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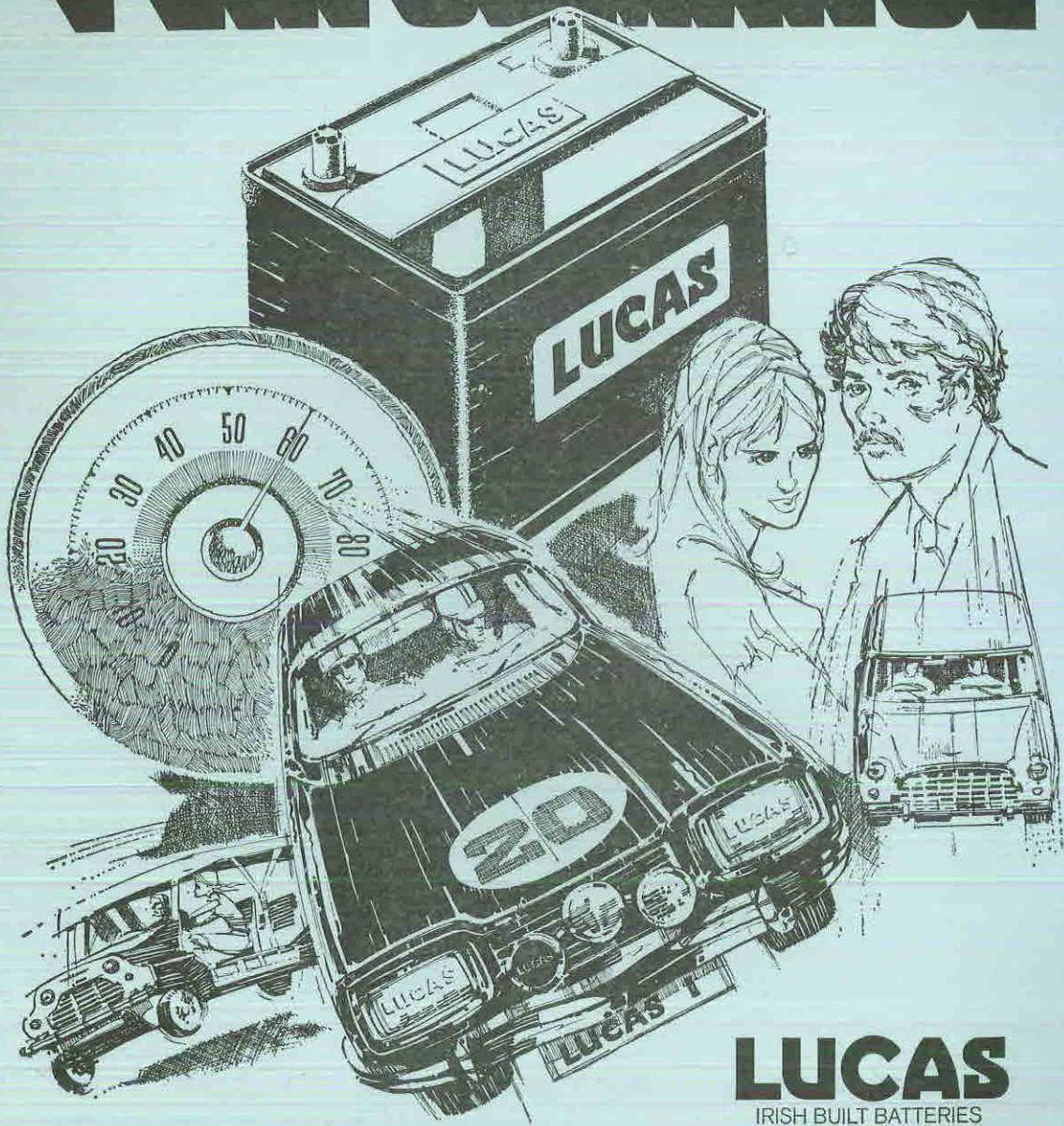
**New Writer's Prize**

The winner of this competition, for which a prize was presented by the Officers' Club, is Capt. James Harold, 27th Inf. Bn., Dundalk. His paper, "Ireland in a European Military Alliance, Naval Considerations," will be published in March.

**Cover:**

Capt. Bertie Thompson's impression of a student's arrival at the Arty. Corps. School forty years ago.

# PERFORMANCE



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# The First Guns in Ireland

G. A. Hayes-McCoy

WE are unlikely to know when the sound of gunfire was first heard in Ireland, although a contemporary reference to the fact that Lionel, Duke of Clarence, brought a gun with him when he came here as his father, Edward III's lieutenant in 1361, suggests that it may have been much earlier than is generally supposed. The earliest evidence for the use of the new weapon, the gun, in England and by the English in France, dates from the second quarter of the fourteenth century. The Duke of Clarence's gun was therefore a novelty, and it is unlikely that he took it with him on his journeys through the Irish countryside, although his possession of it may have added to his prestige when he summoned the famous parliament to meet at Kilkenny in 1366.

Knowledge of the awe inspiring properties of gunpowder and ability to make a reliable gun were two different things, and a century and a half was to elapse before the development of firearms began to transform the conduct of warlike operations. Basically, it was a matter of metallurgy. The first guns, which were largely built up of wrought iron bars or staves laid on a disposable wooden core so as to form a tube or "barrel" and held together by iron rings shrunk on outside them, were usually, like all modern guns, breech-loaders, but they were liable to disintegrate in action, or to burst on being fired. Since, when other things were equal, it was simpler, following this method of construction, to make big guns rather than small ones, cannon soon tended to grow in size and weight, and to become, as time went on, less manoeuvrable—like Mons Meg, the giant fifteenth century gun still preserved in Edinburgh Castle.

As men's skill in metal working improved, however, more effective weapons, of varied size, could be produced. Cast guns of non-ferrous metal had been made since the fourteenth century. Cast iron guns, in which the "bore" was bored out, were being widely produced, in England and in various places in continental Europe, by the sixteenth century. Trunnions, or the projections at the sides of the gun barrel which permitted the elevation

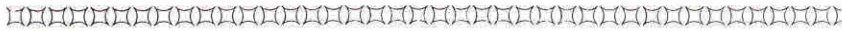
of the gun, date from the end of the fifteenth century. Their introduction made great improvements in mounting possible, and gun carriages, which were originally wheelless wooden beds that allowed only a fixed line of fire and made but a poor provision to absorb recoil, were fitted with wheels and made manoeuvrable.

Hand firearms, which are almost as old as cannon, were originally iron or bronze tubes mounted on straight wooden stocks. Such hand cannon or handguns were superseded early in the sixteenth century by the first matchlock, a weapon called a hagbut or arquebus (there is some evidence that the hagbut may not, at least in its original form, have been the same as the arquebus), words which are generally derived from the German *Hakenbuchse*, or "hook gun." The arquebus was the first gun to have a "lock," or mechanical device for firing. This was a movable arm which could, by the action of a trigger, be made to bring a glowing match into contact with priming powder held in a pan beside the touch-hole, thus firing the gun. These improved firearms were fitted too with curved or shaped stocks, which, since they eventually came to be butted against the shoulder, brought about a great improvement in aimed fire.

The first Irish references to the use of guns, rather than to the existence of a gun or guns in Ireland, date, not surprisingly, from this late fifteenth and early sixteenth century period in which firearms were undergoing marked improvements and were everywhere being more widely used. Known here earlier, although possibly only in the Dublin area, guns are mentioned with steadily growing frequency from this time forward.

Apparently, other than the 1361 mention, the first reference to a gun which occurs in an Irish context is that made by the Annals of Ulster under the date 1487 to the shooting by Godfrey O'Donnell of one of the O'Rourkes of Breifne at Castlear in Co. Leitrim. The weapon used was almost certainly a handgun. Its use in a place which was so remote from the areas that were

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munition in the previous year, did what they could to prepare Maynooth for a siege. They collected guns where they could get them and mounted them in the castle, and sixty of the hundred men who made up the ward were gunners. But the English attack prevailed. It took two days to place the siege guns, and when fire was opened on the third day some of the defenders' guns in the keep were silenced and the English could move in to pound the wall of the base court, which they did for five days and nights. They then stormed the breach which had been made and took the base court by assault. The castle surrendered and the 37 survivors of the garrison were given the "pardon of Maynooth," that is, they were executed—a stern warning, which the Irish were to remember. Thenceforth, the crown's guns made death traps of the Irish castles.

The defeat in 1536 and 1537 of "the Geraldine faction," the Anglo-Irish and Gaelic supporters of the house of Kildare, saw the further use of the royal artillery. Lord Leonard Grey used eight guns, a demi-culverin (calibre about four inches, weight of shot about eight pounds), a saker (about 3½ inches and six pounds), and six falcons (about 2½ inches and two pounds) in his attack on O'Br:ensbridge on the Shannon. The O'Briens, who opposed him, replied with a great iron gun (where did they get it?) which fired balls "as great in manner as a man's head." These guns

were not effective beyond a range of two or three hundred yards, and the accepted method of attacking a castle was to break down the wall of the bawn or base court, as Skeffington did at Maynooth and as Grey did at Carrigogunnel in Co. Limerick, and then, bringing in the guns, to fire point blank at the bottom of the wall of the keep. Grey broke a heavy gun while so engaged at Dangan castle in Offaly in 1537 and besought a replacement from England—"help us with a battery piece and with other artillery, which will not, nor is not possible to be gotten here, neither for gold nor silver."

Reference to the use of firearms in Ireland become commonplace as the sixteenth century advances. The forces of the state were always well supplied with matchlock hand firearms—at the close of the century men with the contemporary calivers and muskets outnumbered the pikemen in some of the infantry companies—and the government stores were well stocked with cannon. The towns too secured guns for their defence; Waterford had guns in 1495, Limerick and Galway saluted Lord Deputy Sussex with gunfire in 1558; all the towns were markets for the sale of gunpowder, and the ports secured ship guns. The state failed to maintain a monopoly either of firearms or of powder. It was said in 1515 that the Irish feared more "the sudden shot of guns" than anything else, but they were soon using

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under English control, or were subject to continuous English influence, must strengthen the argument that guns were, by that date, already well known in the pale, and perhaps in the towns.

The first mention of the use of cannon occurs under date of the year following. Gerald Fitzgerald, the Great Earl of Kildare, acting as the representative of the new Tudor king, Henry VII, took Balrath castle in Westmeath in 1488, *iar tabhairt ordanais cuice*, after having brought ordnance against it. The gun or guns used at Balrath were almost certainly the king's, and not the earl's, property. Kildare used them frequently in later years. Their fire helped him to capture Dungannon castle in 1498, and he no doubt used them again when he took the Connacht castles of Athleague, Tulsk, Roscommon and Castlerea in the following year. They must have been small guns, since he was able to transport them so far afield, and they failed him in the year of his death, 1513, at Leap castle in Offaly; "what was seldom the case with him," say the Four Masters, "he neither broke down nor took the castle, for he was not able to do it any injury." Intending to return to Leap with a heavier gun, Kildare was mortally wounded by a gunshot fired by one of the O'Mores at Kilkea—further evidence of the possession of firearms at early dates by the Gaelic Irish—and he died shortly after.

This earl of Kildare was, more than any other individual, responsible for the early extension of the use of firearms in Ireland. He seems to have been greatly interested in the new weapons. He may have seen types of guns which were previously unknown in Ireland in the hands of the German *Landsknechte* who landed in Dublin in 1487, soldiers who had been sent by the Duchess of Burgundy to aid Lambert Simnel in his attempt to wrest the throne from Henry VII. Kildare received a present of six handguns from Germany two years later and issued them to his men who stood sentry at his Dublin house of Thomascourt. Perhaps it was fitting that one whose name was so much associated with firearms should have been killed by a gun.

The state, which Kildare represented, sought in 1495 to establish for itself a monopoly of the use of firearms. It was enacted by Poyning's parliament that nobody should, under pain of forfeiture of the weapons and a heavy fine, keep "any manner (of) ordnance or artillery, that is to say, great gun or handgun" in his house, save under licence of the deputy. The regulation was modified by a statute of 1498 which required the palesmen to use weapons of English type, including handguns, for their defence, but the state, as its power in Ireland increased, renewed its efforts to keep an exclusive control of movable cannon. Remembering the semi-private use which

the Great Earl, his son and his grandson, Silken Thomas, had made of the king's guns, the Kildare house was charged at the time of its downfall in 1535 with the conversion to its own use of the royal ordnance.

We know that the Great Earl had one or more handguns at Knockdoe in 1504, the first Irish battle in which the new weapon was carried, but we are not sure if he caused them to be fired there. Our information is merely that a Dublin soldier killed a horseman on the battlefield; he "struck him with a gun with both his hands and so beat out his brains." Silken Thomas, however, in his attempt to take Dublin in 1534, "chiefly trusted in his ordnance, which he had of the king's" (to change the tense of a contemporary reference). His lieutenant, James Field of Lusk, opened fire on Dublin Castle, probably with the guns which the Great Earl and Thomas's father had used to break down, or compel the surrender of, the castles of their opponents. Field fired first from within the city wall and then, when the citizens drove out the Fitzgeralds and their supporters, continued his bombardment from Ship street, to the south of the Castle and just outside the line of the wall. He was answered by the guns of the Castle, the defenders of which, to get a clear field of fire for their artillery, used wild fire, the flame-thrower of the time, to burn down the Ship street houses, and soon drove off the Fitzgeralds and the rebel palesmen who supported them. One of the illustrations in Richard Stanihurst's history of Ireland, published in 1577, gives an anachronistic and indeed highly fanciful representation of this action. This picture may well have no connection at all with Dublin, since the printers of this and later times often illustrated their texts by using printing blocks which they drew from "stock."

The year 1535, which saw the downfall of Silken Thomas, began a new phase in the history of the use of guns in Ireland. From that time forward the crown was the breaker of castles; here, as in other countries in western Europe, the state, growing steadily more powerful, was to become the sole owner of artillery, and the feudal lord who resisted the crown was to be battered into subjection. Maynooth castle, the last stronghold of the rebel house of Kildare, was assailed in March, 1535, by Sir William Skeffington, a gunner in his own right and a former Master of the Ordnance in England. Following the Kildare example, the Earl of Surrey had, when he was Lord Lieutenant, already used three heavy guns to take Monasteroris castle in 1521, but it was the successful attack on Maynooth which set the precedent for the remainder of the century. Silken Thomas and his Master of Ordnance, Donagh O'Doogan, who had run short of am-

or rampart pieces, or swivel guns for ships, and are all breech-loaders with removable chambers which held the powder charges and projectiles. In three instances these chambers are now missing; the hinged cover of the chamber of the fourth gun still survives. Three of the guns are of cast iron. The remaining weapon is of forged iron with hoops shrunk on to the barrel, and was seemingly built up. Two of the four guns have trunnions and three have long barrels. Each is fitted for mounting on a single iron pin or pivot, on which the trunnions are permanently fixed by means of a fork, and all are of small calibre. They appear to date, at the earliest, from the sixteenth century, and some of them may have been classed in their day as serpentines or rob-inets, the smallest of a class that was intermediate between the cannon and the heaviest of the hand firearms.

The fifth surviving gun, which was formerly in the National Museum, was found in Kinsale harbour in 1902. It also is a breech-loader, an iron gun with a banded barrel and with, like the other four, a handle projecting backward from the breech which served to lay or aim it. It appears to date from the late sixteenth century.

Readers who wish to pursue further this subject of early Irish firearms will find further information, together with documentation, in the writer's "The early history of Guns in Ireland," which was published in 1938 in the Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society (Vol. XVIII, pages 43-65).

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handguns—and in due course the improved arquebuses—everywhere: in Offaly in 1521, in Sligo in 1538, in Galway in 1557. The English called them “very apt” gunners in 1544. Firearms were used to ambush Lord Deputy Sussex in County Galway in 1558 and by Shane O’Neill’s men outside Armagh in 1563—the first mentions of a practice in which Irishmen were to become specialists.

The O’Donnells of Tirconnell made an early use of firearms. We have seen that the first man recorded as having used a gun in Ireland was an O’Donnell. Another O’Donnell borrowed guns from a French ship and used them to take a castle in Sligo in 1516. The O’Donnells tried to get “certain battery pieces” from Scotland in 1537 and 1538, having earlier secured a gun from that country which they had used to “subdue a great part” of their enemies. An earl of Argyll sent a weapon which the analysts call the “*gonna cam*,” or hooked or crooked gun—and which may have been an arquebus-à-croc or wall gun—to Calvagh O’Donnell, lord of Tirconnell in 1555.

As hand firearms were improved in construction and, with improvements in the quality of gunpowder, became more effective in use, the state came to rely for fire power more on arquebuses, calivers and muskets, and the English marching forces which penetrated further and further into the interior of the country gave up the difficult practice of hauling artillery about with them. Since the Irish grew chary of attempting to defend castles, there was less need for heavy guns, and, outside of parts of Leinster and Munster, the absence of practicable roads and tracks and the existence everywhere of water-logged areas and districts overgrown with brushwood and primeval forest made wheeled transport of any kind extremely difficult. When it was really necessary, field guns and occasionally heavier cannon could be transported, but the English always tried to gain access to the interior for their artillery by making use of their guns by ship to suitable points on the coast. They did this frequently to suppress rebellion in Munster and during their attack on Gaelic Ulster at the end of the century. When Lord Deputy Mountjoy, the best English soldier of the century, opposed Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, he used field guns only once, at the river Blackwater in July, 1601. These guns were a falcon (calibre about 2½ inches, weight of shot about two or three pounds) and a robinet (about one inch and ½ pound). Artillery was, of course, used in the siege of Kinsale, but not in the battle.

Although Hugh O’Neill had cannon he never used them. His ally, Hugh Maguire, captured three falcons which belonged to the city of Dublin at Enniskillen castle in 1595. O’Donnell took

some guns at Sligo in the same year. O’Neill got the saker which Bagenal’s defeated army was forced to abandon at the Yellow Ford. Not even at Derry, where they might have been used to effect in 1600 and 1601, were any of these guns brought into action. The loss of artillery has always been thought disgraceful, and Queen Elizabeth was very much annoyed when her advancing forces found three captured guns hidden in a crannog on County Tyrone in 1602. Why were none of these guns used by O’Neill, whose men were plentifully supplied with hand firearms, including the most up to date type, the heavy muskets? Possibly because his stock of gunpowder was never great; more likely because they were very heavy and were hard to move about, and the earl’s method of combat required uninhibited mobility. When he besought the King of Spain to send him artillery O’Neill contemplated the arrival too of Spanish gunners and of a Spanish army which would make a different kind of fight possible.

Have any of these early Irish guns survived? When James Stuart wrote his history of Armagh at the beginning of the last century he noted that “a great gun” had been dug up near the church in Dundalk in 1739, a gun which “was encircled and secured with several hoops”—that is, almost certainly a bombard, or early cannon built up of wrought iron staves or bars in the manner which we have described. Stuart said that the gun was “alleged to have been left in Dundalk by John de Bermingham, who defeated Edward Bruce at nearby Faughart in 1318, and added “If this is true, the use of cannon must have been known at an earlier period than is generally conceived.” As it is described, this Dundalk gun certainly seems to have been one of the early ones—perhaps a fifteenth century weapon. Archdeacon Barbour, the sub-contemporary panegyrist of the Bruces, was formerly thought to have mentioned the use of guns by the English against the Scots at the battle of Weardale in 1327, but his reference — Barbour’s words are “crakkys of wer (war)” — is now more generally taken as meaning not guns but crackers thrown by a catapult or other engine with the intention of terrorising an enemy. One feels that the ascription of the Dundalk gun—which seems to have disappeared again between 1739 and Stuart’s time—to an age as early as that of the Bruce invasion is but another example of the popular mania of the assignment of ownership of things found, regardless of typological or other possibilities, to well known historical figures.

However, at least five early guns which were found in Ireland have survived to our own time. Four of these are in the arms collection of the National Museum of Ireland. They are all well

most drove responsible officers to drink during the succeeding days of a self generating "flap" and a local enquiry. In the meantime the rest of the work proceeded at other sites.

Two days afterwards with the predicament unresolved and being considered the Camp phone rang at 16.30 hrs. to give a message that the Chief of Staff, the Director of Engineering and other G.H.Q. officers would be at Fort Shannon at 08.30 hrs. the following morning. This was indeed the moment of truth. Sam Browns, like jetsam, would be floating down the R. Shannon within twenty-four hours if something could not be done immediately.

A hurried conference, with Lt. Brennan in attendance, was called for 18.00 hrs. A plan was formulated but the plan was completely dependent on whether "Scotcher" was prepared to lift the complete gun equipment with his gyn and tackle to a height of two feet clear of the ground. Anxious engineer eyes watched and pleaded while "Scotcher" calculated the risks involved. We need have had no doubt. He agreed, even in the knowledge that the safe working load of his equipment (approximately 8 tons) was only half the load he proposed to lift. Perhaps he was convinced that the safe working load included "a factor of ignorance." With the green light from the "Scotcher," detailed orders were issued and at 19.00 hrs. the operation started.

The first phase required the artillery team to raise the gun equipment. Chocking up, as they took the load aloft, the gunners raised the whole gun assembly inch by inch until it was two feet clear and supported to take the weight off the gyn. When this operation was completed without a hitch thirty-two selected field engineers whose trades qualified them as experienced welders of hammer and chisel were divided into four teams of eight to work in relays. With the raising of the complete gun piece and chocking up completed at about 20.00 hrs. eight engineers in a prone position disposed, like the petals of a sunflower around the pedestal, began the task of chiselling away rock hard concrete to a depth of one and a half inches over an area of nearly six feet in diameter. To gain the optimum output the working team was replaced at the end of every five minutes. This entailed five minutes vigorous non-stop chiselling and fifteen minutes rest for each team. The operation was backed up with two portable forges and two blacksmiths engaged on reforging chisels, rapidly blunted and damaged by the concrete. About thirty chisels had been collected for the operation. For work during the night, four flood lights had been deployed to provide essential illumination for the work.

Starting in the bright light of an August evening the work went on through the night punctuated

by words of advice and encouragement from apprehensive officers measuring progress against the passage of time. At dawn chips of concrete illuminated by tracer-like sparks, were still flying, blood was oozing from many bruised, tired and unbandaged hands (medical support for the operation had been forgotten), and chaos was going down the dust encrusted gullets of the men. At 0430 hrs. the offending concrete base had been chipped away level at the required depth and by 0530 hrs. "Scotcher" and his gunners had gently lowered the gun piece complete, back into place. With the anchor bolts now protruding, and with screw threads to spare, the nuts were tightened up. Then the concrete chips were shovelled away and the emplacement floor was swept clean as a billet awaiting COs inspection. Weary men from the Engineers and Artillery picked their way back to the Camp by the shortest cross country distance through dew laden grass for a well earned sleep. The aura of satisfaction was almost tangible.

Three hours later and sharp at 08.30 hrs. two saloon cars pulled up at the Camp gaet. A door of one car swung open and an order "get in" was fired at the engineer officer who was waiting with mixed feelings of apprehension and optimism. The route to the gun emplacement measured about half a mile along a newly constructed road through pasture fields. Not a word was spoken to the "victim" as the two car cavalcade moved along. When the cars stopped near the emplacement the party dismounted and like a pointer on a fresh scent of game went, in order of seniority, straight for the gun. The engineer officer was a reluctant tail. It was all over in a few minutes. A quick walk around the gun pedestal, a laconic and barbed comment by the Chief of Staff "I see nothing wrong with this bloody gun" and the nonplussed party was into the cars and away, leaving the relieved engineer officer to return to Camp on foot. The consequential holiday declared was an engineer's Thanksgiving Day celebrated without a Te Deum. There were no bells available.

So ended a visit to Fort Shannon which had all the ingredients of the thunder and lightning associated with a Chief of Staff's wrath. What about the ensuing praise? Well, at that time Col. John Gleeson (R.I.P.) was Director of Engineering and had accompanied the Chief of Staff to Fort Shannon. With a backlash from a botched job by his subordinates hanging over his head like the sword of Damocles, his journey from Dublin to Fort Shannon in the early hours of the morning must have been anything but comfortable. His elation at the gun site when he saw nothing amiss was distilled in a knowing wink of relief, satisfaction and omniscience to the engineer officer. Many

## Operation "Chip Away"

EARLY in 1942 Maj. Gen. M. J. Costello, G.O.C. First Division, the anchor man of the Wartime Army and an avuncular figure to all officers of his formation, directed that a coast defence installation would be established on the R. Shannon. In May of that year the Corps of Engineers was thus committed to construct the first major seaward defence to be planned and executed by Irishmen in their own country. In that context it was to be a unique and historic undertaking. The location near Tarbert, on the Shannon Estuary, had been decided not without considerable argument on the relative tactical merits of Tarbert Island and Ardmore Point, the eventual site. The concept provided for six inch gun emplacements, with magazines and connecting tunnels together with search light emplacements, engine rooms, directing station, electricity supply station and living accommodation with associated services including water supply and roads. Except for the living accommodation all the installations involved a major rock blasting programme to ensure adequate overhead cover for guns, search lights and engines.

The main armament to be installed was two six inch naval guns salvaged, the author believes, from H.M.S. *Sydney* which had seen action in W.W.I. The defence scheme provided for installing these guns in reinforced concrete emplacements.

The size of the project required a work force of two companies and a section of field engineers diluted with an infantry company and a company of the Construction Corps. The achievement of these units is not the subject of this article. Perhaps sometime, someone will put on record the long hours, the dedication, the toil, the vicissitudes and the success associated with the construction of Fort Shannon and give credit to the NCO's and men who laboured there.

The author's subject is an isolated incident in August, 1942, when the energy and stamina of the field engineer soldier turned a visitation of wrath into an occasion for subsequent praise. To set the scene it is necessary to fill in some details. Each six gun (piece, cradle and pedestal) had to be secured and anchored within the emplacements by twenty-two 3 ft. 10 ins. long anchor

bolts set in a reinforced concrete bed six feet deep and accurately spaced in a circle to fit the pedestal holes for eventual bolting down. Late in July as the guns and anchor bolts had not been delivered from Clancy Bks. an engineer officer went to Dublin to measure the bolts. This he did and on his return the design of the gun foundations proceeded. The transportation of guns, which could only be undertaken by the E.S.B., using the largest trailer available in the country, was delayed and the anchor bolts were forwarded to Fort Shannon some weeks before the arrival of the guns. Working to an O.D. level, the six feet deep reinforced concrete foundation of one gun was poured around the anchor bolts which were accurately aligned with templates leaving the up-stands of the bolts protruding above the concrete for the bolting down of the gun pedestal. By the time the guns arrived the concrete foundation had fully matured and hardened around the bolts.

For the installation of the guns in the emplacements a special well trained and equipped artillery unit arrived at Fort Shannon. What St. Barbara and the holders of the honourable "leather aprons" thought of that prostitution will never be known. The unit was commanded by Lt. Brennan known to all of us as "Scotcher"—a nickname well earned from his continuous and loud harangues to "Scotch up" during operations. With the arrival of the guns Lt. Brennan set about his job. Because of the prohibitive weight of the gun barrel, cradle and pedestal (over 16 tons) they were moved and lifted into place individually using only a gyn, heavy tackle and the muscle power of the gunners. With the complete gun installed and assembled, "Scotcher" and his team sat around with smiles of satisfaction almost obliterated by the smoke of well earned cigarettes watching the final bolting down of the pedestal by the engineers. This simple operation created an immediate and traumatic crisis. It was noticed that some of the anchor bolts, six in all, were not long enough to take the securing nuts. Like a bush fire the news spread to the many working sites and eventually engulfed the headquarters back at the camp site a half mile away. How did such a simple error arise? Who was at fault? What could be done? There were questions which al-

# Silent Night

Captain Seamus Kelly (Retd.)

THREE days before Christmas they told us that leave was off. The Corkmen—hard-chaw soldiers *mar-dh'eadh*—were as upset as kids. Especially Martin; but Martin had a little girl, so nobody held it against him. Most of us had money saved for home, and now we couldn't even go out to town to buy Christmas cards. So naturally enough ourselves and our money found our way to the Wet Canteen. "Joe's Surgery" the old sweats called it. We found it more like Joe's Mortuary, with its dank zinc counter and its morbidly frigid air and Joe, hollow-jawed, dispensing inferior porter with an "*odi profanum vulgus*" look in his eye.

It took a lot of bad porter to dispel the gloom of that morgue, but once the bellies were distended with a few pints and the tunics loosened up, great contentions began, beer-begot upon nostalgia for rain-sodden townlands in the far corners. Ballads were roared, and counter ballads. The Limerick-men out of the First Light, notorious bellicose ruffians, began an interprovincial war when they sang:

*"Fare thee well, Ballysimon  
Fare thee well for a while.  
'Tis south of the border  
Near sweet Boherkyle.  
And when Ireland gets her freedom  
We will rally one and all,  
And we'll dance our Irish jigs and reels  
In the Faugh-a-Ballagh hall . . ."*

A hungry-looking Fermanagh man took exception to what he claimed was a downright steal from "Farewell, Enniskillen," which he insisted on singing. Somebody disliked the lines about—

*"They were all dressed up the like of  
gentlemen's sons  
With their long scarlet jackets, an' their  
carabine guns"*

and Joe had to go through lethal motions with a bung-starter before the Fermanagh man was

Captain Seamus Kelly was 211506, Volunteer Kelly, S.B. of the 2nd Medium Battery, Ack-Ack Battalion, when this saga was first published sometime in 1940. He swears it was a true incident which happened in his recruit days in McKee, and that the Room Orderly, now retired from the Army and a well-known body-builder, was then a Gunner in the same unit.

Kelly was transferred from the Ack-Ack to Southern Command H.Q. in December, 1940. There, with the rank of Sergeant, he assisted Captain John Busteed in editing the newly-born AN COSANTOIR. He was posted to GHQ in G2 after being commissioned, and believes that he was the first serving Officer in history (at least of this Army) to have become Drama Critic of a National Newspaper (The "Irish Times") where his first theatre review appeared in November, 1945. He has been Quidnunc in the same paper since 1949, and is notorious among the lesser breeds of the Defence Forces as an arrogant propagandist of The Corps. About this he is totally unapologetic.

pacified. Mutterings and rumblings and ultimatums between Ulster and Munster continued until Ginger Degan, dug-in as an Officers' Mess Orderly and immune from red-capped revenge, chirruped his bawdy squib about the Provost Sergeant. All tension sublimated to the common hate, Fermanagh and Limerick came to peace again and joined in the endless dirge of McCafferty . . .

*"At the age of eighteen I was hasty sent  
For to join the Forty-Second Regiment."*

Even after the Orderly Buck had chivvied us back to billets and "Lights-out" had sounded its lullaby, homesick reminiscences went on around the turf fires in darkened billets, and muted songs condensed on the frosty panes . . . Christmas Eve, just before dinner, I was told go clean my equipment for the Night Guard. Bad news, in so far as it meant passing up the beer and ballads in Joe's, and worse as it killed my

months later the nocturnal activities of the engineer-gunner task force were described in detail to him. There were no recriminations and notwithstanding the abortive visit, he considered the face, and possible belt, saving efforts of his engineers to be nothing but a praiseworthy exercise. It became one of his favourite stories in the years before his retirement.

What had gone wrong initially? It arose through that common but natural error of taking things for granted. The officer who measured the bolts at Clancy Bks. selected one bolt, measured it and assumed all the remaining bolts were the same length—they should have been but they weren't. Six bolts used in No. 1 Gun Emplacement were short of the measured length. It was only a difference of one and a half inches but what a difference it could have proved to be. The dilemma created by the measuring error was also compounded by the necessity to work to O.D. levels at the gun site.

The incident provided some lessons for all concerned—the necessity to check and recheck assumptions before decision making, and the limits of endurance which well trained willing soldiers can achieve. One other lesson might be added—“Is my journey really necessary?”

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them." I never heard any harshness in the Northern voices those days.

Inside, the chapel would be grand and bright, with "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" floating across the sanctuary on white shiny letters like frosty snow. The aisles would be packed with people, and Matt McCann, the Sexton, would be Sergeant-majoring around among the hardy boys at the back—"Ye'd think yez were playin' 'nap' instead of do'ng yer duty in the house o' God."

I used to be shivering with excitement until the Gospel. Once the rustle and scrape of the rising congregation died, a quavery chord would tremble out from the little French organ, and then, like a silver trumpet, the first verse of the "Adeste" would peal through the chapel. That was big Billy McLarnon, and he was goalkeeper for the football team as well as being the best tenor in the barony. Many a raw Saturday I crouched by his goal-posts, quaking every time he swooped on a ball in fear that harm might come to him and that I would never again thrill 'til my very bones melted while he sang the "Adeste" on a Christmas morning. Billy McLarnon's "Adeste" and the big yellow star—those were the best of Christmas to me.

This Christmas there was no "Adeste." No singing at all. Just a sober lecture from the priest, warning us that maybe it would be the last Christmas we'd see and to look to our souls. Martin was beside me at Mass and he gave me a dirty look when I said "Happy Xmas" coming out. So I sloped off to bed.

Twelve o'clock I got my off-duty pass and went to town. The lads were surprised I wouldn't wait for the special dinner. Some of the First Light said it would be served by Colonels with their own hands. Just the same I went to town. There were plenty of people I knew, but Christmas is a kind of exclusive family day, and I didn't want to butt in. There were two hotels open to casuals. I went to the less pretentious. The Boots was slightly drunk and felt above dealing with Private soldiers. When I asked him if I might have a bath and some lunch he handed me over impassively to an underling and said "This—uh—gentleman wants some Bass."

The contretemps resolved itself, and soon I was drowsing in steaming heat. The dining room, when I got to it, was heavy and oppressive with

Victorian bric-a-brac, its hideousness accentuated by tawdry tinsel decorations. I got a single table and took a look at the festive diners. One table held two old maids who alternately fed themselves and a repulsive, aged Pomeranian. At another a palefaced man in a black tie was making pathetic efforts to amuse three children who ate stolidly. The rest of the crowd had the stamp of the Belfast Malone Road middle-class, making a getaway from rations. They ate with a determined business-like earnestness, and talked little or none. I talked to the waiter. He hailed from the West originally. He worked in London, left it when the war started, was fed-up, and wished he was back. He recommended Tokay when I asked for the wine list. I bought a bottle and found it sweet, but clean to the palate and with a stealthy, warming headiness.

When I'd paid my bill I told him to cork the bottle and put it in the pocket of my soldier's greatcoat by the door. The Malone Road burghers showed themselves slightly scandalised at my gluttony albeit impressed by my thrift. I felt that they were easier when I left the room. I was too.

I wandered the town for an hour or two after that. In the late evening I got into a pub and had some sandwiches and a drink. While I was there somebody was talking on the radio about families who were separated this Christmas . . . at home, now, they'd be playing cards or singing, and the kids up in bed would be roaring to get down to the fun . . . Then I got fed-up, and went back to barracks with my half-bottle of Tokay. Martin was in bed before me. He pretended to be asleep and wouldn't talk. I decided to keep the Tokay for another day, and went to bed.

We had seven o'clock parade as usual on Boxing Day. Martin wasn't on it, but I met him on my way back from breakfast, all dolled up in his civvies. I said: "Did you get your leave, or is that the new battle-dress?" Martin didn't grin. He said: "I got my leave, alright" and walked on to the gate.

When I got back to the billet, Mickey-the-Barber showed me the telegram on Martin's bed. It read: "Mother died this morning stop Come home."

So I finished the Tokay myself.



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chances of a smuggled trip to the Sergeants' Mess, where, the newshounds of the First Light said, anybody with a string of oul' songs would get his bellyful of buckshee beer that night. The Mess President, Company-Sergeant to the First Light and known to them as "The Gazzy Man," fancied himself as an impressario.

Martin wasn't on the Guard, but he wasn't going home either, so he sent eight quid to his mother in Cork to get something for herself and the little girl. He was jeered, but he said his mother was sick and the little girl would be lonely and anyhow he couldn't hold that much beer and he wasn't going to throw eight quid down our maws. So we let him be.

The Guard Commander was jumpy, because the Orderly Officer was a jildi boy with a bad liver, so I got no chance to sneak out, not even to the Dry Canteen for a cup of tea. And it wasn't my luck to be put on the Gate Beat, where the rare and privileged local leave pass-holders, incoming warm from their wives, might part with a drink or a smoke to a man with a decently blind eye. Number Two beat was my draw, and I'd plenty to crib about. It was an isolated miserable path between two hedges, with a wall at one boundary and a barrack fence at the other. A British Lancer coming in drunk one night, had hanged himself in his lanyard getting over that same fence, and I'd no great hope of a fraternal drink from a strangled spook.

The first spell was from eleven to one. For half an hour I did it by the book—"Slo-hope Arrrms! Outwards turn! Forward!" I intoned my orders like the Sistine Choir. "The sentry will patrol his beat in a smart and soldierly manner at all times . . ." It went well to the "Dies Irae." That night was very cold with some wind, and soon I had my hands dug in greatcoat pockets, rifle crooked in my arm, Toby hat down on my eyes to keep bits of twig from whipping my face, and was butting up and down the beat like a morose billygoat. *Hamlet* was apropos then. I played the first Act.

"Hold you the watch to-night?"

"We do, m'lord."

"Armed, say you?"

"Armed, m'lord."

"From top to toe?"

"M'lord, from head to foot."

But I couldn't get beyond—

"'Tis bitter cold, and I am sick at heart."

When the bells started at midnight I thought there was an air-raid. Then I remembered it was Christmas, and ceremonially presented arms to five bloated rats. "God rest you, merry gentlemen," I gave them courteously, "and may you always patrol your beats in a smart and soldierly manner." The rats, bored, moved off, and

with that a donkey in the neighbouring paddock let loose a bray like ten banshees, sending me through the hedge with rifle at the ready and defensive murder in my heart. A good job I didn't shoot that donkey, for it was well beloved of certain gentlemen with golden hats.

The wind died and the night cleared before my relief. The next spell was four to six in the morning and was so dull that I'd have welcomed even the rats or the strangled Lancer. But nobody came.

On the way in I scrounged a cup of tea in the Cookhouse, and a luscious hot sausage. The Cookhouse was festooned with turkeys, and Mossy, the Cook-Sergeant, was already working into the epilepsy of energy which always portended a special meal with him. He became sulphurously impatient of cha-scrounging sentries and chased me back to the Guardroom.

After the new Guard had relieved us, we straggled over to the Mass hut. It was my first Christmas away from home, and my mind kept wandering back . . . There was always a frosty crispness as we moved along the east road to Ballyhackamore chapel, and a big bright star used hang low over that road. Neighbours would be clustered outside the chapel door, breath vapour rising like steam as greetings passed between them. "Compliments of the season, ma'ma." "Same to you, Mr. McLoughlin, and many of

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Gann, John Phelan or Joe O'Brien are the best reservoirs. But sure you probably have your own. Everyone has their own version, and there are as many permutations and combinations to this popular bitter sweet song as there are to that other war time ditty, euphemistically entitled "Bless 'em all."

A "bad shoot" was a sore thing. And the post-mortems once upon a time were scorchers. Then when every s.o.b. Staff Officer had wiped the floor with the O.P. Officer up for dissection, insult was added to injury by hammering in the last nail with the query: "And have you anything to say C/S" to the attending artificer.

The first one I ever heard singing that song, though, was "Vandy" I think (i.e. Captain Rene van der Velde). We had completed our Officers' Course in November, 1940. I was one of three Infantry Corporals from the 10th Uisneach Battalion (Brian Cantwell and Kevin Kearney were the others) and we were justly full of our Infantry *esprit de corps*. The Glen quickly taught us the lesson of Infantry-Artillery Co-operation: that the Infantry and the Artillery both need each other. But as we arrived in a fog-shrouded, rain-soaked Glen for the first time there under the dripping trees in Leitrim Gun Position in those rain traps—the steel toby and old time ground-sheet—was Vandy bawling heartily and lustily with great gusto: "You'll never be a gCaptaining Sir." We just wanted to become Second Lieuts.

and the way ahead seemed stoney. There was the O.P. where Colonel Pie Maher (in auld god's time, they used to say) gimleting into the back of the Fire Controller's poll as the victim wrestled meaninglessly with that terrible featureless old time map which was not improved by being sodden. Perhaps it was more ejaculations than Fire Orders that got the will-o'-the-wisp rounds on the ground. Then there was G.P.O. work: but the Glen brings out the best in people and while the results of the shooting may not have given Hitler second thoughts about his still projected Operation 'Sea Lion'—they were satisfactory enough: though mind you a "'tis awright" approach was never good enough for meticulous gunners in the Glen. "Bang on" was the demand. "Nearly" was no good: as they say in the country, "nearly" never bulled a cow."

The excellent 1/25000 map which was enlarged from the one inch map with additions plotted from six inch maps augured of course a new era. And new methods of Fire Procedures simplified control even if the evocative word "Drop" in the case of one visiting fireman set gastric juices in Pavlovian flow pointing the broomstick back to the bar. But there again the Germans have a phrase: 'Dienst ist Dienst; Und Schnapps ist Schnapps' and the Artillery in the Glen were also strict practitioners of this slogan. Drink and work did not mix and was not tolerated at all, at all. But when the job was done and it was earned



Artillery training, 1926. Crossing the Slaney in Coolmoney Camp.



# The Glen of 'Em All

Commandant J. P. Duggan, B.A., M.I.L.

THIS article is not going to be asterisk dotted and 'ibid' draped in a display of egg-head erudition. Though the temptation is strong to attempt an advance on an academic axis because every pebble and clod, every coote haunt and fern haunt of the same Glen is laden with lore of all descriptions. But this is a Mark 1 Biro firing WW1 shrapnel percussion into boggy ground on a wet day. This is simply an attempt at an evocation and you can pronounce that any way you like as you decant the submerged incantations and spot the hidden faces. The target audience is the 'cognescenti' and the words, and even the spaces between them, may have lives of their own.

The Glen, as we say, is full of history and of course the ghost of Michael Dwyer is everywhere. Leitrim Barracks was built during the summer of 1803 to guard the newly constructed mountain military road link above the Black Banks connecting Glen Imaal and Glenmalure. This link improved an existing cattle track to provide communications to pursue and harass the "rebels" of the time. An odd interesting point here (pace Dr. Paisley) is that some of the garrisoned Highland Regiments involved were Gaelic-speaking but were unintelligible to the natives of the Glen. Because the Glen had been very heavily planted a hundred years before and there is no evidence that Irish was commonly spoken in the area. Luke Cullen was of the opinion that Michael Dwyer had no Irish. There is a saying there, too—how true it is is another matter—that in the Glen "the Catholics have the Protestant names and the Protestants have the Catholic names."

But this is the trouble about writing about the Glen. Pull aside any bush and you'll have to reach for the three-legged stool and sometimes, like Goldsmith's 'broken soldier kindly bade to stay,' 'shoulder your crutch' and 'seanachaidhe' the night away. There are the two demure but dishy daughters teasing and tickling the fancies of two members of a Highlanders posse while Michael Dwyer slipped out of their bedroom in his 'long johns' to escape. Mary Doyle rendezvoused with Michael Dwyer in Knockgarragh

at the butt-end of the Black Banks gateway to Glenmalure to be joined in matrimony by Father Murphy. Again John Doyle in his examination on 31st August, 1803, stated:—

"Informant pretended to be drunk and would scarce open his eyes: James Commons . . . introduced two men to Informant whom he called French Generals and desired that he would allow them to sleep with him and pushed Informant to the middle of the bed in order to make room for them. That said two men lay one on either side of him. The Informant rose about 5 o'clock and left said men in bed."

Or to come more up to date one of the Hoxy family from Derrynamuck rose from Private to Major General in the British Army. That's a Glen Imaal story in itself and of course another temptation to digression to be set aside.

Because having identified the pitfalls of writing about the Glen of Imaal they must be hurriedly left behind before they are fallen into. Captain Hugh Gunn's version of "You'll never be a gCaptaing, Sir" should exorcise:

*"Your opening shot was not so hot  
You'll never be a gCaptaing, Sir!  
And all the time you were off for line  
You'll never be a gCaptaing, Sir  
Your observations were correct  
But you made a — (round, rude and plural)  
of your Fire for Effect  
So 'Empty Guns,' 'Prepare to Move'!  
You'll never be a gCaptaing, Sir!  
Your opening round was on the Ground  
Before the time the SCHOOL laid down  
You should have fired on Stoney Ridge  
But you blew the (River?) out of Seskin  
Bridge.  
So take your Battery from this Glen  
And never come back here again  
Just 'Empty Guns'!, 'Prepare to Move'!  
You'll never be a gCaptaing, Sir"*

Another of the couplets ran—

*"You mixed up Coen with Knappahaun  
You'll never be a gCaptaing, Sir."*

But there are many variations of the theme. There are many other verses. Perhaps Pat Mc-

changing of Gun Positions after the new co-ordinates were slipped in a little "billet-doux." It was whirling thermometers for mercurial correctors of the moment. It was demonstrations and for this school officer beating the panting clock planting dawn demarcation flags on the tip of Split Rock and the bottom of Stoney Ridge. It was sometimes woeful whammies which stunted promotion.

The Glen was also as happens in all enclosed communities a place for one-upmanship. This one-upmanship in the early days started back in Kildare when the move out to the Glen was ordered for, say, 08.30 and the reveller of the night before was awakened by the horses at 0800 with the Battery already on the move. It was 'Panic Stations' then to catch up. Then there was the calculated contemptuous sang-froid occasionally assumed in the early days by the odd one whose pose was not equalled by his gunnery knowledge: they turned their backs on the target during and overlapping the time of flight. It was a sort of "Look! no hands" gesture. There was plenty of WWI experience about and the explanation "jump" covered a multitude of ballistic mysteries. No names; no Puck Fair.

In the first shoot ever Major P. A. Mulcahy made an effort at ceremonial on a sacrificial Knapahaun openly engaged. He pulled the firing lever. There was an empty click; nothing happened. He repeated the operation; it was the same again. O.M.E. Johnny Doyle stepped diffidently forward: "Your safety catch is on, Sir," he said. "You mean *your* buckin safety catch is on," was the retort. But bang it went and the Glen was ceremoniously reborn to the Irish Artillery Corps. The first drops of sweat had been spilt and traditions of pride in performance and perfection began to be shaped. The embryo of *esprit de corps* had fallen on fertile soil.

For some the Glen meant damp sheets and seniority statistics. For others it meant a ball of anti-damp to keep the home fires burning. The horses still mythically pervaded even though 'the bridle was hanging on the wall' with other cult phrases like 'a piece of twine' and 'a packet of twenty' and 'by direct order,' etc. A woman once mistook Coolmoney for a bonesetter's house and ended up bringing a bunch to a dance in Dunlavin. All piled in to her two-seater car. And Dunlavin was no Las Vegas. It was a case of needs must and the simple pleasures of the poor again. And there was swimming in the Slaney and the occasional split skull.

There was an anti-tank range to be built. Old landlords throughout the country have dotted their estates with follies. The anti-tank range is not one nor is Crissy Dawn O.P. built the hard way by young men in the twenties to test gun-

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manys the sing song swung along in the bar in Coolmoney House and no harm done except to someone searching for a seance with the ghosts allegedly surreptitiously skulking around the juiced up corridors or to someone maybe trying to snatch a spot of beauty sleep on a damp candle-lit Sunday night. And all those post celebration inebriated ruses of stacking the remaining coin in sober columns on the chair outside the bed and feeling cute for drinking brandy (it was purchasable in those days — someone has the prices — they're staggering!) But the brandy act was to ensure that you fell backward instead of forward or vice versa. The benefits of this tumble were supposed to confer remain obscure. "You'll hardly credit this"!! A fag was rolled apprehensively by the C.O. to take the shock of discharge.

But about those "baad" shoots the comments were only devastating. "The target you got you did not hit and the target you hit you did not see" was only one of them. "Your opening round was fair enough, but your fire for effect!" And what about the unfortunate O.P. Officer who used a mobile straying sheep as a reference point. Then again there were those from whom one hundred per cent approval had been withheld during the year for one hiccup reason or another. A half concentration plonk into the Sheep-Pen or the Boat-shaped Hole, a fong up the Reentrant via Stoney Ridge or a ladder-up on the line of trees at the butt of Camera and it was "Come home, all is forgiven" and in the competitions even the greatest muck-bird beamed approbation on the whammy-conquering hero. He was accepted. But the poor 'who are' who was unlucky enough to do a "bad shoot" had to hang his head and lick his wounds in a corner. It rankled and none applied the lash more severely than the Officer himself. It was a long route back via the "Dug-In" Officers charity target — the Octagonal Shaped field. It was no use in blaming the target indication although weird enough similes were known to have been used, e.g. "what appears to be a Telephone Directory" or "what looks like Pat Curran's eyebrows" or "Inverted question marks" — and . . . there's a lesson here. Consolations were few and solace was scarce if one excluded a film like "Tondeleyo" with film actress Hedy Lemarr shown in the less than luxurious gushed, which was a notorious lightning conductor.

Names have been a problem in this article. Not so much that some have passed on because the Artillery Corps is a Barbarist gunner union like the communion of saints that crosses celestial as well as terrestrial boundaries. But statistical names appear elsewhere and what was hilarious 'buck the duck' in a young blade may not raise a smile for a staid Bank Manager as the gunner

may have become with the passing of the years. And culinary virtuosit'ies chiselled along the progress to social graces may not now amuse. And there were odd things hung out to dry in wash-houses too.

The Glen was a great leveller but. And all ranks and all branches of the Corps—Field, Ack-Ack and Coast had to pass through the crucible. The Ack-Ack shot in Gormanstown of course and the Coast Defence had the sea. In the GHQ Inspection staffs on the Coast Artillery one of my jobs was to report fall of shot measured through the "rake." For a V.I.P. shoot in 1944 in Fort Dunree with a British general among the audience the regular target-towing ship *Wyndham* was unable to turn up. This ship paid out and wound in target towing cable and was built for the job. A little craft, the *Eileen*, was pressed into service. It had no cable so a target had to be fixed to a three hundred yards coil of rope. There would be no tow in: 300 yards was the issue from start to finish. The night shoot proved tricky. The sea around Dunaff Head in the Atlantic got choppy. The Ack got sick over my sleeve. Searchlights picked up the ship which was speck-like enough to look like a target. One round blew through the rigging. They also blew the target itself out of it. The shooting was uncomfortably good for night shooting. CPO McGuinness, the skipper who had sailed the world over voiced the motto "one hand for the owner and one hand for yourself" as he stepped over the side to retrieve the shot-away target from the big black Atlantic waves to make it ready for the next shoot. It was a 'good show' but I must not trespass on Comdt. Dawson's "Glen." But talking about GHQ Inspection Staffs and aim correctors: if a doctor used his instruments the way some staff did aim correctors a tonsil case would have been operated on for haemorrhoids. And another apparatus designed to circumcise the sacred bull of musketry practices was dubbed a machine for shovelling seaweed out of lighthouses. And there was the Bermette which was ingenious—back to the Glen however.

But the Glen for the gunner is not Michael Dwyer nor any one else. It is not the scenery, beautiful as that is; it is panorama. It is co-ordinates; it is some cushy targets but some rogue bastard targets that would break your heart and leave a Shakespearean crowd susurrusing unbelieving whispers behind your back in the O.P. that you had reported "Unobserved." It is concentrations and it was barrages. It was the fox round of the barage that snaked off prematurely and is carved forever in the bark of the song. It is Battle Practices. It is Tactical Moves and Fire Plans. It is building Anti-Tank Ranges. It is Single Gun shoots and will you ever forget the

datum or digit. But the song it seems was composed after a session in Bob Allens to the illumination of guttering candles stuck in stout bottles. The derisory verse was meant as a sort of protest at the kind of grilling line officers were getting from the "School types" running the camp and putting them through their shooting tests which were followed up each evening at 1900 hours by a Conference at which the Director presided. The original verse was therefore a recantation of the usual clichés of criticism of the officers. The opening verse struck the tone and after that improvisation took over and has been going on ever since. The "idle singers of an empty day," as Pat says, started a tradition still carried on by other gunners while the weighty and profound axioms hammered on the Imaal anvil have been largely forgotten. Well, listen here till I tell you . . . Thanks, too, to Comdt. Michael Duggan who sent in a version of "You'll never be a Gapping, Zur." Not surprisingly for two fourteenth Battery men firing on the same zero lines, it was essentially the same as Hugh Gunns. As the fellow said: we could a tale unfold and ringaringaroo 'go deo i.'

. . . The same again and *Tempus fugit* (hard 'g')! Good luck, whatever.

## PPS

. . . The leaves of the trees there will whisper and the very dust of the roads will persist in insisting that there were other times and other souls. . . Our history is one of assimilation and integration of all our varieties of streams. The Emerald Isle is a magical catalyst of irresistible Hibernization. It is truly the Glen of 'Em All! Brigadier Frank G. MacMullen, DSO, has kindly got the RA Historical Society to make up the following article which appeared in "The Gunner Magazine" way back in 1942, and he surmised that it lies somewhere between the Boer and Great Wars, which was where we came in, so to speak. Thanks, Brigadier. Here it is on pure Barbarist zero lines:—

"Glen Imaal as a practice camp superceded Glenbeigh, on which I made a few remarks in a previous article, and was a great improvement on its predecessor in accessibility and instructional value. It was discovered and pressed on the authorities by that enthusiastic Irish gunner, the late Colonel C. D. Guinness, whose father-in-law, Lord Massy, had a grouse moor in the vicinity on the Wicklow mountains. 'Biddy,' as he was always called, while gazing sadly at the tails of the elusive grouse, would long to turn his twelve-bore into a field gun to add to the range and spread of its contents on discharge.

"Our mess at Glen Imaal was a building very similar in appearance and construction to the one

we had at Glenbeigh, but was of more purposeful origin. It had been built as an outlying barrack in a troubled period of Irish history, to deal with "rebellious" contingents operating from the hills, and confine them as far as possible to the wild region they occupied. For its original purpose it was very solidly constructed, with a massive wall enclosing a courtyard, which in our less disturbed time was transformed into a lawn and flower-garden, tended with assiduous love and care by the Camp Commandant, Colonel Stuart, who had charge of the camp for many years. Under his tender care the garden flourished amazingly.

"Glen Imaal had an annexe some two miles away which could accommodate one brigade, while itself it held another. So two brigades were in camp at the same time and shot on alternate days, their batteries following each other successively. The line of fire might be north and south, or vice-versa, the latter being considered the easier for hitting the target, as the light behind one added to its visibility. An additional difficulty in shooting south was that one always had to compete with a big angle of sight, rarely less than 2° 30' elevation, as in that direction we faced a high mountain. In the keen struggle for classification we would feel some sense of grievance if we got more targets in a southerly direction than were given the other brigade that was shooting with us.

"In my four years at Glen Imaal I never could achieve the award of a first prize, though in my three last efforts I came very near it. At a crucial moment a mist would descend from the mountains or the light would fade to obscurity, and I could only grope for my target, praying that I was getting somewhere near it. A second for fire effect, first for fire discipline, classification second, was my constant record. It was a disappointing result for the men of the battery, whose efficiency and efforts entitled them to the highest grade of distinction, but as we usually beat the other batteries of the brigade, canteen prestige was assured for a year.

"Being easily accessible to Dublin and the Curragh, Glen Imaal was occasionally favoured by visits from some of the big pots of the Army! One such occasion possessed more than ordinary interest. The C.R.A. in Ireland, General Sir William Knox, whose mission in life was to break down the barriers between the different arms of the service and bring them to a better realisation of each other's limitations and potentialities—a comprehension which in those days was sadly needed—devised a great artillery scheme at which he procured the presence of the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, Lord Grenfell, and many senior infantry officers. His chief difficulty was in get-

ners under fire and to practice flank observation. It is rarely used now; though Hart and Camera O.P.'s still presumably three-card-trick along in their old hazy 'now you see it, now you don't' ways. There were innovations of fulminating mercury to get anti-tank targets moving backwards and forwards. There were tragedies too.

The Glen was concentration on the gunnery job to the cloistered exclusion of the outside. There was some claustrophobia in the enclosed Glen and of course there was celibacy that made a sex symbol out of the cleavage of Split Rock. If Knapahaun ever became a phallic symbol it was only in a nether perjorative way to indicate ballistic contumely. Knapahaun is respected but not loved.

And the weather: when you could see Keadeen Mountain it was a sure sign of rain: and when you could not see it, it was raining. But this is an exaggeration of course. And the top of Lugnaquilla is overlain with mica schist which supports unexpected vegetation. That somewhat rare bird the Whinchat also comes to the Glen for its annual Summer Camp. The phrase "to have a chat with yourself" has no connection. Anxious Regimental Commanders waited at Coolmoney Gates for "Ere an auld rumble" to confirm their Movement Orders. Quads and autovacs and towing round the square, skids on six wheelers and drunken donkeys encountered en route were part of the hazards that curdled the cholesterol for commanders. The roars of him; and the bawls of him, as they used to say. And "Nigger" was the name of a dog.

But in spite of the resolve, to avoid using names (knowing that once started a nominal roll would not suffice) there are certain patches of evocation impervious to an anonymous approach beater and, nameless, they refuse to be raised. I remember Tommy Wickham in Larkhill earning a reputation for one hundred per cent timely accuracy and carrying the same meticulous survey up hill and down dale to the startling of the more slumberous sections of the Glen. And Bill Rea, in his element, point-to-pointing the concentrations across the valley to flush out the most awkward targets. The more tricky they were the more he revelled in it and his charisma inspired and motivated all and put sport into those famous down-to-earth Tactical Moves and Fire Plans of his. It would be idle to pretend that Larkhill did not leave its mark on the Glen or that there was not a rapport between the Salisbury gunnery techniques and the Glen Procedures. Licut. General Mulcahy did a course with the Royal Artillery early on and Major General Pat Hally and Colonel Bill Rea and Colonel Eamonn Shortall, Commandant Dan Farrell and recently Captain Jim Murphy did Gunnery Staff Courses there.

Major General Bill Donogh also did Survey Courses there and he imprinted his love on Leah alright. They are still going on. (Capatin O'Connor was the most recent Surveyor.)

Lt. Col. Maurice McCarthy did Ack-Courses there and Colonel J. H. Byrne and Colonel Arthur Dalton were also there. But to go further brings us outside the Glen and outside our scope.

We knew Major Pat Curran did a Course in Leavenworth but I think Major Charlie Trodden was the only one who brought Fort Sill to the Glen. Another fine artilleryist who made his own of the Glen was Dan Farrell. But now again we have spilled into nominal roll territory. There's no end to it. Sure the Competitions anecdotes are a tome to themselves. And fair play, *esprit de corps*, survived the cut and thrust of the competitions in the Glen. Indeed a case could be made that, if anything, it sharpened *esprit de corps* and fostered the type of ethos that's born in a crucible. If they inevitably introduced some of the meannesses of war, well war is a mean, dirty no-quarter business and although we are primarily in the peace keeping business, it remains ever on the sights as a possible end product. But it's been a long, long time as the Limerick-Kilkenny clash after thirty-three years reminds us. The leaves fall off, the buds renew, the spirit lives on . . . and the limbers go rolling along.

KEEP THEM ROLLING.

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### Postscript

The ink drops dripped in reminiscence continued to ripple out before this issue went to print at all. Mr. Hall ("40") remembers being pressured by nature into seeing 'the sun rise on the Wicklow Hills' and himself and the Camp Commandant Coolmoney mutually surprising one another. It's like Arabian nights: there are 1,001 vintage stories. But he'll tell you himself better.

Lt. Col. Pat McGann, co-author with René Van de Velde (níl sé san Airm anois), of the "You'll never be a Gapping, Zur" ditty recalls the protest songs of the period and another cant phrase going at the time (which did not then have its 'V' sign ballsbridge implications)—"Two fingers to the Gapping, Zur." As far as I recall it referred to a measuring out of saluting according to rank. Pat recalls that, contrary to the Klondyke theories that have since prevailed, promotion in the Artillery Corps was a much more difficult process than that obtaining in Infantry or Cavalry or whatever! This in many cases is true and contemporaries can show the marks and scars of their seniority operation at the drop of a

# The Artillery

By our Special Commissioner

(from An t-Oglách, June 16, 1923)

I HAVE been keenly interested in the Artillery ever since I had an 18 pounder as a travelling companion over the South of Ireland. Not that the gun in question was as pleasant a fellow wayfarer as it might have been. We had no limber in the accepted sense and had to tow it along behind a Lancia car and now and again it proved too much for the powers of the latter—especially when climbing mountain sides.

It has always fascinated me to see one of these guns in action—the clean, swift, precise movements of the gun crew are about the most workmanlike thing in soldiering. A few days ago I saw them practising in the Fifteen Acres, that section of the Phoenix Park which has been more famous than any other portion of it for the past hundred years or more.

Think of it! A couple of batteries of *Irish* Artillery practising in a place long sacred to the British Occupation and not so long since swarming with British soldiers in Khaki!

Of course they were not actually firing—these gunners of ours—but they were being put through the preliminary drill essential to good work in action. It was rather fine to see a battery sweeping over the grass, wheeling and circling, men and horses alike well worth looking at, all in the pink of physical fitness—and, then, at the command: “Halt! Action Rear!” to see in a twinkling the horses, unlimbered and moving off, leaving the gun ready for action and the crew in readiness behind the shields.

\* \* \*

The Artillery unit of our army is very young yet, perhaps the youngest corps in the service for it only came into existence in March last, but it is a lusty offspring and promises to develop into something of which we will be very proud in the near future.

It is small as yet both in the number of men and equipment, but it is determined to tolerate nothing but the best in both. In the case of the

men the corps stipulates that Drivers shall be at least 5ft. 4in. in height and Gunners 5ft. 8in. The men I saw in the Fifteen Acres were all long-service members of the Volunteers and they seemed to be taking to their new job as ducks take to water.

Colonel P. A. Mulcahy, O/C Artillery, told me that they were anxious that men who join the Corps shall join for a longer period than is customary at the moment in the other branches of the Army. In view of the special training that artillerymen have to go through it can be realised that at least five years' service would not be too much to insist on. At the same time it must be clear that the artillery provides an ideal training for any young Irishman with a bent for soldiering. Recruits need not have a previous knowledge of artillery work provided they are anxious to learn and are willing to “soldier” in the most thoroughgoing sense of the word.

At present the pay for the Artillery is the same as the corps pay in other units and will remain so until the Army Council passes additional corps pay.

\* \* \*

In the case of the officers young men of good education and good standing are welcome provided they are capable of being made into good artillerymen. They will have to submit to an entry examination which is by no means stiff, yet ensures a certain standard of education and mental alertness. It embraces General Knowledge, Mathematics, Geography, English Composition and a Report Paper. The examinations held up to the present reveal a weakness in Mathematics amongst candidates. But it is a purely non-technical examination.

Examinations will be held from time to time and the date of same will be duly notified in G.R.O. Officers from other units will be accepted only through examinations.

The training of the Corps is directly under

ting enough ammunition for his project, national economy being one obstacle, scepticism as to the instructional value of his plan another, and none could be spared from the ring courses of the batteries. But by dogged pertinacity he did succeed in getting a special allowance, not nearly as much as he wanted, but sufficient, he thought, to demonstrate the lessons he wished to impress on the spectators.

"The six batteries available did their utmost to make an impressive show, but owing to the paucity of ammunition, the 'drench of fire,' which our General demanded of us for the final scene, was only a mere splatter, very unlike the downpours we were, later, to witness, or feel, in the Great War.

"The pow-wow that, as usual, followed the event was an amazing episode. The leading file of the infantry, a very smart and distinguished old General of powerful personality, expressed astonishment and resentment that he and all his hard-worked officers should have been dragged so far to see such a childish performance. The least, in his view, that our General might have done was to give some reality to tactical formalities, and place his targets as intelligent infantrymen would dispose themselves. None of his officers would dream of exposing his men in the ridiculous way they were placed on the range, and our General in particular, and artillerymen generally, should learn something about infantry tactics before they presumed to teach the infantry its business.

"Old General Knox defended himself sturdily. He had particularly distinguished himself in South Africa, commanding troops of all arms, and in that respect had had considerably more experience than his present opponent. He stated that the lay-out of his targets was copied from an exhibition of infantry tactics he had seen in South Africa, which happened to present more difficulties to gunners than many others he had seen there: to have put his dummies, as the infantry had more usually disposed themselves, would have meant that all the targets at the disposal of the Camp Commandant, for the normal practice of the batteries, would have been blown to bits. His only object had been to demonstrate the terrific power of artillery fire, more especially now that batteries had been re-armed with the Q.F. gun, and the vital necessity for infantry to do what they could to protect themselves from its devastating effect, a necessity which he was by no means sure they fully realised. The discussion engendered considerable heat, and was heard with quiet enjoyment by battery commanders, who were more accustomed to finding themselves in the dock at camp pow-wows; it was terminated by Lord Grenfell with some soothing non-committal observations.

"A well-known gunner of those days, Major

Robert Ellice, brought his battery annually to Glen Imaal while I was there. He always arrived in a state of open hostility to the camp staff, and no efforts of appeasement on their part could modify his attitude. His classification award was not usually high, a fact he would ascribe to the enmity and ineptitude of the camp authorities, so one year, more than usually stung to anger, he had a parting shot at them. In his range report, under the heading 'Battery Commander's Remarks,' he wrote: 'I consider that more attention should be paid to F.A.T., page x, para y.' The staff, looking up this extract from the drill-book, which they feared might have escaped their notice, found that it was a remark in the preface that the instructions in the book were to be taken as general principles and not as rigid rules of conduct. Our friend 'Bobby' missed the effect of his Parthian shot as he was far on his road to Fermoy before it reached its mark.

"The School of Gunnery kept its eye on our proceedings at Glen Imaal, though inclined to regard us as only a poor relation of the practice camps in England. Its representative while I was there, Major Sydney Metcalfe, was a genial guide and comforter to any battery commanders requiring his services, and a broad-minded teacher of artillery science within the limits imposed on him by the school authorities." \*

\* Lt. Col. C. O. Head, D.S.O., wrote this Account between 1904-1910. An Irishman, he saw service with the Royal Artillery in Ireland, England, India and China.

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# Life in an A.A. Outpost 1939-1946

Capt. Brian F. Maguire (Retd.)

AN air of suspense and expectancy pervaded McKee Barracks, Dublin, on the Sunday morning of September 3rd, 1939. It was a humid day, and very heavy rain was falling when, at 11.00 a.m. Neville Chamberlain declared, in cool, clipped tones, that Great Britain was at war with Germany. A few minutes later, the equally cool and clipped tones of "The Bann" informed the Ack Ack Volunteer Reservists that, though we were being released from Annual Training, we would soon be with them again.

So began an eventful seven years of wartime service. In our youthful minds and bodies, there was no realisation of participation in history in the making in all the activity involved in closing ranks with the Regular Army. If motivation (an unlikely word in those days) is to be sought, however, put it down to a mixture of high spirit of adventure, and a pure and ready patriotism/nationalism (in all the varying degrees of today's pundits). How otherwise can be explained the voluntary relinquishment of employment by so many thousands, who then thought the defence of the country was of prime importance. There were no "splinter groups" in those days, so the one thought in all minds was to be with the Army (albeit the Air Corps and embryonic Navy therein included).

Hectic months were to follow, during which the swelling thousands of new recruits willingly (let us say so for the majority, anyway) went through fiercely intense training production lines and, to the amazement of many a prematurely greying Sergeant-Major, emerged as passably stalwart soldiers. Full many a sweating Sergeant, however, found himself smiling benignly on his shining protégés and felt belated gratitude for the slinness of his girth when he reflected on his once firm rotundity.

In Ack Ack circles, of necessity, there was a slightly higher degree in the intensity of training. For, as was gleaned day by day from the European War, aerial bombardment was the first tactic of an invading army. To a detached, uninitiated observer, though, AA operations must

have sounded like organised gibberish. "Up-a-Half"; "Left Two"; "Vertical Steady" "Lateral Steady" may now appear to be strange and wondrous terms; and who, in the know, can forget the "Bacon Slicer" and the "Berum"; but they were bread (of the thickest), butter (of the sparest) and jam (of homemade variety only) to Ack Ack Officers and Gunners of those seemingly far-off days. Irrepressibly, too, there was always that secret weapon of the Outposts — "Gunga Dinn."

With "trained soldiers" being produced at "double-time," full use was soon made of a wealth of soldierly talent. Indeed, far from being embarrassed by its riches, the Army speedily dispensed its largesse far and wide throughout the country. Well up the list of top priorities was the siting of outposts for the Ack Ack defence of Dublin city. Those "favoured" with postings to such camps were so buoyed-up by the still hard-blowing air of suspense and expectancy, that they gave little thought—initially—to the mud and the hardship. The capital had to be defended (come Allied or German bomber) and, anyway, life in the outpost had a novelty not to be found in barracks. Nevertheless, it quickly became apparent that camp-life could be, and was in truth, very rude and very earnest.

Duties were frequent (Gunners were "off" one day in three, and Officers were "on" one day in three) so week-end passes became things of happy memory, while a full night's sleep became such a rarity that, when experienced, it was treasured and recollected with a glow through many disturbed and frostily bitter wintry nights. Nightly, from midnight, German squadrons droned by Dublin on bombing missions over Britain. These were so regular, in fact, that time-pieces could be checked and set by them.

There were long periods when you did not "go to bed," in the accepted sense — you just "dossed-down." With tunic, slacks and greatcoat as additional covering on the bed, and the "gumboots" at hand on the floor, you "slept" in underclothes and shirt. Consequently, when the



Captain Caulfield, who is assisted by a capable staff of N.C.O.'s including a gunnery instructor and a rough-riding instructor.

\* \* \*

So far the young Corps possesses just a number of 18 pounders and some French Hotchkiss guns. The latter probably will be used in connection with coastal work.

When Colonel Mulcahy took over command of the Corps on the 23rd March last, there were a number of 18 pounders scattered over the country. They were all brought to the Ordnance workshops and thoroughly overhauled by the staff there. The first completely overhauled and refurbished gun was delivered from the Ordnance to the Artillery as recently as 7th May, and was the first to be used for instructional purposes.



## Letters to the Editor

Army Headquarters  
Parkgate.  
30th November, 1973.

Editor,  
AN COSANTOIR,  
Army Headquarters,  
Parkgate,  
Dublin.

Dear Sir,

Congratulations to the 'Gunnery' for partial lifting the lid, in the November issue of AN COSANTOIR, and also to you, Mr. Editor, for the continuing improvement in our Defence Journal.

When the lid is fully ripped off 'the black box' I hope the history of the Field Branch Artillery during the glorious years of 1943/46 will be fully covered.

Lt-Gen. P. A. Mulcahy in his 'At the beginning' refers to the Guns which were distributed throughout the Commands prior to the formation of the Artillery Corps in 1923. One such Gun (Ordnance QF 18 Pdr MK 11 No. 10756) was handed over to the National Army by the British and given to Capt. J. C. (Johnny) Doyle of the Ordnance Corps in June, 1922. Capt. Doyle, who was i/c Gun in the Four Courts operation on 28-6-22, maintained to the writer, that he was the first 'Artillery man' in the National Army. This was undoubtedly correct as the Artillery Corps was NOT formed until 1923. Johnny's Gun drills were confined to pointing the Gun in the general direction of the target, and when the target could be seen through

the rear of the barrel, breech open, a round was loaded and fired. He was never known to miss.

Johnny and his Gun took part in three operations as recorded in the official Gun History Sheet.

28-6-22	Four Courts operation.	375 Rounds fired.
4-7-22	Millmount Drogheda	40 Rounds fired.
8-8-22	Passage West Cork	25 Rounds fired.

This Gun was NOT fired again until the first Artillery Corps shoot in the Glen of Imaal on 1-9-25 when 6 rounds were fired under the control of Capt. Garret Brennan, Comdt. Johnny Doyle died in the summer of 1970. His name should be recorded amongst the 'greats' of our short Corps history to provide that important link between 1922 and 1923.

I. P. NOONE, Colonel.  
DMPC & PM.

P.S.—In my time the 4.5 Howitzer was instantly recognisable—NOT so now

### THE IRISH SWORD—vol. XI. Summer, 1973. No. 42.

The articles in this number of the journal of the Military History Society of Ireland are concerned mainly with the eighteenth century. Up to the middle of that century Frank Ford remarks in the opening sentence of his interesting study, "The Royal Irish Artillery, 1755-1801," Ireland "had her own Parliament in College Green, with a War Office in Dublin Castle, but no Artillery Corps." This state of affairs was ended in 1755 when an artillery company was formed. George III graciously permitted the title 'Royal Irish Regiment of Artillery' and appointed the Earl of Kildare to be its first Colonel-in-Chief. In the years that followed companies of the regiment saw service in Europe, and took part in wresting Martinique, Guadaloupe and St. Lucia from the enemy but "yellow fever caused more deaths than the French." At home, the gunners played a less perilous if undistinguished part in aid of the civil power. In 1796, for instance, "a detachment with six field-guns, marched from the barracks in the Lower Castle-Yard for the Curragh of Kildare, in order to assist the High Sheriff of the county in prostrating the numerous cabins that had been illegally built on the common." The insurgents of 1798 proved to be more formidable targets. There was no shortage of action, steel and blood in June of that year in Wexford when Irishmen of a different persuasion stormed the guns, nor in August at Castlebar when grenadiers of the French 70th Demi-Brigade sabred the gun crews. One of the results of the Union was the merging of the Irish Regiment with the British Royal Artillery. Other articles: "John Barnwell and Colonial South Carolina"—Patrick Melvin; "Wolfe Tone's Provost Prison"—Comdt. P. D. O'Donnell; "James Huston, a Forgotten Irish-American Patriot"—Monsignor Patrick O'Flaherty.

packs of rationed cigarettes being offered as prizes.

Apart from the normal fatigue duties, an infrequently recurring exercise was the moving and digging of dry latrines. Heaven help the innocent beating his hazardous path in answer to a call of nature (which so frequently comes in the dark of night), and who was unaware of the change in "location."

For everyone involved with "Life in an AA Outpost," a most important recollection must surely be "The Night of the North Strand Bombing." In fact, it immediately became a reference date: things had either happened before, on, or after the "Night of . . ." That evening began, and went on through the early stages of "Air Raid Message Red," just like all the many other such nights. Ammunition was prepared, gun crews were ready and posts were manned. It was not long, however, till it was realised that there was something very different happening. Instead of the heavy by-passing drone of waves of bombers, the aircraft sounds seemed to be concentrating in the skies over and around Dublin. Then, too, the searchlight posts began to participate in these preliminaries. Emphasising the change from other "normal" nights, the reports from Air Defence Control carried information that seemed to indicate a developing threat to the city. They reported the incoming passage of individual aircraft along the coast, over the bay, and from inland directions. Some of the planes were being picked out by the searchlights—their pointing fingers flicking across and stubbing at dark fuselages of German aircraft.

Coolly, calmly, the Ack Ack defences of Dublin, undoubtedly limited, prepared for action. Height-finders selected illuminated targets; predictors sent their predictions of future positions by electric cables to the guns; gun dials were aligned; fuses were set on shells; the guns, on command, opened fire—and the planes dropped bombs. All round the city guns (3.7" Mediums mostly, but even 40 mm Bofors participated) were hurling shells skywards in defence of the city.

The "action" did not last long. It was short and severe—and tragic, as far as Dublin's citizens were concerned. Some were dead, others were injured and a row of houses on the North Strand was demolished. Units of the L.D.F. and A.R.P. worked their fingers to the bone in extricating people from the rubble; and, by daylight, stunned Dubliners had an inkling of what war, through aerial bombardment, could do to a city. Though the dreaded possibility of a recurrence of that night was always there, it did not, in fact, occur.

Annual Camp in "Gormier" seemed unreal after that. Here, every year, each outpost spent a period being examined and tested in the handling and use of its Ack Ack weapons and instru-

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alarm sounded, you were clothed and out of the door, almost before regaining full consciousness. The bitter cold soon had you shivering awake, however. Sleep-heavy eyelids helped in becoming accustomed to the dark, and all activity was jerkily automatic. Ammunition was prepared, gun manned and command-post "staffed" under furtive stabs of torchlight, and a weary silence, lined with some feelings of expectancy, enveloped the camp. Gun muzzles pointed skywards in the general direction of sounds of aircraft. Nothing could be seen, however, either in black, star-spotted, or murky, overcast skies.

Would the searchlight batteries come on and, with silvered beams, point to an aircraft, so that the guns could crumpily express their displeasure at this invasion of Irish sky-space? No, the darkness of the heavens remained unbroken, leaving a sense of frustration. Who and what was up there? Suddenly, on one such night, a brilliant burst of light appeared for a moment at ground level, and then came the round, booming sound of an explosion. With an automatic, almost reflex action, the guns swung in that direction but, as no aircraft was illuminated, they had to remain silent.

That was the night that a bomb was dropped near the Synagogue on the South Circular Road, resulting in two houses being demolished. Though there were many similar such nights, the dropping of bombs was only a rare occurrence. Winter gave way to spring, then summer, and, in that the nights were warmer and less dark, the con-

stant disturbance of sleep became more endurable.

The odd bomb was dropped now and then, but in a rather aimless way, with no real design or apparent objective about them. Though the phlegmatic calm of McKee Barracks and G.H.Q. was rudely shattered during one never-to-be-forgotten night, when a bomb fell near the pond in the Phoenix Park. As soon as information was available, Air Defence Control would report the location of the drops. That night, the first report stated that the Zoo had been bombed, which news gave rise to tantalizing visions of lions and tigers (somewhat upset about their loss of sleep) stalking unsuspecting prey in the People's Gardens and/or The Hollow.

Keeping up morale in outposts, naturally, was a matter of urgency. So, whereas games of chance in the billets were frowned on, those where life and limb were at risk were actively encouraged. There were inter-billet competitions in hurling, football, soccer and basket ball. Some intrepid souls even went so far as to devise a species of basket ball, which was played with a junior-sized Rugby ball: with biting, kicking and gouging out your opponent's eyes the only things barred.

In contrast, the dark-early winter evenings were less active. In those pre-TV days, the radio was the only source of musical and cultural entertainment. Sets were seldom, if ever, switched off: while "Question Times" were organised for the Guardroom on Sunday nights, with precious



Volunteers exercising in McKee Bks., Dublin in 1938. The gun is a 3" 20 cwt. Anti-Aircraft.

## 'SCAN' (The Late C/S J. F. Scanlon)

Capt. H. W. Thompson (Retd.)

THE November 1973 issue of AN COSANTOIR, in the article on Coast Defence Artillery, by Comdt. J. E. Dawson and Lieut. C. Lalor, reference is made to the Dunboy Trophy, designed by Capt. Kevin Danaher and executed by C/S Scanlon.

Before fiery gunner-types jump down the neck of a mere foot-soldier, may I set forth my meagre qualifications for writing about 'Scan': Apart from the rather loose tie of shared Army Service, we were fellow-townsmen of Kildare for many years, and 'Scan' did 'jobs' for me — both official and private.

Many's the yarn we had in his sanctum—the tiffy's shop in Kildare Barracks—while he worked over his beloved South Bend lathe — the pride and joy of his life. I must admit I never heard him called 'Tiffy Scan'; in my hearing it was either 'The Tiffy' or 'Scan,' and he answered promptly to the latter. What is important is the fact that he was both Senior Artificer and a craftsman of the very highest quality.

The beautiful Dunboy Trophy was one of two he built. The other was 'McGee's Gun,' named for the famous action in which Gunner McGee was reputed to have supported the axle-tree of his gun on his shoulders when the wheel was broken. I believe the designer was once again Kevin Danaher, and that the trophy is awarded for competition amongst the Field Regiments, but am not quite sure; there must be countless gunners to tell us.

This Trophy is even more a work of art than the Dunboy, and was last on public exhibition in the RDS at the recent Army School of Music celebrations. For months after its completion

'Scan' agonised over the method of breaking the wheel: He had made the model up complete first for added realism, and he worked out his problem by talking about it to ignoramuses like myself. Eventually he did the deed with the excellent results to be seen, but I cannot recall how he did it.

The only complete 6-pdr. Anti-Tank Platoon in the Army was formed in the Sp. Coy. of the 3rd Infantry Battalion (Lt.-Col. C. E. O'Doherty) in 1948, and on the transfer of Capt. (now Col.) Pearse Barry to other duties I had the honour to command it. I succeeded 'through channels' in obtaining the services of 'Scan' for certain aspects of training, and all the instruction on maintenance and mechanism was given by him. He also attended, as required by Standing Orders, with his little black bag, at all our shoots in the Glen. As a round-off to these services 'Scan' prepared and mounted the case of the first round fired in this country, which still hangs in the hall of the Battalion Mess.

'Scan' had no difficulty in getting a key job in an engineering firm when he left the Army after a lifetime of service. It was all the greater tragedy when a stroke rendered him almost helpless. However, it can be truly said that Ney fought no grimmer action down the Smolensk Road than 'Scan' mounted against his dreadful disability. His old comrades and fellow-townspersons looked helplessly on as he fought that last, fore-doomed battle.

Yes—quite a chap was 'Scan.' I am proud to salute his memory.



### AN O/400 ALIGHTS ON THE SEA

AN O/400 Handley Page aeroplane, Serial No. J2259 belonging to the Royal Air Force, had a forced-descent in the Irish Sea on Friday, 17th December, 1920. The machine was flying from Chester to Ireland via Holyhead, and shortly after leaving the coast engine trouble developed.

The crew were taken off by the Elder-Dempster liner ITAJAKY. Their names were: Flying Officer J. J. Williamson, AFC, pilot; Flying Officer R. H. Haworth Booth, DFC, navigator; Airmen Burrows and Worsley, and the wireless operator Airman H. M. Aspen.

ments. These tests were carried out under the strictest supervision and control: with meticulous attention being paid to safety, though the guns, pointing seawards at all times, fired only at towed targets. Was it a dream that these same men were sometimes called on to fire at real targets over Dublin City? Gormanston, however, was a camp from camp (even without Butlins), and every opportunity to relax, with sun and sea to be enjoyed, was availed of to the full. Those there were, though, who found certain hostelries in Laytown and Bettystown too irresistible to ignore. The resultant dull, and hard to endure mornings, however, were frequently enlivened by "J.J." ordering P.T. for all Officers at 06.30 hours!

One Saturday morning, an American "Flying Fortress" bomber came from a northeasterly direction, and proceeded to fly over and around Dublin. As was customary, the outposts were alerted and guns were manned; the gun dials were aligned and breaths were held expectantly. What would the American bomber do? In fact, what was it doing over Dublin? Eventually, some thirty minutes later, one outpost—not a hundred miles from the Park—decided to fire a warning round. Instantly, the plane "homed in" on Dublin Airport, where the pilot expressed his indignation about being fired on. When asked what he was doing over a neutral city, his incredible reply was that he was on a navigation training flight from Belfast, did not know where he was and was looking for somewhere to land! Subsequently a G.H.Q. directive indicated that no action was to be taken against Allied aircraft, unless their encroachment had an obviously hostile intent.

From then on Allied aircraft enjoyed the free-

dom of the skies over Dublin, and their flights over the city were fairly frequent. Memories of them include watching a low-flying Short Sterling Bomber following the line of the Liffey, like a homing pigeon, from Howth upriver, and advice being received to withhold fire in case the plane was in trouble. On another occasion, a Bristol Bomber romped around over Dublin, and flew quite low over one particular outpost. The camp personnel, standing by in action positions, watched with feelings of some frustration as the plane circled in a wide bank, with its crew waving gaily and nonchalantly.

Without research, and being culled from memory only, these reminiscences must necessarily appear sketchy. However, thirty years is a long span—half a lifetime really—and the facility to remember does seem to dull with age! At the same time, those were memorable days! days of shared hardship, and of wonderful comradeship, that spawned soldiers of the highest calibre. Life was rough, perhaps, and hard, with rationing not helping in any way to make life more comfortable. Nevertheless, that general sharing of life's difficulties germinated a regard for Army life that has proved to be everlasting.

It must be said, too, that the nation had a heartfelt gratitude at being spared the full horror of an all-out war, though, in these affluent times, it is probably difficult to realise how close Ireland was to war at that time. It must be difficult, too, to visualize the sense of danger that was created by the sounds of aircraft—a dreaded feeling, in fact, that civilians continued to experience for some years. Nowadays, of course, the drone or whine of aircraft probably only evokes visions of warm climes and sunlit beaches!

Long may such visions continue to be evoked!



### COWS GIVE HEAT AND LIGHT TOO

**C**OWS give us milk, true, but they also give us heat and light. One can see this phenomenon in Alathoor, a village about 25 km. from Trivandrum.

A progressive farmer, Shri M. N. Krishna Pillai, has a herd of 12 pedigree milch cattle in his farm. The cattle give him light for his house and farmyard and heat for his kitchen hearth.

As one enters his modest farm house after the sunset, a hundred candle power incandescent lamp in the front verandah spreads bright light all over, including the farmyard. In the kitchen blue flames cook his dinner. His house is not electrified. Where does he get the heat and light from?

In the background there is a masonry cow-dung pit. A polythene pipe from a cylindrical tank is taken to his house. This simple arrangement is a gas plant producing methane and hydrogen, ready for use in the special burners and incandescent lamps.

To work the gas plant, the daily dung collections of six cows and water are the only raw materials required. The plant, costing Rs. 3,000/-. was built on the model suggested by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The gas is sufficient for the entire lighting and cooking purposes of Shri Pillai's six-member household and an equal number of farm labourers.—A. P. Som.

("Current Events" [India].)

# "Saint Barbara of the Gunners"

Capt. Patrick MacDonald, R.O.

*"They are firing, we are falling, and the  
red skies rend and shiver us,  
Barbara, Barbara, we may not loose a  
breath—  
Be at the bursting doors of doom, and  
in the dark deliver us  
Who loosen the last window on the sun  
of sudden death."*

THE statue of St. Barbara that is now such a familiar sight in the Gunners' Headquarters, Dún Mhig Aoidh, Kildare, occupying the dominant position it does inside the main entrance, was erected in 1954.

Barbara, as she is familiarly known, stands on a pedestal made in the form of a tower and holds a chalice surmounted by the Sacred Host. The tower is flanked by two small cannon. The statue itself, the work of Arthur Breen of Dublin, is in Carlow lime stone, while the pedestal is made of Wicklow granite.

All units of the Corps (including F.C.A. personnel) subscribed generously and enthusiastically when the statue was first suggested.

\* \* \*

According to legend, Saint Barbara was born in Heliopolis (Egypt) in the third century A.D. Her father, a rich nobleman, was a heathen.

While he was away on a journey, Barbara heard of a man who was preaching a new religion. This was a priest called Origen, from Alexandria.

On his return home her father, who was violently anti-Christian, was enraged on discovering that Barbara had become a Christian. At first he tried to persuade her to renounce her Faith, but stubbornly she refused.

Barbara prayed for courage, but her father then decided to kill her and with his own sword beheaded her. Later he himself was killed by lightning.

The feast of St. Barbara, Virgin and Martyr, was celebrated by the universal Church until recently on December 4th.

## Heaven's Artillery

When Artillery generally came into use St. Barbara was generally recognised as its Patroness, because of the lightning (Heaven's artillery), which caused her father's death and because the gunner's job was regarded as being dangerous. With the approval of the Church St. Barbara became the particular protector of Artillerymen in all European countries, notably Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Later, she was also honoured by the Artillerymen of Brazil, Bolivia and Ecuador.

Many books have been written through the centuries on the devotion of the Artillery of various armies to St. Barbara, in particular the Spanish, Italian and German. The Pope's Artillery in Rome had special devotion to her, and had a special shrine erected to her in their barracks, the Castel Sant' Angelo. They held special celebrations on her Feast and this tradition was continued by the Italian Army, when they occupied this barracks.

It is recorded that King Charles V issued an order in 1554 to the Artillery Schools in Bruges and Sicily that in future when a ball was loaded into the muzzle of the gun, the gunner should make the Sign of the Cross on the muzzle and invoke the protection of St. Barbara (not least against the danger of the gun exploding!)

## Famous Paintings

St. Barbara is depicted in many famous paintings, the best-known of which is that by Palma Vecchio, which forms the design of the centre panel over the altar of St. Maria Formosa in Venice.

Other famous artists who produced paintings of St. Barbara include Van Eyck, Holbein, Rubens, Rosselli and Pinetoricchio. In many of these paintings she is shown holding a chalice surmounted by the Sacred Host.

\* \* \*

Since this article was first published in An COSANTOIR in 1954, shortly after the blessing of

the statue, an authenticated first-class relic of St. Barbara was given to the late Fr. C. Crean, then Head Chaplain, by a British Army Ordnance major who had received it from the Irish wife of another British Officer. Unfortunately, when the writer questioned Fr. Crean on this matter a few years after the presentation, the latter was unable to recall the identity of either of the two people involved.

A few years ago Barbara was demoted by the Church in so far as she was removed from the Church Calendar, on the grounds that there was no documentary evidence to support her.

The writer has been unable to obtain an explanation of the apparent conflict between these two incidents.

Be that as it may, he fervently hopes, like many another gunner, that Barbara will on the day be on duty "at the bursting doors of doom and in the dark deliver us."

\* \* \*

*"The touch and the tornado; all our guns  
give tongue together,  
St. Barbara for the gunnery and God defend  
the right,  
They are stopped and gapped and battered  
as we blast away the weather.  
Building window upon window to our Lady  
of the Light.  
For the light is come on Liberty, her foes  
are falling, falling.  
They are reeling, they are running, as the  
shameful years have run,*

*She is risen for all the humble, she has  
heard the conquered calling,  
St. Barbara of the Gunners, with her hand  
upon the gun."*

(The opening and closing verses are extracts from G. K. Chesterton's "Ballad of St. Barbara.")

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### MENTAL HYGIENE COMMAND CONSULTATION PROGRAMME AT AN ARMY TRAINING CENTRE

SIGNIFICANT differences exist between civilian and military psychiatry. In civilian practice, patients tend to minimise psychiatric symptomatology, reluctant to be labelled deviant; but, in the military, many patients maximise symptoms for secondary gains. These may range from avoidance of work or combat to discharge.

—"Military Medicine" (US).

# What the Papers Notice

## Over the Sticks

Congratulations to Colonel Martin O'Brien, Lieut. Col. Jim Crowley, Lieut. Col. Ted Russell, Comdts. Pat Lane, John Morgan, Art Riordan, John Hamill and to Lieut. Commander Liam Smith (who gave a fresh dimension to research on the Battle of Kinsale once upon a time) on their promotions. Promotions have in addition, a scarcity value. "Gain Promotion" is the *Irish Times* phraseology. Leaving the Army Game dressing room to participate in the different battle of life in "civvy" street is Commandant Colm Brown, DSM, who will head the auctioneering division of D. Myles Ltd., Drogheda, and Captain Michael Gillespie who after completing his stint along the banks of the Suez Canal and in Damascus will take up an appointment in the diamond industry in sunny South Africa. On taking this step which is (or should be) another rung in the structural ladder of career planning we wish them both the very best of good fortune.

\* \* \*

## Gunners

As the gunners are still firing in this issue it may not yet be safe to pop up our heads. The "Star" Shell perhaps were fired by those ardent apostles of "the Corps," Terry O'Sullivan and Seamus Kelly. They keep burning bright with a spirit of eternal youth on *esprit-de-corps* that the toll of time might otherwise have pattered down to a toothless flicker spluttering in lack-lustre fat and middle aged "spread." More power to their collective elbows.

Terr's "Depression" story in particular seems to have caught everybody's fancy with its "Hole in Buck It" slant. And another venerable writes in requesting a Reunion of the 1943 VI F.A. Regiment in the Hib Schools. He too opens Lady Chatterleys letters. Someone should tell these artillerymen that Effin is the name of a creamery in County Limerick or that Termnfeekin is in Louth. All in the *Evening Press*.

Talking about the Hib Schools, God be with the days before those cushy 1943 days of singing "The Moon comes over Madison Square," drawing the veil gently over a sleeping bar and digging into early morning duck-in-the-rough. A

couple of years before officers were all on first parade where Major Luke Hegarty (God love him) tested the Officers Caps for oil and alignment.

\* \* \*

## Clothes Shortage

The papers made a meal of the effect this has on recruiting. The eye-catching "Join Today's Army" ad provided effective battery fire.

\* \* \*

## New Panhards

The *Herald* has a "Golden Heights" picture (without the blood and burst-ups) of the Cavalry Corps demonstration in the Glen of the new Panhard armoured cars capability of knocking out a tank.

\* \* \*

## Herzliches Willkommen!

The *Irish Press* pictures Dr. Rudolf Fechter, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, inspecting a guard of honour under Lieut. P. O'Sullivan when he presented his letter of credence to the President, Mr. Childers, at Arus an Uachtaráin.

\* \* \*

## Griffith

The *Sunday Press* reports that Griffith Barracks has given accommodation for a classroom for mildly and moderately mentally handicapped children. The billet was converted into a specially designed classroom by St. Michael's House Training Centre. By the way Commandant Michael O'Farrell, the well known Offalyman, has left the Army to devote himself full time to the care and administration of the mentally handicapped. After a highly successful Army career which he ended while his star was very much in the ascendancy we wish Commandant O'Farrell all the very best of good luck for his new and laudable mission.

\* \* \*

## Blazes

Baldonnel, by kind courtesy of Lieut. Colonel Treacey, the officer commanding, was the focus of a combined exercise between his airmen and



the Dublin Auxiliary Fire Service of Civil Defence.

\* \* \*

### Doggone!

A *Herald* picture shows Pte. Denner handing over Darragh, a three months old wolfhound, on behalf of the Eastern Command to President Childers.

\* \* \*

### The Boyne

The *Independent* reports Gardai and armed troops working together with permanent cordons on the Boyne bridges indicating how essential close co-operation is between the sister Security services.

\* \* \*

### Tape Cutting

The *Cork Examiner* put a lens on Colonel Thomas McDonald, OC, Southern Command, assisted by Lt. Col. James A. McMahon, OC, 4th Bait and Collins Barracks cutting the tape to officially open a new sports pavilion.

\* \* \*

### Going Places

The *Irish Independent's* caption refers to a group of "the soldiers most likely to succeed" when twenty-eight graduates of the Command and Staff School received Certificates of Graduation from the Chief of Staff, Major General T. L. O'Carroll. The picture includes the School Staff, who presumably are also embraced by the pace-setting caption.

The use of the term "graduate" in this connection needs to be upped from its present whistling-in-the-wing status. This can only be done when our Defence schools are given their proper structural status and place within the Irish Educational system as a whole, instead of coming under "also" or "afterthought" shrouded headings.

Those who graduated included Mick Hipwell, the rugby international now serving as a flying instructor in the Air Corps, and Capts Joe Young of Galway and Jim Harold of Galway, former footballers. Absent were Captain Gerry Mulrooney, who is serving in the Middle East, and Comdt. Ned Campion who was competing in an equestrian event in Holland. It's a small world.

\* \* \*

### Niamba

The *Irish Press* poses the question if this is the last separate salute to the Niamba ten. The photo shows Lieut.-Col. Louis Hogan (who was OC A Company 33rd Battalion in the Congo at the time) accompanying relatives of the victims after the Mass for them in Cathal Brugha Barracks.

One of the NCOs who organised the remembrance ceremony over the years is reported as remarking "It is probably the last time. Next year there are plans for a special day to remember all the dead but, somehow, we'll manage a special visit to their graves."

\* \* \*

### Mercy Flights

Tullamore Notes in the *Midland Tribune* reports an Army helicopter in a mercy flight from the County Hospital, Tullamore, to Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital.

Kieran Kelly, the sculptor, designed and unveiled the official Helicopter Flight crest at Casement aerodrome. The symbol depicts life and is of Egyptian origin.

\* \* \*

### Mid East

Irish troops have moved in to their action stations in the Suez Canal area to carry out their arduous Peace Keeping mission. Alan Bestic in the *People* had the height of praise for successive Irish contingents in Cyprus. Both Turks and Greeks want them back there. That's a good sign of a job well done. The very best of luck to them for 1974 in their present between-the-two tricky positions. They have what it takes to be good soldiers.

\* \* \*

### Not Mickey Mouse

The *Independent* relays the *London Times* report of a new healthy respect for the modern Irish soldier. But surely statistics and V.C.s in their own regular army through the years should have told them that already. There is a point however that now we are getting the tools to do a job. The trade itself comes natural. And nowadays Irishmen take for granted pride in their own island country with all its different traditions. It was not ever so but today Geoffrey Godsell is able to report in the *Christian Science Monitor* how well equipped Ireland is to work in the United Nations peace keeping forces.

\* \* \*

### Swallow this

The *Irish People* takes a swipe at Married Quarters conditions.

\* \* \*

### Irish Merchant Seamen

The *Irish Press* pictured after the Mass in City Quay Church, Dublin, for Irish merchant seamen who lost their lives during the Second World War, the British Ambassador, Sir Arthur Galsworthy, and the Chief of Staff, Major General T. L. O'Carroll and Mrs. O'Carroll.

## Stories

Quidnunc reports some salty memories of Commodore T. McKenna of the Naval Service at a meeting of the Naval Association at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, which recalls that it was Tony McClafferty (Commandant to you!) who asked the late Colonel Busty McCabe—a then epitome of the sometimes apart Regular Officer—if he were an Emergency Officer thereby causing some swellings of indignation and outraged *armour propre*.

\* \* \*

## FCA Presentations

The *Cork Examiner* pictures presentations on behalf of the 23rd Battalion FCA being made in Collins Barracks (Cork, of course).

\* \* \*

## Good Luck Denis

Col. T. Ryan, Director of the Cavalry Corps, presented an antique drum table on behalf of officer friends in the Corps to a “fresh and well” looking Comdt. Denis Quinn after 39 years service with the Cavalry Corps. That’s a lot of service! Also in the *Independent* picture are Lieut. Col. P. Lavelle and the Command OC, Col. C. J. Burke. Unseen is another Cavalryman, Captain Aidan Pender, Editor of the *Independent*. Bon voyage in the shoals of civvy life, Denis, auld son. Denis was one of the most popular officers, not alone in the cloisters of the Cavalry Corps, but throughout the Army.

\* \* \*

## A half-century ago

In January, 1923, a second class Private earned the princely sum of one half-crown (2s. 6d. or 12½ new pence to the forgetful or the young). A “Solid Tyred Utility Car,” however, cost a mere £157 10s.

\* \* \*

Elected treasurer of Limerick Command AAA on January 25, 1924, was Comdt. James Hannon, the late and well remembered marksman who became OC 1 Brigade in Clonmel and Limerick.

## Better Conditions

Conditions in the Army were improving and would further improve, Col. C. J. Burke, OC of the Curragh Command, told No. 10 Platoon A company of the Third Infantry Battalion after their passing out parade at James Stephens Barracks, Kilkenny

\* \* \*

## Slua Muiri

The *Press* (Andrew Bushe) writes of a new role of Navy Reservists when they will be revived and given an active role within the Defence Force structure.

\* \* \*

## Fuel's Pardon

Oil be seeing you. During the Emergency the Army cut its own turf. Móna meant more than a girl's name. Freeze or duck became a vogue slogan. But Europe was great before oil was ever heard of. If the energy to locomote the First Industrial Revolution was coal and for the second Industrial Revolution was electricity and chemistry inventive Europe will inevitably provide the energy for the Third Industrial Revolution which might embrace refertilising the oil-drained dry Sahara. So let ye keep yere inventive thinking caps on. In dem auld dimergency years already referred to, Commandant Nick (Anchors Aweigh) Healy of the Corps of Engineers modified his car to be energised by a Heath Robinsonish carbon contraption. But it went and Nick was mobile while it was Shanks Mare for the scoffers. Outflank the oil is the answer.

—\*~\*~\*—

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## Reverie

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Chess, always regarded as a game to appeal to the military mind, was a popular pastime in the early years of the Army as can be assessed by the fact that two full pages of *An t-Oglac* were given to reporting the activities of the GHQ Chess Club.

\* \* \*

At the GHQ Ball “The genial QMG was the most capable exponent of the Irish Dances.” (Thereby proving that quartermastering and Irish Culture are synonymous—another point for the Goldsmith case.)

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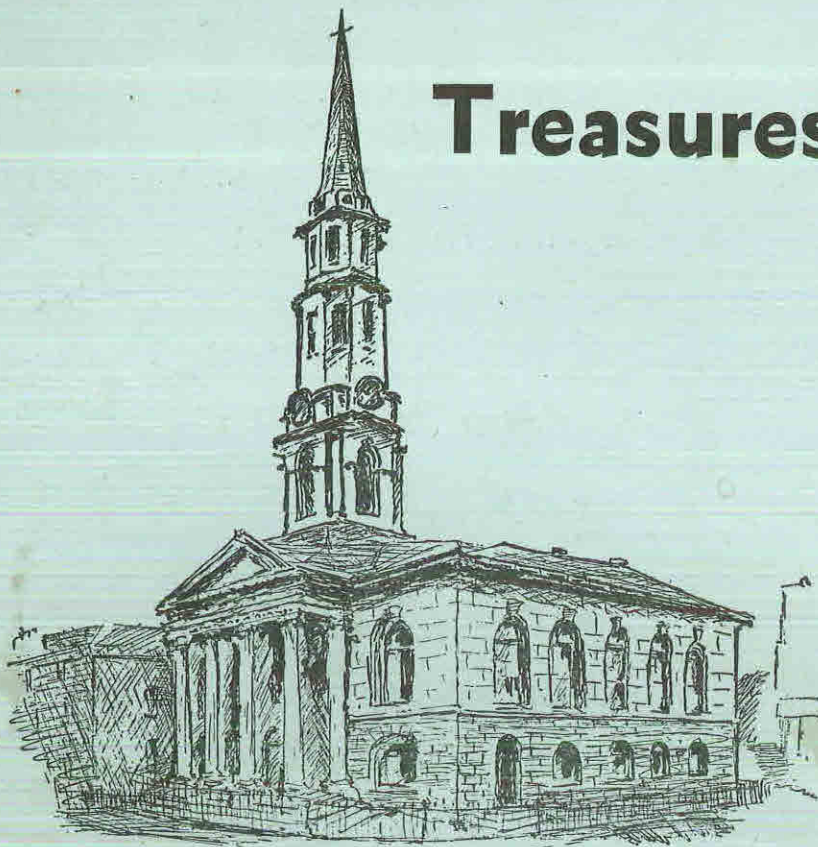
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# Treasures



ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, Dublin. This magnificent church stands at the apex of an unique street-plan. Its architect, Francis Johnston, is said to have been influenced in its design by Wren's work in London. The spire is 180 feet high. Johnston died in 1829 at No. 64 Eccles Street, Dublin. A treasure from the past, but the future has treasures too . . . for lucky ticket holders.

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