thousands of pilgrims travelled to the area each day to view the 'bleeding statues', and the phenomenon of the 'Templemore miracles' lasted for three weeks until the visionary James Walsh was interviewed by senior I.R.A member Dan Breen on the instructions of Michael Collins. The I.R.A decided that the apparitions were not genuine, and the Catholic Church also expressed 'extreme reserve' about the cures and miracles attributed to them. (Irish Times, 23 August 1920). The Templemore miracles finally ended when the I.R.A ambushed and killed two R.I.C members at Killoshane near Barnane on 29 September 1920. Pilgrims were forced to take the bodies of the dead policemen back to Templemore in their car. This ambush brought large number of military and police reinforcements to the area who indulged in a 'reign of terror by indulging in indiscriminate firing into

houses and across fields'.

Rumours spread that Templemore would be burned to the ground as a reprisal for the Killoshane ambush and pilgrims, stall-holders and tramps all made a hasty exit. Within twenty-four hours normal conditions prevailed in the town once more.

On the 11th July 1921 a truce between the Irish Provisional Government and the British Government was arranged, and in November Richmond Barracks was handed over at a ceremony in the Barracks. Major Phibbs Officer Commanding the 1st Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment signed for the British, and Commandant Sean Scott O/C 2nd Battalion (mid.) Tipperary Brigade I.R.A represented the new Irish Government. The Regimental diary of the Northamptonshire Regiment sarcastically noted that 'the Barracks was handed over to a motley force calling themselves the Irish Army'. Richmond was renamed McCan Barracks to commemorate the first Member of Parliament for Mid-Tipperary, Pierce McCan, who died in Gloucester prison in 1919.

During the Civil War which began on 28 June 1922, the situation in Templemore was very tense, with anti treaty I.R.A members known as 'irregulars' occupying McCan Barracks. Preparations were made by the national army to storm the barracks, but a truce was arranged by the Archbishop of Cashel & Emlly, Dr. Harty, which allowed the barracks to be vacated by the irregulars, and the National Army took over.

When World War II began in 1939, a state of emergency was declared in Ireland, which remained neutral. McCann Barracks was occupied by the 10th Uisneach Battalion, and until the war ended in 1945 a large garrison was stationed in Templemore. A commemorative plaque is located at the College Driving School remembering the soldiers who served in Templemore during the emergency period. McCann Barracks was vacated except for F.C.A camps during the 1950's, and when the F.C.A was integrated with the regular Army, it became the Headquarters of the 3rd Field Artillery Regiment.

#### Garda Training Centre

In 1964 it was decided to move recruit training from the Depot to McCan Barracks, which became the Garda Training Centre (G.T.C) On 14 February, recruits and staff left the

Phoenix Park Depot, which had been used for training recruits since 1842, and marched to Heuston railway Station and boarded a train called the 'Templemore Special'. On 21 February, the G.T.C was officially opened by Mr. Charles J. Haughey, the Minister for Justice, and Commissioner Dan Costigan.

An enormous tragedy for An Garda Síochána and the G.T.C occurred on 16 December 1983 23-year old recruit Garda Gary Sheehan, and Private Patrick Kelly of the Defence Forces were killed while on duty at Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim while searching for Mr. Don Tidey, who had been kidnapped by the I.R.A. A memorial plaque to R/Garda Sheehan is situated at the College Guardroom, and on graduation days, the Gary Sheehan Memorial Medal is awarded to the best all-round probationer.

In April 1989, following a major examination of training methods for An Garda Síochána, a new two-year Student/Probationer Training Programme was introduced. A major building programme saw the facilities developed and modernized to the most up to date standards in Europe and the name of the institution changed from the Garda Training Centre to the Garda College. In 1992 the Garda College was designated an Institute of Higher Education by the National Council for Education Awards (NCEA). In 1993 the two-year Student/Probationer programme was accredited by the N.C.E.A. with the award of a National Diploma in Police Studies. A more recent development was the introduction of a BA (Bachelor of Arts) in Police Management Degree for members of Inspector rank upwards.

The Garda College Museum was opened in 2002 and has a large collection of memorabilia from Ireland and around the world. Since opening, the Museum has proven to be a very popular addition to College facilities, and a planned expansion will deal with the Military history of the complex from 1815 to 1921.

The Garda College has a long and fascinating history since being built in 1815. It has been centrally involved in Rebellions, the Anglo-Irish war, the Civil War, the foundation of a new State, and more recently, has found a new lease of life as a world leading Police Training facility and vibrant third level institution.

As it approaches its 200th anniversary, the Garda College is rapidly expanding to meet the needs of gardaí, and continues to play a

# LUGS - The Life and Times of Garda Jim Branigan

By Bernard Neary



Bernard Neary and  
Chief Superintendent  
John Kelly

Number 8005 - and began a career which was to put him in the limelight both nationally and internationally and see him become a legend in his own lifetime. When he entered the Depot, which was the training centre for Gardaí until the establishment of the Garda College, Templemore, Co Tipperary, in 1956, he had never seen a boxing glove, let alone hear about the famous GBC. In those days the young recruit had to do an hour of boxing and an hour of physical training a day. Jim put on the gloves and got into the ring "to practise how to defend myself".

## The Boxer

During this time Jim was taking his boxing seriously and trained every day to maintain peak fitness: "Besides training in the gym, I would get up at 5am every morning.

Jim earned a name for himself during the halcyon years of the GBC, although he did not rise to the dizzy heights of some of his other colleagues. As he often said himself "I lost more fights than I won" and the extract of his career from the records of the IABA elsewhere in this book bears this out. Over his whole boxing career he won approximately half of all his contests. He was never knocked out in any of his bouts and he never knocked out any of his opponents and fought at cruiser-weight for nearly two-thirds of his career, and from August 1936 until 1939 he contested in the heavyweight and light-heavyweight classes. His first major contest in the heavyweight class was a most successful one and brought him the Leinster Heavyweight title.

## First Posting

As a recruit he was posted to Irishtown, an assignment that did not agree with him and he was to remain there for only three months. He did not get on too well with a



Jim 'Lugs'  
Branigan

Edited extracts from a presentation to THE GARDA SIOCHANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY on Friday, 11th April 2008 at the Garda Club, Harrington Street Dublin 2 Even today, more than twenty years after his death, thousands of Dubliners recall Jim Branigan and his style of policing and it is very common to hear people say "if only we had a few like him around now". If only. Recently a group of solicitors were talking about Lugs in Court No 4, Chancery Street, during a recess. All agreed that if he was around now some criminal or other would have put a bullet in him a long time ago. But the Court Registrar disagreed, saying that the bold Lugs, if he were on the beat today, would still be in court every day - but it would not be the custody courts but the court across the road, meaning the High Court. He would be so tied up in litigation for ill-treatment, slander, deprivation of rights that he would be tied up in civil actions for the rest of his career.

On 18th June 1931 Jim Branigan joined the Garda Síochána -

particular sergeant there and he told a story about how on one occasion, on a Saturday morning coming up to Christmas 1935, he was on point duty at the Haddington Road/Shepards Bush junction when he stopped a car in traffic to allow some pedestrians cross the road. When he beckoned the traffic to move, the first car stopped in the middle of the junction and the passenger asked Jim to go over to the curb side as he wanted a word with him.

It was Major General Murphy and he wished to compliment Jim on his traffic handling and to query an unusual feature on his face - a black eye. "You shouldn't be on duty with such an injury", remarked Jim's boss. "It's okay, sir, it only looks a little bad. I feel fine". "Did it happen in the course of your duty, Garda?", queried the General. "No, Sir". "Then how did it happen, man?". "I was in the ring last night in a contest with an RUC Constable" remarked Jim, waiting to be ticked off for turning out for duty with a horrible-looking black eye. But to his surprise the General engaged the bold Jim in conversation about his boxing exploits while from the corner of his eye he saw his Sergeant at the junction scribbling in his notebook. When the General terminated their conversation and proceeded to drive away, Jim took a note of the car registration number and entered it in his diary.

The following Monday when he reported for duty he was hauled



Jim 'Lugs' Branigan

before his Superintendent, on a charge of gossiping. Jim admitted the charge but refused to give the name of the person he was talking to until he was formally charged in writing. When he left the Superintendent's room, the Sergeant remarked that he had 'got' him. Jim said nothing. But a couple of days later when Jim was on parade, the Superintendent smiled at him - he had since discovered who Jim was talking to - and why Jim was insisting on being charged in writing. "I'm sorry, Garda. If there is anything you want, I'll try and get it for you" said the Superintendent. "A transfer, sir" came the reply and shortly after Christmas, in January 1936, he became Garda James C Branigan, 160A Newmarket Garda Station. Jim said "goodbye and good riddance" to Irishtown to begin a long and famous career first in the Garda A District first and then throughout the metropolis.

#### The Battle of Baldoyle

The 'Battle of Baldoyle' as it was called, took place on May 14th 1940. It received massive media coverage and a few months later, when the trial began, it displaced the Second World War in the National newspaper headlines and on the radio. Jim Branigan played a crucial role in the infamous Battle and at the trial spent over four hours in the witness box, 1½ hours giving evidence and 2½ hours under cross-examination.

Jim recalled the trial: "The amazing aspect of the whole trial for me as a cop was that the most seriously injured man, who was called by the State as a witness, had to be treated as hostile because he went back on a statement which he had made to the Gardaí while in hospital. This was my first real experience of a Mafia cardinal rule of 'omertha' or silence, which in gangster lingo means that only death and trouble awaits the canary who sings.

Jim described thugs as gowgers. By this time the spelling of that word had been refined to read 'gouger' by the media and had even been extended to cover the unruly female element in society when in February 1962 Jim referred to such ladies in court as being 'gougeresses'.

In 1963 the violence on the streets continued to escalate and almost every night the newspapers reported cases of people being charged with possession of knives and other offensive weapons. Jim had a considerable number of charges for these type of offences during this



time - in a five-week period in early 1963 he had charged no less than sixty thugs with possession of lethal weapons.

Jim Branigan was not a rough Garda and never used his baton during his career. He did use his gloves - those famous black ones - on occasion and also used his hand to give some trouble-shooter a few clips.

Promotion again came Jim's way and in the beginning of December 1963 he was promoted to sergeant.

#### The Riot Squad

In August 1964, the Riot Squad was set up to deal with violence in Dublin; to be spearheaded by Jim Branigan, a vote of confidence by the authorities in his ability to enforce law and order on the streets of the capital.

Jim soon earned a reputation as head of the Riot Squad and a colleague of his on that first team told how, at the end of August 1964, they were called to a Saturday night street battle. The battle was at its height when they arrived on the scene. They heard a roar that "Lugs is here" and to their amazement saw hardened criminals running into the darkness, leaving the fighting to another night.

Undoubtedly 1964 was a milestone in Jim Branigan's life, being made leader of one of the premier, active garda units in the country at the age of fifty-four.

The Riot Squad proved an effective measure of curbing the excesses of Dublin's gangs.□

# Garda memories from the past

By Inspector Pat McGee



**A**s An Garda Síochána now approaches the 86th Anniversary of its foundation in 1922 it is time for reflection upon a number of issues that have helped to contribute in establishing the Force as an integral part of this country's history. Since 1922 the vital role played by An Garda Síochána as an unarmed, disciplined and completely legitimate defender of public order has made a vital contribution to the Irish State.

## Raising standards

On his appointment as Commissioner in 1922 Eoin O'Duffy took command of a force of 1,689 men, with recruiting

virtually at a standstill. Working long hours with great urgency to make up for lost time, the new Commissioner and his small headquarters staff presented the Department of Home affairs a tentative establishment scheme providing for a complement of 5,520. By February, 1924, with the Force close to its established strength, there were on file 6,000 applications from hopeful candidates; bringing to 30,000 the number of applications that had been examined since the appointment of O'Duffy as Commissioner.

The legislation in 1925 bringing about the amalgamation of An Garda Síochána and the Dublin Metropolitan Police

provided for a maximum establishment nationally of 7,646 men.

Candidates sat an examination in arithmetic and dictation and in the ability to write a 'sensible letter'. O'Duffy welcomed a Home Affairs proposal to give responsibility for the entrance examination to the Civil Service Commission. He criticised a standard pegged at third class in primary school, which was unrealistic in the 1930's. Contrasting the work of the old Courts of Petty Sessions, overseen by unqualified magistrates, and the new District Courts with lawyers as justices, O'Duffy stressed the need for higher educational standards.

In a letter to the Department of Justice, dated 28 February 1931, the Commissioner outlined '...the day of the dull, unintelligent policeman had gone'. In an imaginative initiative, he introduced an efficiency and fitness test for all ranks and presented well-designed certificates, each signed personally by the Commissioner. O'Duffy had to defend his initiative from the ambitions of the Civil Service Commission when it attempted to inflict external assessors on the Force. He stated '...it would be manifestly unfair to bring in an outside body to determine the fitness of members of An Garda Síochána'. The initiative of awarding certificates greatly appealed to many of the recipients, coming from a culture unused to such acknowledgement of personal achievement.

### A sober police force

As it set about its task of restoring peace the new Provisional Government were dismayed at the rising tide of drunkenness and disregard for the licensing laws which had crept in during the War of Independence.

The enforcement of the liquor licensing laws was seen as a priority for all concerned. Commissioner O'Duffy was asked by the Department of Home Affairs if the Gardaí themselves were being warned that they 'must be extremely careful to set a good example...in order to preserve their independence as custodians of the law'. The Minister was keenly aware of the temptations for young incompletely trained guards.

Drinking on duty after hours 'would deprive the guards of all of their public usefulness in the enforcement of the Licensing Laws, apart from the breach of discipline'.

In December 1922 O'Duffy issued a general order on 'Intemperance in the Civic Guard'. At that time half of the estimated strength of the Force had been enrolled in the temperance movement.

The weight of enforcing the Licensing Laws was soon felt in the land to the annoyance of a client in one drinking-shop. On conviction in Kilkenny District Court for after-hours drinking, the defendant protested that he had been frequenting his local public house for forty years and was 'never interfered with by the RIC'.

The first Scott Medal winner, James Mulroy and his colleague, John Donlan, had been on public house duty when they were attacked. On 28 December 1925 Garda Thomas Dowling, 29 years, of Fanore, Co. Clare was ambushed

and shot dead in reprisal for his enforcement of the illicit distillation laws.

These members, who had physical confrontation forced on them, made the headlines, but there are few records of the moral courage of untried young men who presented themselves in public houses after closing time to carry out their duty, of the petty resentment and taunts they accepted, and sometimes the humiliation of challenges to fight that in their good disciplined they ignored. In the years that followed there was never a word of the courage of young men who faced down bullies in remote places.

### The emergency

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 saw An Garda Síochána play a major role to deal with any threat arising from that conflict.

In the Spring of 1940, as the German armies beset the Low Countries and swept across France, the part-time soldiers of the Volunteer Reserve left the towns and villages to join the war effort, leaving Ireland without a home guard. In a radio broadcast the Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera, called for the organisation of a Local Security Force (LSF).

Commissioner Michael Kinnane delegated his most experienced officer, Deputy Commissioner W.R.E. Murphy, to organise the LSF. Putting all other work aside Murphy responded to the challenge with great zeal.

On 4 June he circulated instructions to all members of the Force on the 'Organisation and Duties of a Local Security Force', followed on 24 June by further instructions on the separation of military and auxiliary police functions and on 26 June and 13 July on the particular duties of an unarmed LSF.

The Gardaí were seen as a keystone to the success of this project. W.T.

Cosgrave, said at the time the guards were 'good servants of the State, capable at a moment's notice of either stopping the traffic to let children cross, or defending the State with their lives if necessary'

Men of all ages volunteered in their tens of

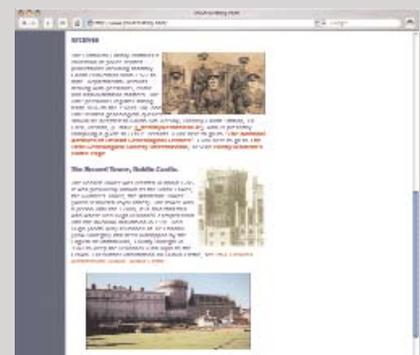


thousands, including old republicans who had never before crossed the threshold of a Garda station. Local Sergeants instructed the volunteers in basic police duties, with citizens living in the vicinity of stations rostered for station or cordon duties or as messengers.

Superintendents became directly involved in the organising a new army reserve, the Local Defence Force (LDF). On 1 January 1941 the task of overseeing the LDF was transferred to the army, with a guard seconded as an administrative officer in each LDF area. The LSF remained under Garda control until the force was stood down at the end of the Emergency in 1946.

The Emergency Service Medal awarded to the Defence Forces and other voluntary organisations, including the LSF, was withheld from members of An Garda Síochána as the contribution by members of the Force, as permanent public servants, was deemed not to be voluntary. ◀◀





The Garda Síochána Historical Society is a non-profit making organisation which was set up in response to requests from both members of the Garda Síochána and the public. On 20 January 1995, a meeting was held in the Garda Museum/Archives and the Garda Síochána Historical Society was born.

The Society's aim is to bring the history and traditions of policing in Ireland (especially the history of the Garda Síochána) into the public arena;

through lectures and exhibitions. The Society also acts as a support service for the development of the Garda Museum/Archives.

The Society is grateful for the support of Garda Management, the Garda Representative Association, the Garda Síochána Retired Members Association, St Paul's Garda Credit Union, St Raphael's Garda Credit Union and the Dublin Metropolitan Region Garda Social Club. ◀◀

**Supported by:**

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