



# *Seán Sabhat*

1928-1957



*Awakening the  
Spirit of Freedom*

*Edited by Des Long*

## AWAKENING THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM



Seán Sabhat from Garryowen  
Died for Ireland New Year's Day 1957



Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon  
Died for Ireland New Year's Day 1957

Best wishes

1 Dec 57

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## AWAKENING THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon

Died for Ireland New Year's Day 1957

Plaque Unveiling Commemorative Booklet 1st January 2015.

Introduction to second edition of booklet.

It is with pride that Coiste Cuimneacháin Seán Sabhat are unveiling in memory of Seán Sabhath at this house at no. 47 Henry Street, Limerick City where Seán was born, raised by his mother Mary with his brothers Jim and Gerrard and where lived all his short life. It was here that Seán worked on his many articles and booklets aimed at awakening the spirit of freedom in his fellow citizens and country men and women. It was here too that he planned for his part in the ongoing fight for Irish freedom.

The committee have been trying for many years to have this memorial unveiled without success. We are happy that it can now be achieved today thanks to the generosity of the owner of this house Mr. Brendan Breen. We also wish to thank most sincerely all those who made this possible by their generous financial contributions.

On this occasion, the 58th anniversary of Seán's death we find ourselves further away from his dream of a free and united Ireland. We find ourselves in an Ireland where the British Queen Elizabeth 11, Commander-in-Chief of the British Crown Forces who still occupy part of our country, is welcomed here. Where the minister of justice on the 26th November signed a statutory instrument which allows the British spy agency General Communications Headquarters to tap the telephone calls and emails of the Irish people in this 26 county state. We now find former republicans administering British law and rule in the 6 county assembly.

It is time for all REPUBLICANS to unite, work together to,  
**AWAKEN THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM.**

Des Long (editor)



## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

'It was on a New Year's Eve as the shades of night fell down'...a lorry load of Volunteers approached a border town...the stirring opening words of Seán Costelloe's song, "Seán Sabhat of Garryowen" capture the image of dedicated men setting out to challenge the might of British occupation in the Six Counties.

Sean Costelloe was a Limerick song writer from Janesboro, Limerick and his tribute to this fellow Limerick man has gained a treasured place in the musical history of Irish Republicanism. The song tells the story of the failed IRA raid on the Brookeborough RUC Barracks on New Year's Eve in 1957. The Volunteers were seen approaching the barracks and the RUC men inside opened fire. Seán Sabhat and his comrade Fergal Ó Hanlon from County Monaghan were killed in the ensuing gun battle.

When word of the operation and the deaths of the two men spread throughout both the 6 and 26 Counties huge crowds turned out and lined the streets as the funerals made their way back to Monaghan and Limerick. All along the route thousands of people watched in silence as the hearse bearing the remains of Sabhat made the long journey home to Limerick. At every town and village the people stood in silent tribute.

The funeral of Seán Sabhat in Limerick attracted the largest crowd the city had ever seen. It was flanked by men wearing black berets. The procession moved through a closed and silent city to Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery where Seán was buried in the Republican Plot. The outpouring of national grief once again highlighted the ongoing occupation of part of Ireland by foreign forces and brought to attention the divisions and evils forged by the unjust partition of our country.

Many years later one of the men on that raid, the late Daithí Ó Conaill, spoke about the night and recalled that before setting out on the trek to Brookeborough the men had enjoyed a convivial

evening of Irish song and music. When Daithí Ó Conaill spoke at the graveside of Seán South, huge green cypress trees had grown up around the plot and Ó Conaill remarked: "What if we had had such cover on that fateful evening..."

Another more recent speaker asked those present at the Annual Seán Sabhat New Year Commemoration in Limerick "to pause for a moment to recall why we are here....let us remember for a minute why we stand at this graveside today. It is to honour a young man from Limerick - Seán Sabhat from Garryowen, who also opposed British rule in Ireland."

The cause that inspired Seán Sabhat to join the resistance movement and take part in the Brookeborough Raid of 1957 is still relevant today even if British occupation in Ireland has become more sophisticated and is now aided by people who once agreed with the philosophy of Seán Sabhat.

The Six Counties are still under British rule and the presence of Crown forces continue to cause conflict. Seán Sabhat was part of an All Ireland tradition of opposition and resistance to British rule in the Six Counties.

To-day that opposition is still strong and active even though former Republicans are in the pay of the British and there is ongoing harassment of those who oppose British rule in Ireland. The present collaborationist activities are an insult to the memory of Seán Sabhat and all those who died in the cause of Irish freedom.

The British still occupy part of our country and the same ideal of a new and united Ireland that inspired Seán Sabhat is still relevant today. The reality is that the British presence is the real cause of conflict in our divided country and until that presence is removed, and partition ended, there can never be a real or lasting peace in Ireland.



We shall remain true to the memory of men like Seán Sabhat and his comrades, who did not die for the Good Friday Agreement or for an assembly in Stormont. They did not die for parity of esteem or new houses or increased social welfare. They did not die to put a cynical leadership into positions of power. They did not die to dine in the White House. We all know that they died for the ideal of a new and united Ireland - we must now pledge ourselves to continue that political struggle!

To-day the 50th Anniversary of that famous raid is being remembered and the publication of this booklet is dedicated to the memory of Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon and all those who took part in the Brookeborough operation. We also remember all those since who have made the ultimate sacrifice for an All Ireland Republic.

Today the stirring words of Sean Costelloe's ballad still re-echo after all this time and pay testimony to the ongoing nature of the struggle because ..."there were men from Dublin and from Cork, Fermanagh and Tyrone, but the leader was a Limerick man Seán South from Garryowen..."

*Des Long, Limerick*  
*1st January 2007*

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## SUMMARY

12/12/1956 Assemble in Mrs. Carney's, Drimnagh, drive to Monaghan  
27/12/1956 Collect weapons, march to Fermanagh  
28/12/1956 Patrolling at night in Fermanagh  
29/12/1956 Attempted ambush (might have been 30/12/1956)  
30/12/1956 Patrolling at night Fermanagh (might have been 29/12/1956)  
31/12/1956 Preparing for Brookeborough Raid  
01/01/1957 Brookeborough Raid  
02/01/1957 Wounded to hospital, fit men arrested  
Funerals in Monaghan and Limerick over the next few days

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## MEMORIAL TO SEÁN SABHAT, VOLUNTEER OF THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY, WHO DIED AT BROOKEBOROUGH, CO. FERMANAGH WITH HIS COMRADE, VOLUNTEER FEARGAL O 'HANLON ON 1st JANUARY, 1957.

It was in July, 1955 at an I.R.A. G. H.Q. Training Camp in Co. Kildare that I first met Seán Sabhat. My recollection is that Seán spent a fortnight at the camp as he had a good deal of experience having been a member of the F. C. A. for some years. He was of great benefit to the camp because of his knowledge of arms and map reading. He was a solid and conscientious soldier who was highly regarded by all those who came in contact with him.

I met him a number of times after July, 1955 when visiting I. R. A. Units in Limerick. When the I. R. A. decided to launce its



guerrilla campaign for December, 1956 the pace of organization and training quickened. It was the task of G. H. Q. to select volunteers for the campaign and Seán was one of the first to be called for active service.

A farm near Athboy, Co. Meath, owned by Charlie Prendergast, an I. R. A. Member originally from Kerry, was selected as the jumping-off point for most of the volunteers assembling for the campaign. All volunteers spent some days in Athboy getting acquainted with each other and discussing various issues of the day.

The column to which Seán was assigned was for the first night - 12th December - made-up of a larger than usual number of volunteers which would divide into two columns - one for Down/Armagh and one for Fermanagh - with volunteers from Wexford, Cork, Galway, Dublin, Louth and Roscommon.

The first target of the combined column was to attack Gough Barracks in Armagh City on the 12th December, 1956. When the column got to Dundalk Jimmy Dullaghan, the local man, had arranged to have a truck to transport the column to Armagh. The truck, unfortunately, was delayed and it was after midnight before the column moved off. Arriving at Gough Barracks the usual plan was adopted - to place a bomb at the front gate and blow the gate down. As this was being attempted a sentry on the walls spotted the members of the column and fired some shots into the air setting-off an alarm.

The leading group which was approaching the main gate with the bomb naturally left the bomb on the ground when the alarm went off and we decided to call off the attack. All members of the column, who were on the ground, immediately climbed back onto the lorry. I got into the cab with the driver Vince Conlon and Eamon Mac Thomais and we started to pull away.

Suddenly we heard a voice from the back of the lorry shouting: "Ta fear ar an talamh. Ta fear ar an talamh." With the Little Gaeilge I had I knew what this meant - there is a man on the ground. So we stopped the lorry and I jumped out, ran back to see what was happening and saw the bomb that the leading party had left on the ground which Seán (for it was he who had shouted) had mistaken for a body. I ran back to the lorry and jumped on the running board. I was carrying a Thompson Sub-Machine and Eamon said to me as we were heading away: "Give them a blast" which I did.

The truck sped out of Armagh and out into the country. The column divided and each went their separate ways. One group went to South Down/Armagh. We headed for North Monaghan to a townland called Knockatallon where G. H. Q. Members were awaiting our arrival. They had begun to worry given the late arrival of the column.

Dave O'Connell had been appointed I. R. A. Organizer for Fermanagh some months before the 12th Decenber, 1956. He had arranged billets for the column and local guides. He had also scouted targets. When the column moved into Fermanagh each member had specific tasks. Dave, who was 2.1./C., was responsible for contact with locals and assessing intelligence. Pat Connolly, from Roslea, Fermanagh, was the chief scout. Seán Sabhat, because of his experience in the F. C. A. (Foras Cosanta Aitiuil - Local Defence Force), was responsible for setting a course by compass and he was the Bren Gunner.

For some days after the 12th December the column moved about the county seeking targets which at that time were very limited. The I. R. A. Army Council had issued instructions that no attacks were to be carried out on the R. U. C. or B Specials - a sectarian paramilitary force founded in the 1920's to prevent any sectarian attack on the Catholic/Nationalist Population.



This laudable decision was fundamental to the Republican Principles of the unity of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter but on the ground in Fermanagh these principles did not carry much weight with the Catholic/Nationalist Population. Any occasion or place where the column met with the local people the first and principal demand was: "Attack the B Specials" - the Protestant Paramilitary Force which had for decades acted as the eyes and ears of the Northern State and in general harassed their Catholic Neighbours.

The I. R. A. had given a warning to the R. U. C. and B Specials that if they assisted the British Army they would, after a period of time, be subject to attack. Over the course of the few weeks preceding Brookeborough Seán and I had many conversations concerning our task and our country's future. He was a well read man, studious, very quiet in manner, always courteous, very determined and committed to his country and people.

Seán was a Devout Catholic but he never pushed his religious opinions on anyone else or intruded on other people's privacy. The revival of the Irish Language was a top priority and he would address a person as Gaeilge first and then, if the person had no Gaeilge he would revert to English. He encouraged all members of the column to speak whatever Irish they had. He was highly intelligent but he had no airs or graces and was always willing to take on any task which faced members of the column.

Seán's courage was never in question and he was under no illusions as to what we faced. I recall a conversation one night when we were splitting-up the column into small groups to stay in different billets. There had been a number of instances where I. R. A. Volunteers were captured in isolated farmhouses. Seán, who was taking charge of one group, asked what were the orders in the event of the billet being discovered and members of the column being in danger of capture. My response was that in such

circumstances there should be no surrender but to fight. I was in no doubt that Seán would carry through his orders.

Coming near to Christmas some idiot had the bright idea that there should be some kind of truce for Christmas so the column was withdrawn for some days. Seán spent the Christmas in Dublin with the Murphy Family of Leinster Avenue, North Strand on the



*A Republican colour party at a Commemoration for Seán Sabhat in Limerick. Alf Larkin, front right, and Joe Quinn behind him, the last two Limerick men who went on active service in the campaign.*

north side of Dublin. Most members of the column stayed in Dublin and all met on a number of occasions for a few drinks and 'craic' in the Murphy House over the few days in Dublin.

Returning to Fermanagh after Christmas the column had a number of new members: Paddy O'Regan from Dublin and a young volunteer, Feargal O'Hanlon, from Monaghan Town. A few of the original members had stayed in Dublin or had been transferred to other areas. Given that the R. U. C. and B Specials



had not responded to the I. R. A. call - not to assist the British Army in patrols or searches I. R. A. G. H. Q. decided that such forces would be legitimate targets.

Back in Fermanagh the question of targets was discussed and Dave O'Connell, who had most knowledge of the area, proposed that we attack Brookeborough Barracks. It represented, because of its name, a special significance in Northern Ireland due to its reactionary, sectarian, Unionist Prime Minister, Lord Brookeborough.

In order to ensure up-to-date information Dave O'Connell went into Brookeborough to scout-out the situation, to check there were no major changes and to consult with local supporters. The column, which was billeted at a farmhouse, began preparation. A bomb, which was to be placed at the front door of the barracks had been prepared and most members kept busy familiarizing themselves with maps of the county and with ensuring that all weapons were in order.

When Dave left to carry out his reconnaissance we decided that the date would be 1st January, 1957 for the attack and even if Dave did not return from his trip we would stick with our original timetable. He did return as planned and everything was set for the attack. A builder's lorry was to be commandeered and on the day of the attack this arrived. Vince Conlon, an experienced truck driver, had the task of driving the truck into Brookeborough.

Brookeborough R. U. C. Barracks was located midway on the right hand side on the main street coming in from the north. The plan was to have the lorry pull-up opposite the barracks. The column would then break-up into teams with specific tasks - one team led by Dave O'Connell with Liam Nolan, Feargal O'Hanlon, Phil O'Donoghue and Harry Goff to place the bomb at the front door. Others were to block-off entry to the town. Mick O'Brien was to keep open the exit from the town whilst Mick Kelly was to cover

the entrance to the town. Seán Sabhat and Paddy O'Regan were to stay in the lorry with the Bren Gun giving covering fire to the assault party. Packy Tierney and Sean Scott were also assigned to the lorry to assist in the same task.

The most fateful mistake was when the lorry pulled-up on the same side of the street as the barracks and directly under the gable end of the barracks in which a window was sited. Once the lorry stopped all volunteers immediately began implementing their allotted tasks not realizing the major error that had been made. The group, under Dave O'Connell, with the bomb, raced forward and placed it at the door whilst at the same time firing commenced from the assault party and return fire came from the defenders.

The advance party, after placing the bomb, moved back to cover and attempted to set-off the bomb. No explosion happened and Dave O'Connell went forward to see what was the problem. He returned to the assault group and once again attempted to explode the bomb and once again there was failure. We concluded later that because the bomb had been made-up for some days before the attack the fuses/detonators had got damp.

While Dave and his group were doing all they could to explode the bomb Seán Sabhat and the group in the lorry were attempting to return fire at the barracks gable end window where the R. U. C. Sergeant had taken-up position and from where he was firing, with what I believed was a Sten Gun but have now been told was in fact a Bren Gun, into the lorry which was placed directly under the window.

It was impossible for Seán Sabhat or for any of the group in the lorry to have an accurate field of fire given the location of the lorry.



The R. U. C. Sergeant was in a commanding position and he was experienced and capable enough to use his position to the best advantage. I got out of the lorry and began firing at the best window with little effect. I could see the flashes from the gun of the sergeant and was able to see whenever his magazine was empty that he would close the shutter, put the light on, reload, turn the light out, open shutter slightly and recommence firing. It was clear to me after some minutes that we were not going to succeed so I went forward to the front of the barracks and called on the advance party to withdraw.

Everyone scrambled back into the lorry and we picked-up the sentries who had been posted at each end of town and the lorry took-off. As I was getting into the lorry I was hit on the left thigh which tore a large piece out of my leg but fortunately did not break the femur. We realized at that stage that we had suffered a number of casualties. The main task was to get out of town.

As we drove out into the country the driver inadvertently released the tipper control of the truck with the result that the body of the truck moved-up in the air and all in the back of the lorry slipped-down to the rear. With great difficulty and with the truck moving we managed to clamber back to the front of the truck and with our weight forced it down to a level plane. Despite my wound I managed to retain consciousness. Dave O'Connell and I tried to ascertain exactly who had been hit and how serious were the wounds.

Some miles out from the town we came to a crossroads, which I later learned was called Altawark Cross, with a farm nearby where we stopped the truck. It was obvious that Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon were the most seriously injured. They were unconscious. When we lifted their bodies from the truck I had taken hold of Seán's body and it was clear to me that he was no longer alive. Feargal, I believe, was not dead at that stage

though it was also clear that he was very seriously wounded. Their bodies were left in the cow-byre and none of the column, to my knowledge, believed that there was any hope for them.

Realising that we had not much time we assembled at the crossroads and with Pat Connolly, the local guide, we struck-out across the mountains heading south. At this stage we were concerned to get as far into the mountains as quick as we possibly could expecting the R. U. C. and the B Specials to be in pursuit. When we were some way up the mountain we could see the lights of many vehicles converging on the crossroads and the farm where we had left our comrades. When the vehicles stopped at the crossroads we heard some bursts of gunfire as their advance party obviously moved into the farmyard. We took it that it was some R. U. C. and B Specials letting-off some shots before they entered the farmyard. It is my opinion that Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon were beyond help when we left them. I don't subscribe to the view that they were shot by members of the R. U. C. or B Specials.

At this point we had ascertained that Paddy O'Regan, Phil O'Donoghue, Vince Conlon (the driver) and myself were the wounded. The one clear fact was that all those who were wounded were shot in the truck simply because of its position under the gable window of the barracks which, as I stated, gave the R. U. C. Sergeant a clear target.

Having started over the mountain and in some order having clarified what had happened and what we needed to do, and because of my wound Dave O'Connell as 2.1./C. took charge. Pat Connolly and himself had good local knowledge of the country. Even though we were unsure as to what we might meet our morale was good.

My own reaction was of anger and I expressed myself in very



harsh language f...ing everything and everyone from Jack to Jill so much so that Vince Conlon, the driver, expressed his annoyance at my language stating that I should be praying instead of cursing - a suggestion I rejected, never having had much time for prayer of any kind at any time.

After many hours of difficult marching we could see lights of a town in the distance. Pat Connolly went ahead to scout-out the area. I will always recall his voice shouting-out on his return: "We're in the State. We're in the State", which meant, of course, that we were over the border and in the Free State as it was known to most people north of the border. Shortly afterwards we got to a farmhouse where the people very kindly gave us a welcome and as usual in the Irish Countryside made us tea. Dave O'Connell organized the dumping of arms and then went out to get some assistance for the wounded.

Within a short space of time the farmhouse was surrounded and an ambulance called. The four wounded were brought to Monaghan Hospital where the medical staff immediately began attending to our wounds. Dave and the rest of the column were made prisoners and brought to prison. A number of weeks later they were all sentenced to six months in jail. In early January those in Monaghan Hospital were transferred to the Mater Hospital, Dublin.

My abiding memory of Monaghan Hospital, after being there for some days, is looking out the window of the hospital ward and seeing the long procession of motor car headlights accompanying the hearses bringing the dead bodies of our comrades across the border late at night. This funeral procession, with its lights piercing the darkness, was a sad and lasting reminder of two brave, patriotic and honourable men who gave their lives for their country.

Fourteen men took part in the raid: Seán Sabhat, Limerick; Feargal O'Hanlon, Monaghan; Vince Conlon, Armagh; Harry Goff, Wexford; Dave O'Connell, Cork; Liam Nolan, Dublin; Pat Connolly, Fermanagh; Packy Tierney, Fermanagh; Sean Scott, Roscommon. Mick Kelly, Galway; Mick O'Brien, Dublin; Phil O'Donoghue, Dublin; Paddy O'Regan, Dublin and Sean Garland, Dublin.

Sean Garland.

#### **EDITORS NOTE.**

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### **PEARSE COLUMN SPEARHEADED OPERATION HARVEST**

The campaign of resistance "Operation Harvest" was started by Óglaigh Na h-Éireann on the 12th December 1956. It was hoped that the campaign would spearhead a popular uprising similar to the War of Independence and that the bitterness of the Civil War would be put behind us.

Four flying columns and a number of active service units were deployed throughout the Six Counties of Ulster. Seán Sabhat was with the Pearse Column and they were active up to the Christmas holiday.

I was not with the column at this time, because I had not been contacted at the start of the campaign. Prior to the commencement of hostilities I had spent three months in South East Derry as a training officer. Events in the area compromised my billet and my cover story and I was forced to return to Dublin at the end of November.



The column was active from the Twelfth of December until they were taken out of the area for Christmas. Some men spent Christmas locally but most of them went to Dublin. Seán Sabhat and about ten others shared Christmas with the Murphy family of the North Strand. The Murphys were a long tailed Republican family with the father and mother fighting in the 1916 uprising. Several family members were active and jailed North and South in the 1950's. Seán entertained the family by playing his violin and teaching them to play cards through Irish.

The Murphy's now have mostly died out. But Marion Murphy is still alive and is the Mother of the Steenson family, a Republican family, still living in the old Murphy family home. Marion treasurers a piece of rosin (rosin the bow) that Seán left behind by mistake. The column returned to duty on St Stephen's Day.

The Dublin Unit contacted me and directed me to go to Mrs. Carney's house in Drimnagh on St. Stephen's Day. Philip O'Donoghue and Liam Nolan, who had been in North Antrim before Christmas, also joined the Pearse Column. Throughout the afternoon most of the column came together in Mrs. Carney's house.

In the late afternoon we got into a Ford 10 van driven by IRA veteran Ned Gargan. It was very cramped in the van. I can't remember how many men were in it. At that time there was a shortage of petrol because England and France had invaded the Suez Canal area causing a fuel crises. Our first call was to a garage in North King Street where we filled up with black market petrol. The journey was then continued through North County Dublin. North of Finglas we met up with John Garland who was driving Paddy Murphy's (Kilkenny) V.W. Beetle car. John Garland was not a very experienced driver and was taking every opportunity to improve his skills. In the front of the car was John Garland



driving, with Paddy Murphy sitting beside him. Behind them was Seán Sabhat and another volunteer whom I think was Harry Goff. I was put into the back with Seán and Harry.

The weather was dry but there had been rain and snow. Somewhere on the North Road about halfway to Monaghan Town we came across snow and ice on the road. The V.W. lost traction and spun about in a circle ending up with its rear-mounted engine in the ditch. We pushed it back onto the road and continued on to Monaghan Town. When we arrived in Monaghan Town Seán and myself were put into a very good billet with a young family for the night.

On the 27th December 1956 the column assembled in Fergal O'Hanlon's mother's house. It was dark when we left in a mini bus to be taken to where our weapons and equipment were stored.

We were issued with one Bren light machine gun plus three 30 round magazines (regular army are issued with ammo boxes containing twelve magazines), two model 1921 Thompson sub-machine guns, each with four 20 round magazines (U.S.A. army issued soldiers with ten magazines in a pouch belt), and twelve Lee Enfield .303 No. 4 rifles. The ammunition .450 ACP for the Thompsons and .303 for the rifles and Bren was in good condition. Stripper loading clips for the rifles were in short supply, each man got about eight 5 round clips which would accommodate 40 rounds. Rounds' stripper clips were kept loose in haversacks or pockets. At least one .455 Webley revolver was available but was left behind because its ammunition was unreliable. In addition to the small arms we had about six GHQ grenades, about six self-igniting Molotov cocktails (petrol bombs) and I estimate about 201bs. commercial explosives.

Personal equipment was sparse. We had what we stood up in - rough work clothing and some bits of surplus army uniforms. We



had some haversacks but not one for every man. At the arms dump we were issued with Tricolour arm flashes, which we sewed on to our left arms at the shoulder.

Instructions were given that any fighting would be carried out as per the Geneva Convention. As policemen the R.U.C. had been given a number of days to stand aside from the conflict and now could be targeted as they had failed to comply.

Special Constables (B Specials) were not to be attacked as they were considered to be a sectarian force. If they happened to be part of a mixed army/police patrol the patrol could be attacked. South of Ireland security forces could not be interfered with under any circumstances, even if it meant imprisonment or loss of weapons.

The formations used by the IRA at that time were:

1. **Volunteer:** acting alone in the field.
2. **Battle team:** two volunteers as a unit - one in cover role, the other in assault role.
3. **Section:** two battle teams plus a section leader - one team "cover", other team "assault".
4. **Column:** three sections, one section "cover", one section "assault" and the third was "cut off section". The "cut off section" was to be used as back up, extra cover, drivers, guides or as required.

The Pearse column comprised the following: *Assault Section*

*(Group)*

- 1) John Garland, Dublin, Officer Commanding, Thompson.
- 2) Dave O'Connell, Cork, 2nd in Command, Thompson.
- 3) Liam Nolan, Dublin, Section Leader, rifle.

- 4) Fergal O'Hanlon, Monaghan, Volunteer, rifle.
- 5) Phil O'Donoghue, Dublin, Volunteer, rifle.
- 6) Harry Goff, Wexford, Volunteer, rifle.

*Cover Section (Group)*

- 1) Seán Sabhat, Limerick, Section Leader, Bren.
- 2) Paddy O'Regan, Dublin, Volunteer, No. 2 on Bren, rifle.
- 3) Packy Tierney, Fermanagh, Volunteer, rifle.
- 4) Sean Scott, Galway, Volunteer, rifle.

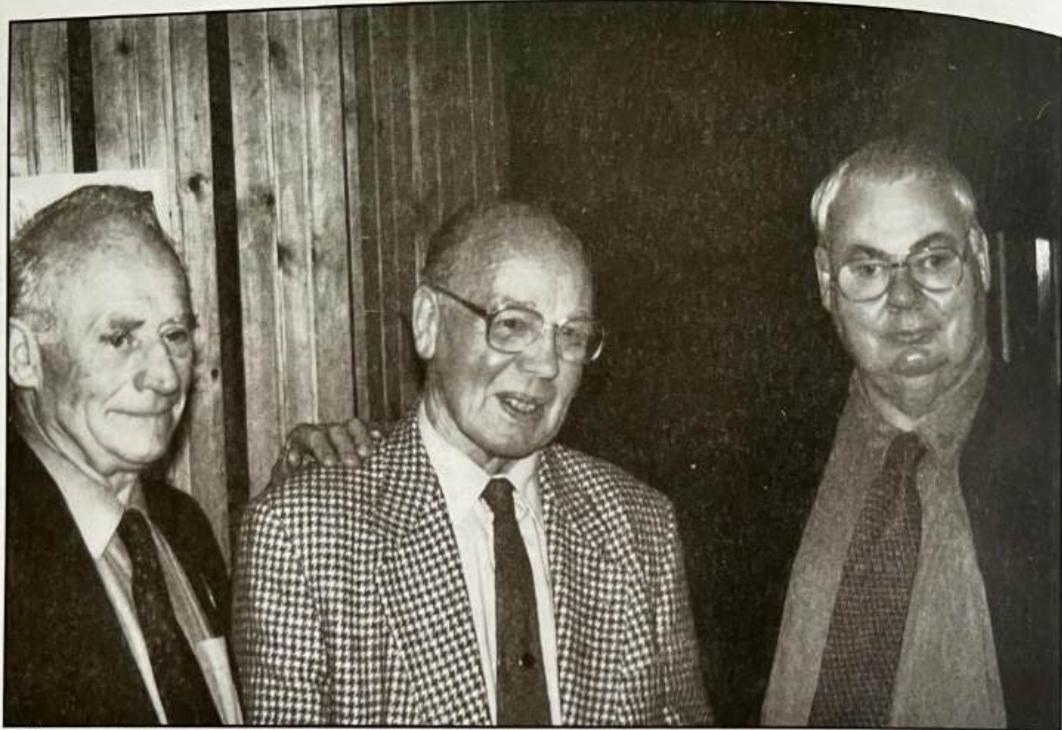
*Cut off section (Group)*

- 1) Vincent Conlon, Armagh, Volunteer, Driver, rifle,
- 2) Pat Connolly, Fermanagh, Volunteer, Guide, rifle;
- 3) Mick Kelly, Galway, Volunteer, rifle.
- 4) Mick O'Brien, Dublin, Volunteer, rifle.

In the event of John Garland and Dave O'Connell being knocked out of action, Pat Connolly was to take over command as he was the local man with knowledge of the area. There was another Northern Volunteer but he was called away to a family crisis after a couple of days. I can't remember his name. Seán Sabhat preferred to speak in Irish at all times. I was teamed up with him because I could speak Irish at that time and I was also well trained on the Bren light machine gun. As soon as we had finished collecting the weapons and arranging the column makeup we headed north in the mini bus. The police were out in force and after about an hour trying to cross the Border it was decided to march across country. The going was very wet and heavy with streams and mountainy country to cross.

We eventually got to our billet, an isolated farmhouse. We bedded down for the night and kept indoors the next day, which was the 28th December, 1956. The next few days were spent moving about the area at night and staying indoors in the daylight.





*Three of the men who took part in the Brookeborough raid, from left Sean Scott, Phil O'Donoghue and author of this article Paddy O'Regan.*

The billets were out of the way houses and farms with single men living in them. We did not carry supplies with us and had to rely

on our hosts for our food. These men could not buy in extra food, because it would be noticed. We ate mostly potatoes, bacon, bread and tea. Money was in very short supply. I did not have a penny to my name. Fergal O'Hanlon's sister later told me that he had ten shillings when he left home. (In 1956 a tradesman's wage was £7, Ten shillings, it had the buying power of about €32. As a benchmark, eight pints of stout cost ten shillings then but would cost in the region of €32 in 2006). One evening a couple of local volunteers were in the billet. Most of the column started to turn out their pockets and a small amount of money was collected. Much to my disappointment, I discovered that this collection was for cigarettes and not for food. I was a seventeen-year-old non-smoker with a large appetite.

Midway through the week an ambush was set-up. It was known that the R.U.C. normally set-up a roadblock at a three road Y junction. We got into position at the junction with two firing points. Local volunteers were to blow up a bridge to draw out the police. However, they were unable to complete their task. After lying in position in the pouring rain for two or three hours we returned to our billet to dry out.

At all times, day and night, we had a sentry under cover keeping watch. The couple of hours sentry duty in the daylight was boring but night duty was when you were alone with your own thoughts. You wondered from what direction the enemy might come, what action you would take, as you could be positioned in an out building. You wondered why you only had two magazines for the Thompson, when four were available, but as a volunteer you did not complain. The possibility of being killed crossed your mind and you said a little prayer. Thoughts of home and family and how they were coping was always to the front of your mind.

One dreary grey afternoon, four of us were lying across a double bed trying to sleep. Without warning a shot rang out and the four of us hit the floor, grabbing our weapons from under the bed. I then saw Vincent Conlon with his rifle in front of a window looking out. He probably fired it by accident I thought. Forty years later Phil O'Donoghue told me that he had fired a blank round out of Vincent's rifle to clear a broken pull through. This was a lesson to me that things are not always what they seem to be.

Dave O'Connell had been an organiser in the area and he had maps and information on Brookborough Police Barracks. The evening before the raid on the barracks the plan was explained and every volunteer was given his task. Roughly the plan was for a truck, carrying the column, to pull up across the road from the barracks. The cover group would give covering fire from the back



of the truck at the building, thereby allowing the assault group to place a landmine at the front door of the Police station. It was hoped that the blast would blow in the doors and result in the garrison surrendering. If they did not, a second mine would be placed in the breach and blown up. As we were generally short of weapons we wanted a surrender in order to capture their firearms.

Two men from the cut-off group were to clear the street of people and vehicles and keep it clear. A volunteer was to go up the street from one side of the barracks clearing it; the other was to clear the street in the opposite direction.

After the action the plan was to withdraw in the truck to the border area. The driver and guide were to stay in the truck cab during the action and they were part of the cut-off group.

On New Year's Eve, as darkness closed in we went to a friendly house for a meal. There was a young family in the house and we were served with the first regular meal we had since we left O'Hanlon's. We had peas, sausages and mash, tea, bread and butter, and it tasted great.

Local Volunteers had acquired a tipper sand truck for the operation. It was a Bedford three ton short wheel base truck. We got into the back of the vehicle and lay down on the floor. Very few young people could drive at that time but Vincent Conlon was an experienced driver in the U.S.A. He may not have had any experience in driving trucks but he managed very well.



*Annette Long, Limerick makes the wreaths for the Seán Sabhat  
Commeration*

The truck moved off and after a while we realised we were coming into a village as the street lamps started to pass over our heads. It was early in the evening, about seven or seven thirty, when we arrived. Just before the truck came to a halt I heard children singing a street game. The children seemed to be skipping or playing a game and singing rhymes. We had just passed the sound of the children when the truck stopped and the action started.

I looked over the side board of the truck and found I was looking into a window, maybe a country shop decorated for Christmas. It was clear that the truck had stopped in the wrong place. This may have been the result of failing to identify the barracks until the last moment. The more likely reason, I believe, is that Vincent, on seeing the children on the road went to the opposite side of the street so that any gun fire would not be in the vicinity of the children. As the Volunteers vaulted onto the road I could hear the



smack of their hob nailed boots on the road. Women began to shout "it's the I.R.A. get the children off the street". Two Volunteers from the cut-off group, Mick Kelly and Mick O'Brien, set about their job of clearing the street of people and traffic and keeping it clear.

Mick O'Brien went into a shop beside where the truck stopped and warned the people there to move away and take cover. Mick then moved up the street in the direction of where the truck was pointing. A number of men came out of a public house and after ignoring two warnings from Mick to go back in to the pub they obliged when he fired a single warning shot over their heads. Pat Connolly recently told me that as they drove down the village street they were aware of some people on the street. The Sergeant was then seen by Dave O'Connell crossing the road towards the Barracks.

Dave ordered the truck to stop and he jumped out and pursued the sergeant. The sergeant ran into the barracks and slammed the inside door of the porch shut. Dave fired a burst from his Thompson through the inner door after his quarry. I could not see the barracks but the cover group was redeploying to the tailboard at the rear of the vehicle. Shots started to be fired slowly for the first couple of seconds, but then in rapid fire as the target was identified. Seán was firing his Bren from the rear corner on the driver's side. I was next to him, then Packy Tierney with Sean Scott at the rear passenger corner.

The windows of the building were made of cast iron trellis with small diamond shaped panes of glass and they were sand bagged both inside and outside.

The barracks' lights went out when the firing started but a bedroom light in the side of the building went on and off a few times. This room turned out to be the sergeant's bedroom. It has

been reported that the sergeant collected the Bren that day and had instructed his constables in its use. After the weapon training class he stored it in his bedroom, which had a clear overhead view of where the truck later stopped.

Seán was firing his Bren in short bursts but the first magazine soon ran out. When he tried to change magazines he could not find another one to hand. When we moved to the rear of the truck the magazines had been left where they lay.

Seán turned to me and said the last words he uttered in this life "Na philearlanna, Padraig cá bhuil na philearlanna" ("the magazines, Patrick where are the magazines"). Even in a very stressful situation Seán still thought and spoke in Irish. The magazines were retrieved by me and Seán continued firing in short bursts until he was almost out of ammunition.

Rapid fire was still the order of the day for the cover group riflemen. After firing about 30 or 40 rounds I was reloading my rifle. As we were short of stripper clips I was taking mine from my rifle and putting them in my pocket. Seán was lying on his belly aiming at the upper windows and I was on my knees leaning forward reloading my rifle, when I felt two heavy thumps in my left hip. There was no pain but a spreading numbness in my hip. The Bren was tilted against the tailboard and Seán was lying still, he had been hit without him making a sound. I drew Seán's condition to Packy Tierneys attention who commented that "he's a gonner."

About this time incoming fire passed through a passenger windscreen and it also removed a button from Pat Connolly's shoulder strap. He got out of the cab and returned fire from near the driver's headlamp, he got back into the cab when Vincent was shot in the foot.



The incoming fire from the Sergeant's window was travelling down at about a 45 degree angle. The bullets passed over the back of our heads hitting Seán in the lower back and myself in the upper back. If I had been looking up aiming my rifle I would have been hit in the top of my head or on the forehead. The assault group were attacking the building from ground level. A mine was laid on the front door step outside of the open hall door. It was not placed in the hall. This mine failed to explode and a second mine was placed beside it, which also failed to detonate. Dave O'Connell fired at the mines with his Thompson in an attempt to explode them. The failure of the mines to explode could have been the fault of the wires, the battery or the detonators. On the plus side, if the two mines had exploded simultaneously the blast and building debris would have struck the truck.

John Garland called off the attack and as the volunteers were returning to the truck they were under fire from the barracks. John Garland had to hit the ground, roll to one side and move forward as he came under fire from the front of the building. Liam Nolan threw a grenade but it fell back onto the footpath and exploded. For a second I thought it was the mine exploding.

Fergal O'Hanlon was hit in the legs at the rear of the truck and was helped aboard. John Garland received a very severe leg wound above his left knee as he climbed into the truck. A piece of muscle the size of a clenched fist was torn from his leg by a burst of fire. Phil O'Donoghue was grazed on the forehead and also received a flesh wound on the side of his stomach. Vincent Conlon, the driver, was shot in the foot.

Mick Kelly on returning to the transport found that the passenger side windscreen was shattered and Pat Connolly could not see out. Mick and Pat broke out the windscreen with the butt of their rifle. The truck started to move out but had to stop after a short distance to let Mick O'Brien climb aboard. The truck had



passed Mick O'Brien and he had to run after it for a number of yards.

Seán Sabhat made no sound that I can remember; Fergal O'Hanlon called out in pain but quickly fell silent as he went unconscious. The sergeant, an ex-army man, was very skilful with his Bren. It was reported that he fired three magazines (90 rounds) into the back of the truck below him. It would have been necessary for him to fire from a standing position through the window. An unloaded Bren weighs 23 lbs and is difficult to fire from a standing position without support. I believe the return fire from the other R.U.C. men caused no casualties.

The power take-off of the truck must have been engaged and the tipping lever accidentally knocked, because the truck body tipped at least twice as we drove through the countryside. The body of a tipper truck has to be pumped up, it cannot rise on its own, but can be lowered without power using its own weight.

Dave O'Connell ordered that all magazines and weapons be reloaded for further use. About this time I discovered a wound in my upper back. A bullet had entered at the base of my neck and travelled down the soft tissue of my back into my left buttock, a distance of 28 inches. I had been hit by two bullets making three wounds. The other bullet came from behind me most likely from a B. Special in a private house.

This bullet passed through my left hip making an entrance wound the diameter of a pencil and exiting after 8 inches making a wound 3 inches x 4 inches. This bullet would have gone through the cab or passed close by it on the passenger side. Lights of two vehicles could be seen following the truck but they kept a gap of about a quarter of a mile, they may have been security forces. Six miles outside of the village in a remote hilly



area we stopped at a crossroads known as Baxter's Cross or Altawark Cross.

Everyone got out of the truck and the unconscious or dead volunteers were taken to an outhouse on the farm where we stopped. There was no one at home, the house was locked up but the barn was open. Seán Sabhat and Fergal O'Hanlon were dead or close to death at this point. I had climbed out of the truck myself but then stood leaning against the rear wheel. Some of the Volunteers carrying the inert bodies gave me their weapons to hold. After getting four or five rifles to hold I protested that I was wounded and not up to the job. Mick O'Brien and Pat Connolly have recently clarified the scene for me. Four volunteers were directed to cover the road, two men in both directions. The bodies were carried into the barn and laid behind the entrance door beside each other. Harry Goff is said to have carried Seán Sabhat and Mick O'Brien carried Fergal O'Hanlon. When it was time to move out after about four or five minutes John Garland came over to talk to me. He asked about my wounds and I told him I had three. John said he was going to stay behind with a Thompson to fight a rear guard action and would I join him with the second Thompson. I was not too happy at this prospect but before I could reply, Dave O'Connell took command and said no one was staying behind and that the wounded would be helped along.

As we moved out Dave supported me with his right arm, I hung out of Dave's arm with my left arm during the whole of the withdrawal march across Slieve Beagh also using my rifle as a walking stick. John Garland also had to be assisted all the way across the mountains.

We had crossed a field when the security forces arrived at the truck. They opened fire with machine guns. It would appear that they fired in all directions. There may have been several reasons

for this firing but the main one would have been to attract return fire and thereby locate the column. No fire was returned; we were only a couple of hundred yards away at the next ditch.

When they had fired several magazines there was silence for a couple of minutes, then one long burst of fire was heard, like a Sten Gun magazine being emptied in one long burst of 30 rounds. Later it was thought that this last burst was a coup de grace to Seán and Feargal.

The column moved into high country. The ground was firm and frosty and soon we had to avoid snowdrifts. Security reinforcements were arriving and parachute flares started to light up the sky and mountainside. The flares were behind us and little light from them fell on the column. After a while we could see a long line of lamps spread across country about a half mile behind us, but they never caught up.

As we moved across country I developed a strong thirst, perhaps from the loss of fluids. It may have been for medicinal reasons but my frequent requests for a pause to eat snow was always parried by Dave O'Connell saying that we would stop at the next snow drift.

Pat Connolly knew the mountain and showed us the way. He was assisted by Liam Nolan who had a marching compass and he kept us going in the right direction.

After a number of hours marching, I don't know how many, say roughly three hours, we were descending the mountain when lights were seen moving in front of us.

Shortly before this Seán Scott, who was carrying a number of rifles, fell down a bank injuring his back, this injury was to trouble him for years afterwards.



A ditch cut across our line of march and we took up position along it. Pat Connolly, our guide, moved forward to check out the lie of the land.

Someone produced a miniature bottle of brandy and passed it along the line of men. I refused it at that point. Shortly afterwards sleep overcame me and when I awoke after some unknown period of time I was shaking and shivering all over. Unfortunately the very small bottle of brandy was empty. A short while later Pat Connolly returned with good news. We had passed into County Monaghan and our ditch was believed to be the borderline.

The lights ahead were those of the Gardaí and the regular army patrolling the area. We moved forward and soon were in a country house in Scotstown. The man and woman of the house looked after us giving us sherry they had over from Christmas and making us as comfortable as possible. The fit men including the now injured Sean Scott moved off with the weapons to dump them safely. They were all arrested the next morning on the road in daylight.

Dave O'Connell and perhaps also Harry Goff (I don't have a clear memory of his staying) remained with the four wounded men and they inspected our wounds. There was little they could do but wait for the man of the house to return with a doctor. This man was arrested when the police did not believe his story for being out in the small hours of the morning. John Garland and myself were still losing a lot of blood and Dave, after waiting for an hour or two for a doctor to come, went out to find the Gardaí in order to get medical assistance.

Later two Civic Guards armed with Thompsons entered the house with Dave. The army was outside. We were then stretchered to an ambulance and were taken to Monaghan Hospital.



At the hospital we were very well looked after by the staff on duty. Early next morning we were X-Rayed and prepared for surgery. The surgeon told me that he could find an entry and exit wound but there was still a bullet in my body and could I explain this.

*Gerry MacCarthy, Cork, lays a wreath on the grave of Seán Sabhat in the Republican Plot, Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery, Limerick. Gerry was Director of Training when Seán Sabhat was the Training Officer with the Limerick Unit.*

I showed him the small puncture wound in my upper back and more X-Rays showed some flakes of the bullet's copper metal jacket. They had stripped from the bullet when it struck me and they lodged at the base of my neck. After the operation the surgeon came to my bed and gave me the bullet and the flakes of copper. He confirmed that the



projectile had passed down my back through the soft tissue. After about three days the four of us were moved to the Mater Hospital in Dublin under Garda escort. On arrival at the hospital Phil O'Donoghue slipped away on the blind side of the ambulance. Again we were very well treated by the hospital staff. My parents came in to see me; they had not known I was injured because the newspaper printed a wrong name (O'Riordan) by mistake.

Vincent Conlon left the hospital after a few days at visiting time and about three days later John and I left with the aid of sympathetic hospital staff.

A doctor in Drimnagh (now long dead) attended to us and we went to Rush where a pharmacist looked after us for ten days. John Garland suffered a strong allergic reaction to the penicillin that we were receiving. I had a slight reaction.

My brother came home from Canada on the 19th January 1957, and there was a party at my home. I went to the party and stayed at home with my parents. I remained an active member of the I.R.A. until my marriage in 1969.

John Garland was arrested and served a couple of months in Mountjoy. This couple of months in jail gave his leg a chance to heal, he had been very active and was not giving his wound the rest it required.

The members of the column could not attend the funerals of the dead Volunteers as we were all in jail or in hospital, but we knew that both of them were a cut above the average volunteer and were a great loss to the movement. The Pearse Column was a group of amateur soldiers of very mixed training. We were still in the process of getting to know each other, our strengths and weaknesses. The main point that I remember is that even though the operation went very wrong, there was no panic among the

volunteers and discipline prevailed throughout the whole event. That's my story of the Brookborough Raid except for one addition more. About 1964 Mrs. O'Hanlon, Padraigín O'Hanlon and myself went to Altawark Cross to visit the barn where the men had been left.

On examining the shed or room where the bodies had been left, I could see bullet holes in the back wall opposite the entrance door. There were no marks on the other three walls. I came to the conclusion that someone had fired a magazine (30 rounds) through the open door from the outside.

To shoot the volunteers in a single long burst the firer would have to be in the shed. He would then only have three to four seconds to continuously empty a magazine shooting at one man, spray the back wall and then shoot the second man lying on the floor. Bearing in mind that it was dark and that bullets would be bouncing all over the place it is most unlikely that the men were shot again where they lay. In a war situation it is common military practice to fire into a room before entering it. Fergal's father did not believe that Fergal was shot again as his wounds were in the legs.

*Padraig Ó Reagáin*

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## **THE DECOY AMBUSH BEFORE THE BROOKEBORROUGH RAID**

The 27th Of December 1956 was a cold wet day. I had just passed my 16th birthday a few months previously and had joined the local volunteers three weeks after. Training had been light - basic 303 and Thompson (which we had to assemble blind folded) but little engineering.



During that initial period we had been told to "prepare for the forthcoming campaign." But I didn't hold out much hope. My training officer was young and an impetuous Cork man who spent as much time and patience grooming as he did training and insisted on perfection or as near possible or both. His name was Dave O'Connell.

At 12 noon or thereabouts on the 27th I received a message that Frank Maguire, who was the local I.O., wanted to see me in his pub in Lisnaskea about three miles from my home. It was welcome news just over two weeks since the 12th December launch of the much lauded campaign and my age and enthusiasm brought a rush of blood and excitement to my brain. At last I thought I might be called for action.

I went upstairs to the 'ballroom' and sure enough Frank explained that I was to accompany another volunteer, who was much older and with engineering experience on the following night (28th) to blow up a bridge at Tullynevin. I was told to be at a location near Lough Narye at 7pm the following evening and the bomb would be dropped off. Not much I thought but at least a beginning.

Next evening was the usual cold wet and windy night which we had come to expect and we huddled together up a small laneway for about thirty minutes. I was getting a sinking feeling when the lights of a van appeared and there was our man with the 'goods'.

I went forward and collected a sack with a bulky biscuit tin inside. The van belonging to a local volunteer moved off and we examined the contents. The tin contained twenty-five pounds of gelignite, prepared with cortex detonator and commercial fuse.

We set off cross-country for the target about two miles away through rough mountain terrain, with drains and ditches, and in pitch dark making headway difficult. But I was happy as a lark in

summer though I sensed that my comrade 'John' was much less enthusiastic than me. About a mile from the bridge we came to the last high ditch on our way. John climbed to the top and I handed him the sack, I then climbed up alongside him.

Suddenly he slipped down the other side and into a drain full of water and the sack hit the water as well. From my position I thought it was fine but after he got out he told me it had been immersed in the water and would be useless.

He directed that we abort and return home. I protested that we should try anyhow but he was adamant. After all he was more senior and experienced. We returned the way we came and dumped the bomb in a hedge about 250yds. from the Lough.



*Christy O'Sullivan left, and Frank Doyle, two Limerick volunteers on active service in the campaign wearing the IRA badge on their left sleeves.*  
Next day I received another message from Frank Maguire to come in at 8pm. that evening. When I arrived and went upstairs I met



a furious Frank who demanded an explanation as to why the operation had not taken place.

When I told him of the events the previous evening it did little to cool him down. Only then was I told that the blast was a decoy to lure the RUC and B-Specials out to patrol the roads. The column had in fact set up ambush positions near Couneen Cross about 6-7 miles away and waited for several hours for a patrol that never turned up.

It's fair to say I returned home feeling more than a little dejected.

Next day (30th) I again went to the pub. There I met Frank with another man I never saw before or since. I was instructed to contact John and move the bomb to a farmyard at Knock, about two miles away, by 4pm the following evening. It was suggested that the previous delivery van could be used. However, despite numerous attempts I was unable to get in touch with either men that evening or the following morning.

Around 3pm. I went to the temporary 'dump' and retrieved the bomb. The bag was soaking wet as was the tin and gelignite, from the previous 24 hours almost incessant rain. I brought the contents out the little lane to my bicycle. Unable to fit the bulk on the carrier, I was obliged to tie the top of the sack around the handle bars and make the best of it.

Three miles with this cumbersome sack swinging back and forth over bad stony (pre-tarmac) roads was definitely a delicate balancing act.

After about a mile I met a car - a Wolsey I believe. As it approached I recognised the passenger. John James (Butcher) Maguire a local 'B'man, dressed in his 'B'man uniform as was the driver who was unknown to me. They barely gave me a glance as

they passed. It was a time of course when motorised transport was rare and the humble bike was used to transport all sorts of unusual loads.

Arriving at the location I met Dave O'Connell along with my missing driver and two other young men whom I never saw before or since.

I handed over the goods and explained that I would have grave doubts about its effectiveness due to its wet condition. Dave said it would be o.k. but that they would check it. He thanked me and to my bitter disappointment instructed me to return home, just when I had assumed I was due some action. That was the last time I saw Dave O'Connell until 10 years later when he gave the oration at the Pat McManus Commemoration in Swadlinbar in 1966.

Late on New Year's Eve we heard the news of the Brookeborough raid. Frank Maguire had told me the target of the operation but not the date.

The tragic outcome was unexpected and for the next few days the area was flooded with patrolling B-Specials and RUC, armed to the teeth and determined to make the 'croppies lie down.'

Ever since I've wondered 'what if?' What if we had blown the bridge that night, how different things might have turned out. What if the two local B-men had their suspicions aroused and turned back to arrest me.

Would the attack have still been undertaken? In the end fate made the decision and we all have to live with the consequences.

The brave young men who went to Brookeborough that fateful evening were among the best in the country. Two died. Others were wounded and arrested by the usual free-state collaborators



and incarcerated in concentration camps.

But when the names of the quislings and traitors are but a poisoned memory, the names of O'Hanlon, South, O'Connell and others will remain ever green.

*"Ernside"*

**Editor's note**

"Ernside" is the pen name used in this article by this Fermanagh republican. He was to remain active all through the 1956-1962 campaign. He was active and jailed during the present campaign against the British Army of occupation and is an active and determined Republican today.

**Feargal O'Hanlon  
Feargal Ó h-Anluain  
A YOUNG LIFE FOR IRELAND -  
LINKED FOREVER WITH SEÁN SABHAT**

Feargal O'Hanlon was born on the 31st January 1936 at 21, Park Street, Monaghan Town, just about five miles south of the border. He was the third and youngest son of Eugene O'Hanlon and Alice, nee Darby, O'Hanlon. His father's predecessor came from Tandragee in County Armagh where they encountered the endemic sectarianism of the ruling elite in that part of our country.

His ancestors suffered practical banishment from Tandragee and settled in North Monaghan. Even in North Monaghan the Darby ancestors suffered oppression with sectarianism once again rearing its ugly head when they refused to send their children to a non-Catholic school, as a result of which they lost their home and a portion of their lands. The local population led by Blaney Rice and a marching band of people armed with various building

tools and materials erected a small dwelling for the family which has gone into living history under the cognomen "Darby's Hut."

Feargal began his education at the local Christian Brother's National School situated a short few yards from the rear of his parents' home. He progressed there to his Leaving Certificate in which he received creditable results. He followed from there to St. Macartan's College where he repeated his Leaving Certificate with even better results. This completed his formal education.

Thereafter he found employment as a Wages Clerk in the construction of Tully Local Authority Estate in Monaghan Town. Later he acquired a position as Clerical Officer at Monaghan County Council Yard also in Monaghan Town. From there he obtained a position as apprentice Draughtsman with Monaghan Council in the Planning Section.

Feargal was a very popular young man of a gregarious disposition and ever modest. He had lots of friends. From his college days he maintained a special friendship with a lad from Omagh and a young man who ironically came from Brookeborough village in County Fermanagh.

Their mutual interests were Gaelic Football and National Politics. Given that his two friends were from the British occupied six counties there was a keen awareness of the discrimination, the officially sponsored sectarianism and oppression of Catholics and Nationalists.

Therein came the dream of coming to the aid of their kith and kin and the dream of a free 32 County Republic. With entrenched Unionism and Orangeism backed by the mighty British Empire it was obvious that only force would remove the chains that bound them.



Feargal O'Hanlon was a fluent Gaelic speaker and writer with strong devotion to his native language and culture. In this he had a soul mate in South who shared his fate in the attack on Brookeborough RUC Barracks in County Fermanagh.

At home the entire family spoke Irish at all times. When among his neighbours and friends he encouraged the use of the language without imposing it. He was a brilliant Gaelic Footballer and played minor, junior and senior simultaneously. He was also Secretary of the Minor Gaelic Football Board. He was regarded by many in the Gaelic Scene as the most promising prospect for many a day.

He joined the Irish Republican Army when he was 18 years of age. He attended training camps while still living at home. He was the kindest, most considerate son and brother. He left home in December, 1956 and went into active service with the Pearse Column. On the late evening of New Year's Day 1957 in an attack on Brookeborough Barracks Seán South and Feargal gave their lives for the country that it might be free.

Huge concourses of people attended their funerals - a fact that found notice across the country and throughout the English speaking world, especially in America.

The two young volunteers became truly iconic figures who awakened once again the spirit of freedom across the nation and they forged the generational link with the continuum of republican rebellion of the past and inspired what was to come. They are linked together forever in the pantheon of Irish Martyrs and will never be forgotten by their people. Their memorial at Altawalk is a fitting tribute and a shrine to their sacrifice. Feargal's brother Eincachan was elected Sinn Fein abstentionist T.D. in March of the same year. He died in 1994. His only other brother Maoliosa, also a brilliant footballer, is a retired Principal

of Tydavnet N.S. where he still lives.

Feargal had two sisters, Marie who predeceased him and Padraigín who still lives at 21, Park Street and who has been a Monaghan Town Councillor for the past 21 years representing Sinn Féin.

*Padraigín Ní Mhurchú*

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## TRAINING FOR THE BORDER CAMPAIGN

In early 1956 our local unit (Galway/Roscommon) began training for what came to be known as the 'Border Campaign' 1956-57. Political awareness regarding our divided country was somewhat subdued at that time. In contrast, the air of enthusiasm and excitement in our unit, about what we were told was coming, gave us all a great feeling. We were told 'be prepared - it may be soon.' We knew we were close to action when we were told to get our gear, clothing, etc. ready in late December, 1956.

I left home in late December, and with other members of the unit, stayed in houses in Galway, Longford and Leitrim before making our way to the border.

We joined the Pearse Column on the Monaghan/Fermanagh border on about the 28th December. The volunteers who travelled north with me joined two columns operating in the Fermanagh/Tyrone area.

The Pearse Column was based in a house close to the border. It was there I first met the late Seán Sabhat - we were together for about two days with the rest of the volunteers. I remember him



as a tall athletic man with a beard and fair to reddish hair. He was a softly spoken man who never raised his voice and always spoke in Irish to people who had a knowledge of the language. He had a great presence and seemed to be constantly doing little jobs around the house. I remember thinking at the time how important every small detail was to him.

I will not go into detail about the attack on Brookborough Barracks; it has all been written about before. The booklet, 'They Kept Faith', gives a very accurate account of the event. Likewise, the aftermath of the raid is covered in detail in the same booklet.

Six of the fourteen volunteers were injured in the raid. Seán Sabhat and Fergal O'Hanlon were made as comfortable as possible; they were both badly injured. They were brought to a farmhouse that appeared to be temporarily vacant. The people in a nearby house were asked to get a priest and a doctor. At this stage the flares and search lights had lit up the area. The twelve



*Seán Sabhat taking part in the march in Limerick referred to by Tony Nolan.  
Seán is at the rear of the column.*

of us, with four injured men, made our way across Slieve Beagh. The crossing took most of the night.

In the early hours of the morning we crossed into County Monaghan. An effort was made to get a doctor and the first man to be arrested was the man who was trying to contact a doctor. At later stages during the morning, other members of the column, all unarmed, were arrested. We were taken to Mountjoy Jail and brought from there before the Special Criminal Court. It was then that we learned about the deaths of Seán Sabhat and Fergal O'Hanlon. Each received a six-month prison sentence for 'failing to account for your movements'.

I knew Seán Sabhat for about three or four days, having lived with him in the house close to the border in the latter days of 1956. To me he was a quiet, sincere, honourable and brave man. It was an honour and privilege to have known him for even a short time. God forbid that I would ever dishonour or forsake the cause for which he so bravely gave his life.

*Seán Scott*

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## THE SEÁN SABHAT I KNEW.

One evening in 1955, having cycled from my home in Mungret, which is about four miles from Limerick City, I saw a crowd had gathered at Thomas Street corner. The meeting was on behalf of Sinn Féin Candidate Paddy Mulcahy's Election Campaign for a seat on Limerick Corporation, as it was called at that time.

The speakers as far as I remember were Paddy Mulcahy, Joe McCrystal and Seán Sabhat. Paddy Mulcahy never liked public speaking but always gave it his best shot. Joe McCrystal was a fine orator; well able to hold his audience and hecklers were no bother to him. I would say that he enjoyed taking them on. The



other speaker was Seán Sabhat. He was a tall, athletic, red haired man who wore spectacles. His speech was entirely in Irish, which was unusual for the time. This was the first time that I saw Seán Sabhat.

In April 1956 I again went into Limerick City and joined Sinn Féin Cathal Brugha Cumann. At the time Sinn Féin had a cellar rented from a German called Vyner in Thomas Street. There were approximately ten members in the Cumann. Shortly afterwards I made contact with the I.R.A. and asked to join. I was introduced to Seán Sabhat and told him that I was seventeen years of age, while in fact I was only sixteen.

For the first six to eight weeks I attended parades on a one to one basis with Seán. I found out later he was Training Officer for the Limerick area. Seán had been a member of the F.C.A. and was a very competent training officer. I suppose during that time he was assessing me and my potential as a volunteer. I remember he asked me why I wished to join the I.R.A. My answer was no one but the I.R.A. was attempting to end partition and drive the British out of our country, and that was why I joined. He said that was also his motivation for joining.

The first parade I attended with Seán was at the back of Mungret Graveyard. Seán brought a Lee Enfield Rifle with him and trained me in its use.

Another parade I attended with Seán was in Short Arms training. This meeting was in Seán's house in Henry Street. When I joined up with the Unit we trained in other areas - Plassey, Cappanty Wood, Mount Shannon and Tervoe. We also met in Seán's house at 47, Henry Street, Hassett's Public House at Hassett's Cross and the gym in the Technical School in O'Connell Ave.

Before the start of the campaign in December 1956 we had a well trained disciplined unit of about twenty volunteers. Here are

some names of members of the unit: -

Seán Sabhat.

Mick O'Halloran.

Jack Hassett.

Noel Roche.

Jimmy McKillican.

Willie Gleeson.

Frank Doyle.

Christy McAteer.

Tony Meade.

Paddy Kelleher.

Mick Barry.

Christy O'Sullivan.

Liam O'Connor.

Jack Considine.

Diarmaid O'Donoghue.

Paddy Deegan.

Billy Byrnes.

Joe McMahon.

Paddy Mulcahy.

John O'Brien.

*Killed.*

*Active Service.*

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*Jailed in 1936, interned in '40, jailed '60.  
A man with a large family was not accepted  
for active service.*

This may not be the full list, as you will have to remember this was fifty years ago. There was very intensive training going on all the time that I was in the unit. We trained two nights a week and most Sundays. While we were enthusiastic in our desire to fight for Irish Freedom we were not aware that a campaign was imminent. I now assume that the officers of the I.R.A. in Limerick were informed about the start of the campaign but they did not tell the volunteers about it.

Our training as I already stated was carried out at various locations. These locations were usually reached on bicycles and the weapons were carried strapped to the cross bar covered by



sacking. On rare occasions we had the use of a car. We were trained in the following weapons:

- Lee Enfield 303 Rifles
- .45 calibre Webley revolvers.
- Thompson Sub Machine-guns.
- Sten sub machine guns.
- Bren Light machine guns.

Ammunition was usually in short supply and this in some ways limited our target practice. We were well trained in field craft and map reading and we regularly undertook route marches over mountainous terrain armed only with map and compass. I have always felt that our unit was one of the best trained and disciplined units in the I.R.A. over the 1956-1962 campaign. Over twenty volunteers went on active service during the campaign from the Limerick Unit. This was due in no small way to the dedication and commitment of Seán Sabhat who always inspired us.

Every time I see a funeral of an I.R.A. man and see the Tricolour, black beret and black gloves I remember the time when Seán introduced the beret and gloves as part of Volunteer dress.

I was instructed to be at a drill parade early in November, 1956 as part of our preparation as Colour Party at the year's Manchester Martyrs' Commemoration. This drill parade took place in the Model School Yard at night and unknown to the school authorities and the public. Seán Sabhat was in charge and as usual all commands were in Irish.

During the parade Seán gave us each a black beret and leather gloves, and instructed us on how they were to be worn. He also said they were to be worn at all future parades. Needless to say we had to pay for the beret and gloves ourselves, as funds were

non-existent at the time. We wore the beret and gloves for the first time in public at the Manchester Martyrs' Parade that year.

If one looks at the book "Maraíodh Seán Sabhat Aréir" page 25 and page 28 you will see two photos of guards of honour at Seán's coffin. The one on page 25 shows members of the Dublin unit, all wearing peaked caps as they stand to attention at Seán's coffin. The picture on page 28 shows Seán's funeral through Limerick with members of the Limerick unit wearing the beret and black gloves. This was the norm in all units ever after the funeral.

The 1956-1962 campaign started on December 12th 1956. Other volunteers and I were not aware that members of the Limerick unit were part of the operations on that night. This showed how tight security was. In fact six members of our unit were engaged in the campaign from the word go. They were:



*The above photo is that of Paddy Mulcahy who recruited Seán Sabhat and was appointed by IRA GHQ to take charge of Seán's Funeral.*

- Michael O'Halloran, New Street.
- Christy McAteer, McNamara Terrace.
- Noel Roche, Mount Pleasant Avenue.
- Willie Gleeson, Rossa Avenue.
- Jimmy McKillican, Wolfe Tone Street.
- Seán Sabhat, Henry Street.

Seán and his comrades may have gone north in secrecy, but when Seán's body returned it was the biggest funeral ever seen in



Limerick, with over 50,000 of his fellow citizens attending and we, the members of his unit, gave him a fitting Republican Funeral.

I had the honour and privilege of being one of the guards of honour at the funeral. (The author is the second man in the photo on page 28 in the book "Maraíodh Seán Sabhat Aréir")

To conclude I have to say the following: some of Seán's enemies have tried to besmirch Seán's memory. We have seen articles written stating that Seán went into cinemas to stop courting couples. This and other such stories are lies. Seán was a very mild mannered man, not given to aggressive behaviour and he would not engage in any such behaviour.

Seán's name lives on proudly, when many of those who tried to malign him are forgotten. It was an honour and privilege to have known and serve with him.

*Christy O'Sullivan*

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**Editors Note:**

Christy O'Sullivan himself went on active service in June, 1957. Served with and under Sean Cronin, Pat McManus and others. He saw action in many operations along the Leitrim, Cavan, and Louth border areas. He returned to Limerick in 1959. He married Peggy Cusack, a member of Cumann na mBan, and they live in Limerick.

## **SEÁN SABHAT AT WORK IN LIMERICK**

Recently, I tuned into TnaG and there he was, large as life, strutting about the screen, swinging from branch to branch and diving from high rocks into clear, blue, pools. With bare hands he slew the Gods. Yes, Tarzan has not changed over the years since

Seán Sabhat and I, who were employed on the clerical staff of Timber Importers, James Mc Mahon Ltd. frequented the local cinemas to unwind, on the rare half days we enjoyed as concessions, three or four times a year.

Our visits to the cinema or indeed to any centre of entertainment were few and far between, simply because funds were scarce and time off work was equally scarce. When you were employed by McMahons you really had to keep your head down. It was said that if you could endure and survive working in McMahons, then you could take whatever hardship and deprivation that could arise anywhere.

On the 4th January 1948, I met Seán Sabhat for the first time. That was the date I joined him as a junior clerk on the payroll of the largest Timber Merchants in the South of Ireland.

Seán would have been regarded as the senior clerk, senior in terms of service and responsibilities, but not senior in monetary earning terms. It is of interest to note that because of the hopeless economic state of the country, with massive unemployment and huge emigration, work was hard to find and some gutless family type employments paid their workers a pittance and treated them accordingly. In the so called annual review of salaries in 1955 which was said to be Seán's final salary adjustment, he was given an increase of a miserly 2/6 per week. I can vividly remember his utter disgust, having to face home to his mother, with such a pittance. I can also recall the crocodile tears of the same management when Seán died the following year.

Timber imports did not resume until well into the fifties after World War 2, therefore, there was a total dependence on native timber. The timber yards were piled high with logs which came from all over Ireland, but especially from Co. Limerick. Seán's job was to calculate the purchase cost and mine was to pay the



suppliers. This was to bring us into contact with the new invasion of titled 'gintry' who arrived into Ireland immediately after the war and who bought up thousands of acres of land, including the forests. Their superior attitude towards mere natives was very evident especially amongst the British officer types, whose loud voices and fresh tones, generated immediate interest in their presence.

Seán developed a particular interest in the acquisitions in Co. Limerick and following research went on to publish a list of their holdings, their names and titles, in the Autumn Edition of 'An Gath'.

Some thirteen planters had purchased 4670 acres of land in Co. Limerick while he listed twenty others who had various size holdings, in south and west Limerick. These were army types ranging from army guards to captains, all of whom had become part of the reconquest. Seán wrote "another year cannot pass without putting a stop to this". The galling thing was, that the first act of these invaders was to cut down the forests and sell the timber. As stated Seán had to calculate the price and I had to hand over the cheques. That was a labour of love.

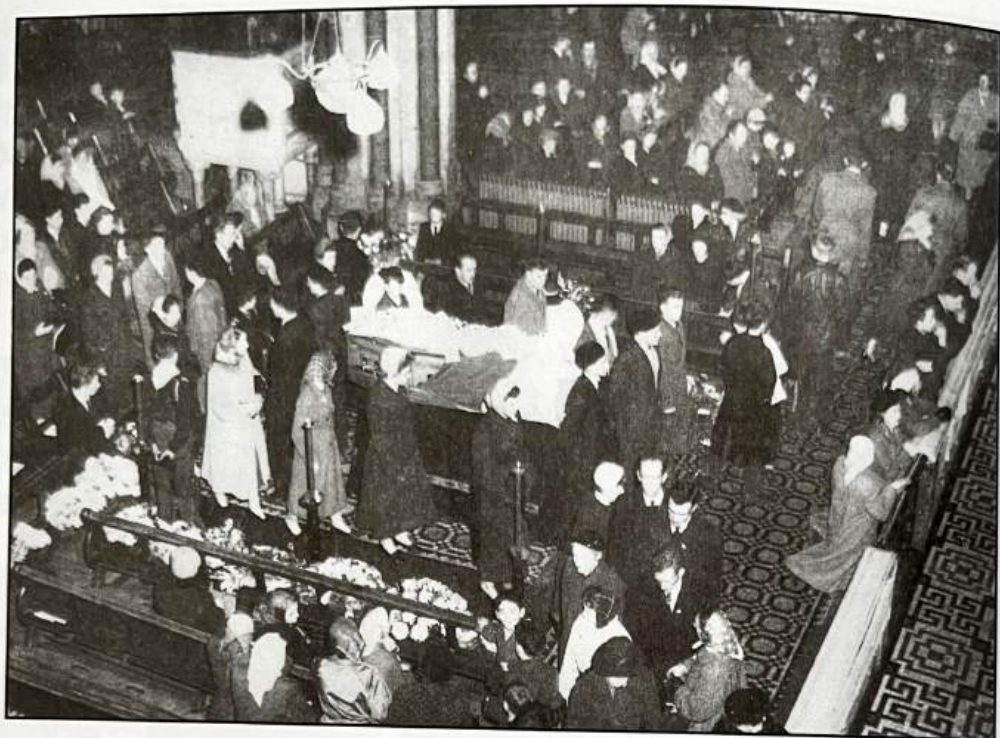
Were Seán Sabhat alive today, he would cringe at the take over by British firms of so many Irish commercial investments, to the detriment of old established decent Irish firms and industries. He would also abhor the sale by an Irish Government of our shipping, our air carriers, our communication networks and so on. We have very little left.

Briefly to illustrate his feelings on supporting Irish enterprises and industries, Seán once needed a pair of shoes, so he asked his mother to buy him a pair at Roches Stores. On her return she noticed that the heels were rubber and "made in England" but as they were the only shoes available in the size, she said he mightn't notice the heels. There was absolutely no way that he



*The above photos is Seán Sabhat's funeral passing through Patrick Street. Photo, Paddy Mulcahy collection, courtesy of Limerick University.*





*Seán Sabhat's coffin in Saint Michael's Church*



*Funeral cortege in Mulgrave Street on the way to  
Mount Saint Lawrence Cemetery*

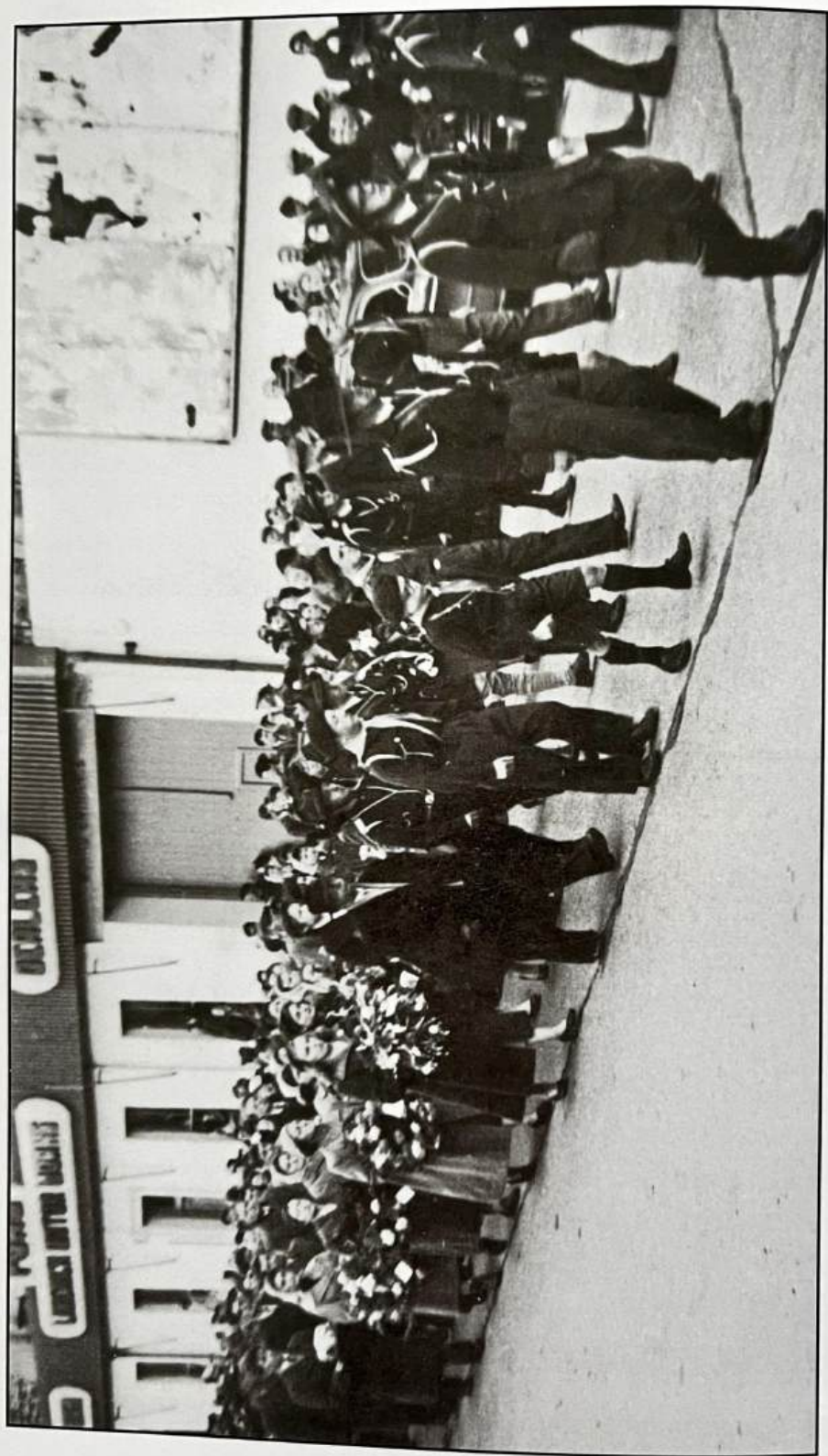


*Seán Sabhat's burial in the Republican Plot in  
Mount Saint Lawrence Cemetery*



*The funeral oration being delivered after Seán Sabhat's burial*





Na Fianna marching at Seán Sabhats funeral. The Limerick man in the black overcoat was a member of Na Fianna during the Black and Tan War and Civil War. He received a 10 year sentence in the Tan War for Republican activities. In 1940 during the IRA campaign in England John Joe and his wife Ellen were arrested for their part in operations. He received a further 10 year prison sentence. He remained a committed republican until his death in the 1960's.

would wear them, back they had to go to the shop. Seán was consistent.

Friendship between Seán and I was to grow and be cemented over the years. We both wrote separate columns in the Limerick Leader, Wednesday issues. This was in 1952/53. He was directing attention at the growth in Communism in the film world and he wrote several articles on the subject. On the other hand as a registrar of the City Board of the G.A.A. I wrote the G.A.A. notes reporting on all matches in the city. I used the non de plume "An Clarughteoir" no need to ask who came up with the handle for me. Each week we proof read each other's notes, prior to publication. It is not generally known that Seán was an ardent supporter of the game of hurling and of the county senior team. He travelled to Thurles to cheer on the boys in green. I recall him cycling out to Ballysimon to a match between Ahane and South Liberties and what a mighty game it was. On his way home he dropped into my home to arrange "some matters of state".

I was always known as an avid reader of newspapers and would buy the Irish Press on the way to work in the mornings. Before I had a chance of examining the headlines, Seán grabbed my paper and always turned to inside the last page, to read the cartoons. Being a gifted artist and cartoonist, he was particularly interested in following the fortunes of "Henry" and Captain Mac. Off with him then and on the way out the door of the office he would double back and say "Gabh mo leath scéil Anton" while at the same time deliberately upending the boxes of pins and paper clips and getting out as fast as he could, before some missile got him in the back.

Early each morning it was necessary for me to go down stairs to the strong room which was located in the sales area where Seán was based. I would have to switch on the light from outside and open the huge steel door before entering, to collect my books and



cheque book. Suddenly the door would be closed behind me and the light switched off and I'd be left in complete darkness, to wallow around, until somebody would release me. The culprit was always the same and he took great pleasure in jailing me.

When there was some "serious typing" to be done, Seán would return to the office early during lunch break and he could churn out a lot of type in a short time. When that was done and if time permitted, there was often a battle royal fought out between those of us who remained on in the premises during lunch and opened the doors - invariably a large book of invoices would crash down on them having been placed over the jam of the door, by either side in the battle. No great injury would be suffered by unsuspecting entrants. Seán enjoyed these releases of tensions. He had one great advantage over some of the undersized of us, his height permitted him to reach up to the top of the door without disturbing the missiles.

It is of interest to note that it was after completing his education at the C.B.S. that Seán really developed his love of the Irish language, which he used daily. He availed of every opportunity to use the language with everybody with whom he came in contact. On answering the telephone at work he would say "Dia Dhuit". In this way several customers made a point of using Irish as their commercial tongue. While none of the management in McMahons had any time for the language, there was a group of us who spoke in Irish amongst ourselves.

There was also a strong Republican cell in McMahons and this was nothing new as the late Comdt. Davy Dundon told me, that during the War of Independence, the water tower was used by the I.R.A to store weapons. In the 50's, there was great support for the Republican Prisoners' Dependants amongst the staff.

People often ask what motivated Seán Sabhat and how did he



come to choose the road that he followed? The answer is simple. Seán had a deep knowledge of Irish History. He realised, as did others of us who were involved in carrying on the Republican Tradition in the 50's and 60's, that until such time as England's stranglehold in Ireland was broken, there would never be peace or complete freedom, politically, economically or culturally. The connection had to be broken. This was our motivation, for which sacrifices had to be made. Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved without effort and hard work and as Seán was to write "Tá deircadh le grameis". The time for talking sweet talk was over.

I came to the Republican Movement by conviction, by reading, studying Irish history and by way of attending lectures. I became involved in 1954 and in 1955 was director of transport during the local government elections. In all the candidates who presented themselves for election on behalf of Sinn Féin, Padraig Mulcahy was elected subsequently to Limerick City Council. During the campaign, Sinn Féin speakers took to the streets for the first time in years. I made my maiden speech outside Janesboro Church from the back of a tractor. We proceeded then to the down-town Dominican Church. Seán Sabhat did not address the meetings as he was still an officer in the F.C.A.. However, he followed us around on his bike and on the following Monday morning, he was waiting for me with his hand out to congratulate me on my efforts. One criticism he offered, "never speak in public with your hands in your pockets". Advice I was not to forget in many speaking engagements undertaken in Limerick, Clare, Galway and Kerry. It is of interest to note, that Seán never joined Sinn Féin. As Secretary of the Comairle Ceanntar I would have known had he been a member. Now he did make himself available to deliver talks on history, finance and the language and of course he was our training officer in matters of a military nature. Wednesday evenings were set aside for training and before taking to the country I would have my tea at Sabhats.



Seán's mother was a lovely caring lady and always made me welcome. Seán would cross the street to Mescalls' shop for cooked ham, tomatoes and bananas. We would then change into our "country gear" after the tea and head off on our bikes to join the others, have a chat and when persuaded to do so, Seán would take out the violin and play a few tunes. He was no Sean Maguire, but he was very determined to master the instrument.

On other occasions we would just listen to the radio and he often complained that Radio Éireann seldom played Irish music or songs. He considered that the great John McCormack sang too many "be gorragh" and "me shillelagh under me arm" type of stage Irish songs. Seán's favourite song was "Eileen Aroon" and while I never heard him sing it, but why would he, when he had me singing it umpteen times for him, which I did one year going to Bodenstown by coach.

On special occasions, like the unveiling of the memorial to Sean Wall, Seán would arrive into work in his F.C.A. officers uniform. He didn't offer any apology to anyone for doing so. I think management were afraid to challenge him, as indeed they were following Seán's death, when they knew of my involvement in the movement. It was a regular occurrence on Mondays for a member of the Special Branch to check with the Managing Director, if I were in attendance at work. As in the case of Seán, the management did not challenge me directly.

I often think that Seán had a great respect for that first Tipperary patriot, Sean Treacy - his love for the language, his love of literature and reading and of music. He had a large collection of books, on a wide range of subjects, military matters, finance, painting and the arts. Seán was a regular customer to O'Mahoney's Book Shop. In fact I can testify that hardly a day passed that he didn't visit O'Mahony's. It wasn't at all unusual for me when it came to time for cycling home to Ballysimon, to find that my

bicycle was missing. There was only one place to look for it, parked outside O'Mahoneys Book Shop. Seán would have taken it at lunch hour, cycled it down town and would forget that he had it, becoming so engrossed in his purchases and he would have walked back to work. People were more honest then. But it meant that by the time that I had walked down town to collect my bike and then cycled home, that I was always late getting home to my dinner.

Seán Sabhat was in manner and bearing always a gentleman. Indeed, he had plenty of cause for being resentful of a working environment that lacked civility on the front of management towards their staff. I suppose one could not expect anything else, as the same management could not offer each other a civil word. There was constant infighting and wrangling going on between the McMahon brothers. However, one thing they had in common with each other was that they didn't feel obliged to be generous with the staff who created their wealth.

On two occasions Seán went about organising his four or so colleagues into the Distributive Workers' Union. Both attempts failed, as he was too open and honest in his approach at organising. The result - he was called before the Managing Director and told "You can have your Union or your job". Seán had no option but to concede, as too many of his colleagues lacked backbone and backed down.

On another day and on another occasion it gave me just satisfaction to organise all the clerical staff of McMahons and of Spaight's into the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. I knew Seán was by my side and was proud of my achievement. On the sad occasion of the home coming of Seán's remains from





Guard of honour in Limerick at Seán Sabhat's funeral where the beret is being worn. This form of dress was introduced in Limerick by Seán Sabhat as referred to by Christy O'Sullivan who is the second man on the right.

Brookborough I had the privilege of being a member of the Guard of Honour. Thus we travelled together for the last time on the same street on which he would have accompanied his girlfriend, Maire, to her home in the Old Cork Road. Seán would wheel his green bicycle and later cycle home to Henry Street. This was the same street along which we as Republicans had marched to honour our patriot dead at Easter 1956 - within the year of his death.

I will end on a happy note, by recalling the time that Seán spent his annual holidays cycling the country up as far as Croagh Patrick and back by Connemara. Seán decided to climb the rock and

parked his green bike complete with all his gear and tent in a field nearby. On descending the rock he found a herd of cattle surrounding his bike and they had eaten their way through all his possessions. Typical of the man, he said, sure a person only needs one lot of clothing, you can only wear one suit at a time.

Seán was a man of principles who really had little faith in politicians to reunite our country. His disillusionment began in 1948 when he campaigned on behalf of Sean MacBride and Clann na Poblacta. When elected, MacBride found that once he accepted office in a 26 County assembly he was in a political straight jacket, just like Gerry Adams is now. Seán knew that compromise would not completá the task begun by the men and women of Easter 1916. He also knew that in every generation men and women would be found to keep the faith and complete the task.

*Tony Nolan.*

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## **LIMERICK CONTRIBUTION TO OPERATION HARVEST 1956 - 1962**

On the 9th December, 1956, six young men left Limerick secretly to journey North. They were:

- Michael O'Halloran, 4, St. Brigid's Ave., New St.,
- Christopher McAteer, 3, McNamara's Tce.,
- Noel Roche, 6, Mount Pleasant Ave.,
- William Gleeson, 12, Rossa Ave.,
- James McKillican, 28 Wolfe Tone St.,
- And Seán Sabhat, 47, Henry St.

They were 6 Volunteers of the Irish Republican Army who had spent the last three years training and preparing for the next



phase of the fight for Irish Freedom.

The Leadership of the I.R.A. had sent orders to the Limerick Command for volunteers who would start this phase of the campaign on the 12th of December, 1956. They were aware of the calibre of those who were coming because they had been in training for such a campaign.

Seán Sabhat was the eldest of the six Limerick men on that night. He was 27 years of age having been born on the 8th Feb., 1928. He was employed as a clerk at James McMahon's Timber Importers. Seán had a great dedication to the Irish language and spoke Irish whenever he could and encouraged others to do so. He wrote, illustrated and distributed a number of Irish publications, they were An Gasog Óg for children, An Giolla and later An Ghath. He also wrote a weekly column in Irish for the Limerick Weekly Echo and was a regular contributor to Rusc. He was president of An Realt and a member of Conradh na Gaeilge.

In September of 1953 Seán met Paddy Mulcahy on the steps of Conradh na Gaeilge Hall at No.17, Thomas Street, Limerick. Both men knew one another because of their interest in Irish and membership of an Conradh. Paddy Mulcahy was a well known member of Sinn Féin and was a collector for the Royal Liver Insurance Co. Paddy had been arrested in 1936 along with Sean Glynn and 30 others when they attempted to get to Bodenstown for the Annual Wolfe Tone Commemoration. That year the Commemoration had been banned by the Fianna Fáil Administration. Many of those arrested were jailed and Sean Glynn was to die in Arbour Hill Prison.

During the Second World War Paddy was one of many Limerick I.R.A. men interned in the Curragh Internment Camp. Paddy was to spend most of the war in the camp. He was a well known republican in Limerick and as such was often contacted by those



wishing to join the Republican Movement.

Seán Sabhat had on his F.C.A. uniform when both men met on the fateful night. He informed Paddy that he wished to join the I.R.A and that was the reason for the meeting. Mulcahy put it to him that he was a member of the F.C.A. and as such a member of the Free State Military. He also pointed out to him that he had been a member of Clann na Poblachta, a political party which had accepted The 26 County State. Anybody who retained membership of these groups or who accepted there legitimacy would not be admitted to the Republican Movement.

Seán Sabhat then informed Paddy Mulcahy that he had been considering this over a lengthy period and he had reached the conclusion that the freedom of Ireland would not be achieved through the 26 County Forces or through the 26 County Government or any of the political parties who accepted it. He had decided to resign from the F.C.A. and wanted to join the I.R.A. and fight for Ireland's freedom. On Paddy Mulcahy's recommendation Seán was admitted to membership of the I.R.A.

The end result of that conversation in 1953 was that Seán Sabhat was one of the six Limerick Volunteers who went to the occupied area in December, 1956. Seán was to join the Pearse Flying Column which was to operate in the Fermanagh Area of the Six Counties. The Pearse Column took part in the armed resistance which started as part of Operation Harvest on December 12th, 1956. The Column operated all through the remainder of December and took part in the attack on Brookborough R.U.C. Barracks on January 1st. 1957 and unfortunately Seán Sabhat and Fergal O'Hanlon, a volunteer from Monaghan, were killed (a full account on that attack can be read in this publication). Seán's body was taken back to Limerick. It was the biggest funeral ever seen in Limerick and he was buried in the Republican Plot in Mount St. Lawrence Cemetery and now lies there with many more



other Limerick men and women who died for Irish Freedom.

The other five volunteers who went North with Seán in December returned to take part in his funeral. Unfortunately, they were arrested and charged in Limerick District Court with failing to account for their movements. During the trial an Inspector Murphy said that he had put the following questions to the men:-

1. *Name and Address*
2. *Give an account of your movements between 9th Dec 1956 to the present date*
3. *Were they out of Limerick during the period already referred to*
4. *Give an account of their movements on Jan 6th + 7th*
5. *Had they any arms, ammunition or explosives in their possession on Jan. 6th or 7th*
6. *Did they know of any friends or acquaintances who had ammunition*
7. *Did they know anything about explosives stolen in Co. Tipperary between Jan. 6th or 7th*
8. *Did they know of any person in unlawful possession of ammunition, firearms or explosives at the present time*
9. *Did they know of any instructions or orders emanating from an unlawful organization (I.R.A.) to any person or party from December 1st to the present date*

None of the five answered any of the questions and were sentenced to 3 months in Mountjoy Jail.

The Campaign started on the 12th December, 1956 and was to continue until 26th February, 1962 and volunteers from Limerick were to play a very full part in it. Over the five years and three months period 28 Limerick I.R.A. men were to go North to fight against the forces of England in occupation of the Six Counties.

Willie Gleeson of Rossa Villas, one of those who went with Seán

in Dec., 1956 was interned in the Curragh Concentration Camp. He was to lead an escape of 16 internees out of the camp on Dec. 2nd 1958 and two of whom were later recaptured. The cutters used to cut the barbed wire were made by another Limerick man, Volunteer Jimmy Deveraux, who also escaped.

Tony Meade of Wolfe Tone Street was arrested in Armagh in July 1958 and charged and received a 14 year sentence. He was not released from Crumlin Road Jail until 1963.

The last two volunteers from Limerick who went on active service were Joe Quinn from St. Mary's Park and Alf Larkin from Farranshone. After 3 months Joe Quinn was arrested and failed to account for his movements. He was sentenced to 6 months which he served in Mountjoy. Alf Larkin was arrested after one year on active service. When arrested he was in the company of two others Michael McEldowney, Maghera, Co. Derry and Richy Nagle, Middleton, Co. Cork.



Funeral in Dublin shows the guard of honour at Seán Sabhat's hearse.  
Note the wearing of peaked caps.



They had just taken part in an attack on an R.U.C. patrol and crossed the border. They were surprised by a 26 County Patrol and although they were armed with two 303 rifles and a Thompson machine gun they did not fire on the patrol and were arrested. The reason they did not offer any resistance to 26 County Forces was because this was forbidden by the I.R.A. - General Army Order No. 8.

On the 20th April, 1962, at the end of the 1956/'62 Campaign, the 26 County Administration released all the political prisoners they had. There were 29 - all sentenced by the Special Criminal Court. The Limerick men released were:

- Alf Larkin, Farranshone, (7 yrs.)
- Thomas O'Sullivan, Georges Quay, (2yrs.)  
(a native of Cashel living in Limerick)
- Paddy Mulcahy, Lisheen, Dublin Rd., (1yr.)  
(this was the man who recruited Seán Sabhat)
- Paddy Ryan, Hospital, Knocklong, Co. Limerick (9mths.)

The last volunteer to return home was Larry McDonnell, Patrickswell, Co. Limerick. He had been on active service from 1958, while he spent a short period in Jail, but on his release he had returned to active service and was a full time volunteer. When the leadership suspended operations he was one of those who was instructed to dump all arms, ammunition and materials and to ensure that they would be fully serviceable when the next phase in the struggle for freedom occurred.

### *Des Long Limerick*

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## WITHDRAWAL AND AFTERMATH OF BROOKEBOROUGH RAID

As we have seen in other articles in this booklet there were fourteen members of the Pearse Column. When the column withdrew they drove to a spot six miles outside Brookeborough. They stopped at a crossroads known as Baxter's cross. They dismounted from the truck, which was badly shot up and could not proceed any further.

They placed the unconscious or dead volunteers Seán Sabhat and Fergal O'Hanlon inside a barn. O/C Seán Garland who was badly wounded said he would stay there too and informed Daithi O'Connell that he (O'Connell) was now in charge. O'Connell said, "If that is so then you are coming with the rest of the active service unit."

He ordered that the weapons were to be carried by those not injured and instructed two volunteers to pick up Seán Garland and instructed three more volunteers to assist the other three wounded men.

The column then marched across Sliabh Breagh into County Monaghan.

It is to the credit of the volunteers that none of them failed to reach Co. Monaghan and this reflects well on their commitment and discipline.

Seán Scott from Galway who was carrying five 303 rifles fell on that fateful journey and injured his back severely. He was to spend a long period suffering from that back injury. He spent his time in the Curragh Concentration camp in a 'plaster of Paris' back brace, which reached from his neck to his hips.



When the column reached Monaghan the wounded were put in a house near the border and the arms were safely dumped.

The uninjured survivors who were by now exhausted ran into a Free State patrol and were arrested.

O'Connell who had gone for medical assistance for his men was also picked up and arrested. He arranged with free State forces for medical attention for the wounded.

On the fourth of January eight members of the active service unit were charged in the District Court before Justice Redden. The 8 were:

- Sean Scott aged 21 of Ballinasloe Co Galway.
- Harry Geoff aged 25 of Enniscorthy Co. Wexford.
- Michael O'Brien aged 24 Donnycarney Co Dublin.
- Michael O'Callaigh aged 17 of Ballinasloe Co Galway
- Liam Nolan aged 29 of Dublin.
- Patrick Tierney Enniskillen Co Tyrone
- Patrick Connelly of Roslea Co Fermanagh and
- Eighteen year old now O/C Daithi O'Connell from Cork.

All eight marched into court under orders given by Daithi O'Connell. They were charged with: refusing to give an account of their movements and refusing to give all information in their possession in relation to the commission of a crime by another person of a scheduled offence.

The State Solicitor asked that they be remanded in custody for one week. When asked by the district justice if they had any objection to the remand date O'Connell said "there is no evidence to support this charge. I protest to being taken into custody in this situation on behalf of all here." They were remanded for one week.

In relation to the four volunteers who were wounded a report in the Irish Times dated January 9th 1957 said "The four wounded men who were transferred to the Mater Hospital Dublin last week have not been charged with any offence. It was learned yesterday that two of the men have left the hospital. No guard was placed on the men while they were in hospital and doctors in Monaghan told the police that the men required immediate medical attention".

Since they arrived in Dublin they have not been in police custody.

The police will not disclose the whereabouts of the two men who have left the hospital."

In fact what happened was: On January 2nd the four wounded men were taken to Monaghan County Hospital for treatment where they were admitted.

A news report in the Irish times on January 4th stated: "Hospital silent on wounded men, all enquiries referred to Monaghan Gardai." The paper also stated that the four men were Sean Garland (22) Belvedere Place, Dublin, Philip Donoughue, Lally Rd., Ballyfermot, Pat O'Riordan, Dublin and Vincent Connolly, Armagh.

In fact the last two were Paddy O'Regan, Dublin and Vincent Conlon, Armagh.

The paper also stated that one man had a severe hip wound and may be transferred to Dublin.

The four were transferred to Dublin after treatment in Monaghan Hospital.



They were taken in one ambulance. During the transfer Phil O'Donoghue was unable to travel in the back of the ambulance as he became very sick and was transferred to the front cab for the journey.

When they reached the Mater Hospital O'Donoghue saw an opportunity for escape. He jumped out of the ambulance, ran up the road and hid under a hedge. The pursuing police failed to find him and he made good his escape. Volunteers from the Dublin unit later escorted the other three volunteers from the hospital and they too made good their escape.

On January 8th Sinn Féin announced their intention to contest the forthcoming elections in the 26 counties. They stated that their candidates would not take their seats in the Free State Assembly when elected. Their spokesperson stated "we have no intention of going into Leinster House and taking part in twenty-six county politics." He continued, "We believe it would be damaging to our cause to get mixed up in party political politics."

In the subsequent elections four Sinn Féin abstentionist candidates were elected. They were:

- John Joe Rice south Kerry.
- John Joe McGirl Sligo/ Leitrim
- Eimeachan O'Hanlon, a brother of Feargal O'Hanlon elected for Monaghan and
- Ruairí Ó Brádaigh for Longford /Westmeath

The same article in the Irish Times January 9th stated, "Following the recent raid in Northern Ireland the authorities have now banned Sinn Féin as a political party, and have closed it's Belfast office. This action was taken under the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act".

Addressing the court O'Connell said: "Regardless of the charges that have been made against me, the reason I am standing here is because I have resisted British rule in Ireland. Our cause stands for the abolition of partition, which we believe is the stranglehold by which Britain rules Ireland, and which is at the root of the unemployment, emigration and the terrible apathy of the Irish people towards national affairs.

We believe that the so called Irish Government we have had in the twenty-six counties have betrayed the Irish people, and that they(defendants) have not done...O'Connell asked what had happened to the freedom fighters from Hungary when they arrived in Austria. They were welcomed but when they (defendants) came back into the twenty-six counties they were greeted by machine guns. They would be judged by the Irish people."

District Justice Fitzpatrick then sentenced all eight to six months imprisonment in Mountjoy Jail. In July just two weeks before the men were due to be released the state introduced internment. On completion of their jail term all eight were sent to the Curragh military camp and interned. As was said already Sean Garland escaped from the Mater hospital and returned to active service. He was arrested in Belfast on November 4th, 1958 and was sentenced. He was to remain in jail until the campaign ended in 1962.

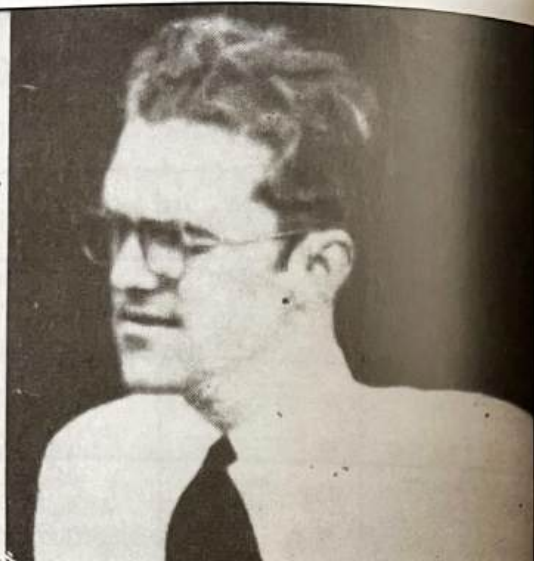
On September 24th, 1958 Daithí O'Connell and Ruairí Ó Brádaigh escaped from the Curragh Internment Camp and went back on active service. O'Connell was director of operations for a period. He was critically wounded in an ambush by RUC and B-Specials at Arboe, Co. Tyrone on November 10th, 1959. He was to lose his spleen and suffer kidney damage as a result. He was imprisoned and was to remain in jail at Crumlin Road Prison until after the end of the 1956-1962 campaign.



# LIST OF THOSE IRA MEN WHO TOOK PART IN THE BROOKEBOROUGH RUC BARRACK ATTACK

Name	County	Function	Weapon	Casualties
Sean Garland	Dublin	Column Comdr. Fought in Assault Group	Model 1921 Thomson Sub-Machine Gun	Wounded
Dave O' Connell	Cork	2nd in Command	Model 1921 Thomson Sub-Machine Gun	Deceased
Liam Nolan	Dublin	Rifleman Assault Group Section Leader Assault Group	Lee Enfield No. 4 MK 1	Deceased
Harry Gough	Wexford	Rifleman Assault Group	Lee Enfield No. 4 MK 1	Deceased
Phil Donahue	Dublin	Rifleman Assault Group Laid Mines	Lee Enfield No. 4 MK 1	Wounded
Paddy O'Regan	Dublin	Rifleman Cover Group	Lee Enfield No. 4 MK 1	Wounded
Seán South	Limerick	Section Leader of Cover Group	Bren Light Machine Gun	Killed in Action
Fergal O'Hanlon	Monaghan	Rifleman Assault Group	Lee Enfield No. 4 MK 1	Killed in Action
Packie Tierney	Fermanagh	Rifleman cover Group	Lee Enfield No. 4 MK 1	
Sean Scott	Galway	Rifleman Cover Group	Lee Enfield	Injured Back During Withdrawal
Mick Kelly	Galway	Rifleman Cut Off Group	Lee Enfield No.4 Mk 1	
Mick O'Brien	Dublin	Rifleman Cut Off Group	Lee Enfield No. 4 Mk 1	
Vincent Conlon	Armagh	Rifleman No 1 Driver	Lee Enfield No. 4 Mk 1	Wounded Now Deceased
Pat Connolly	Fermanagh	Rifleman No 2 Driver Local Guide	Lee Enfield No. 4 Mk 1	

They  
Kept  
Faith . . .



Lean  
Siad  
Long na  
Laoc . . .



"I know of no other means by  
which a Nation's freedom  
can be attained, and when  
attained, maintained, except  
by armed men."

—MAC PIRAIS.





## THEY KEPT FAITH

Foilsithe ag  
Roinn Eolais na Poblacta 1975

This booklet was first published in April, 1957 and its 10,000 copies were sold within two months. When it was decided to write the story of Brookeborough and tell the Irish people how Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon died the authors had no idea that the demand would be so great. No single event in Irish history in recent years so gripped the minds and hearts of the Irish people as the fight at Brookeborough. The reason for this would be difficult for an outsider to determine. An Irish man or woman has no such difficulty. It is all part of our struggle for freedom, which in this generation is represented by the campaign of resistance now taking place in the British-occupied Six Counties.

To those who knew them Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon represented all that was best in this generation of Irish manhood. Nothing about their young lives rang a false note and their deaths were in keeping with their lives. Their comrades live on to carry their message of hope and freedom to all of Ireland's people.

That message is symbolized in resistance - resistance to foreign rule, resistance to oppression, resistance to tyranny. They are telling the world that this generation of Ireland's youth will not submit to foreign domination. They are telling mankind in general and Britain in particular that the Irish people will not continue as defenseless victims of a predatory imperialism. There are many things wrong with the Ireland of today. Among the worst of them is the shadow of British occupation, which darkens our land. Irish Republicans trace all the evils of our political and economic life directly to British Imperial control. They want to break that control. It will be this generation's historic mission to end it forever. And that is the finest kind of monument we can erect to the memory of Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon. We shall erect it. We pledge ourselves to that. It is the kind of monument they

would like best.  
September 1957.

## The Mother

I do not grudge. them, Lord, I do not grudge  
My two strong sons that I have seen go out  
To break their strength and die, they and a few  
In bloody protest for a glorious thing,  
They shall be spoken of among their people,  
The generations shall remember them,  
And call them blessed.  
But I will speak their names to my own heart in the long nights;  
The little names that were familiar once  
round my dead hearth.  
Lord, thou are hard on mothers  
We suffer in their coming and their going;  
And tho' I grudge them not. I weary, weary of the long sorrow—  
And yet I have my joy:  
My sons were faithful, and they fought

PADRAIG PEARSE

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## The People Prayed

50,000 people came to Limerick City to attend Seán Sabhat's funeral at the republican Plot on January 5th 1957. It was the largest cortege the city had ever seen. When the hearse arrived near midnight on January 4th, 20,000 were waiting to pay their respects. Many knelt in prayer as they lined the streets in pouring rain. During the long journey from the Border, similar scenes were witnessed in cities, towns, villages and townlands.

In Dundalk, workers downed tools to march in procession; in Drogheda, it was the same. In Dublin the body lay in state in Parnell Square for two hours while crowds filed past. As the cortege moved down O'Connell Street, Westmoreland Street,



College Green, Dame Street, to the Naas road, thousands followed until the marchers, four deep, stretched for blocks.

Fergal O'Hanlon's body travelled a shorter distance from Enniskillen to Monaghan town, but the tribute of the people was no less impressive. He was buried on January 4th, at Latlurcan Cemetery, and the thousands overflowed from the packed Cathedral to the streets and jammed the half-mile distance to the graveyard.

Over Seán Sabbat's grave in Limerick, a comrade said: "He died for freedom; for my sake. For your sake, for the sake of the generations that are to come . . . let his life and his death be a lesson and a guide to all of us."

And at Latlurcan, Mrs. O'Hanlon told the people there: "I blessed Fergal before he went out to fight for his country." Another Irish mother had spoken.

Fergal O'Hanlon and Seán Sabhat had made the final journey home to rest among their people. Whatever British propagandists or politicians might say or leave unsaid, the Irish people were proud of their sons slain by the masters who want to keep us in bondage.

Two Irish soldiers were dead—killed by British bullets during the attack on Brookeborough, Co. Fermanagh, on New Year's Day, 1957. They died for freedom.

They were dead before their time. As Tone, Emmet, Pearse, and Connolly died before their time. The Cause was the same one.

## Who Were They

Seán Sabhat was 28 when death came to him while manning a machine-gun for Irish freedom in Occupied Ire-land. Fergal O'Hanlon had just turned 20. Legends will be built around Seán Sabhat's name, but no one knew him better than the comrades with whom he campaigned and fought.

At such times everything is reduced to its simplest terms and against the harsh background, one comes forth a man or not. To his comrades Seán Sabhat was a man who never raised his voice, never got angry or annoyed, never complained and always spoke in Irish.

One said of Seán that "no job was too big for him and none was ever too small." He would plot a movement on the map or clean the weapons of the Column. He would draw pictures for the little children in the houses where he stayed and explain the meaning in the Irish language.

Over miles of rugged country during the long withdrawals he carried his Bren and he would help another less fit if the need arose. His tall, spare body, topped by red hair and the beard he grew, when the fight opened and said he would not shave till Ireland was free, is the picture his comrades carry of him now.

Men from the North, denied the opportunity of learn-ing Irish, will remember that every order given by him was in the ancient tongue, then translated for their benefit. And that too was a sacrifice, for Seán never used English if it could be avoided. Seán Sabhat wrote extensively for Irish language publica-tions. He also painted and was a talented cartoonist.

All his writings and all his drawings had a connection with the Cause of Ireland—free and Gaelic—and he rejected reward of any kind; even the simple one of having his cartoons initalled. He



wrote, illustrated, and published (at his own expense) a Republican magazine in Irish called *An Gath*. In the last issue he wrote: "Jacta Alea Est! There is an end to foolishness; the time for talk has ended. No two could be as different outwardly as Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon, and yet basically, they were a pattern of the same heroic mould.

Feargal was a stockily built athlete. with a shock of dark curly hair and a smiling face. He played for Monaghan senior football team, was a hand-baller and a tracksman of note. He worked at Monaghan County Council offices as a draughtsman. He came of an Irish-Ireland family and thought deeply on the subject of Irish Independence.

He had been a member of the Republican Movement for at least two years before volunteering for Column work with his brother Irishmen who had risen in revolt against British despotism on December 12th, 1956.

Up to Christmas he had been engaged in other important work in connection with the campaign. Then he had his wish and was sent to Fermanagh. Somewhere this youth had written in a notebook: "For the Cause it is necessary to sacrifice and maybe even to die". These, then, were the men all Ireland honoured during the first week of the 1957 New Year. They were men of whom any nation could be proud.

## How It Began

The Revolt in the North, which began on December 12th. 1956 had quite a simple explanation: Britain's writ still ran in part of Ireland and British troops occupied it; Ireland could not be free until both were removed.

One of the Columns participating in this revolt was made up of lads from the North and South, the East and West. They named it the Pearse Column. It took part in the attack on Armagh, withdrew across country to Fermanagh, combined with a North Fermanagh unit in the Lisnaskea attack, re-organised and continued to harass the enemy.

Seán Sabhat was a member of the Pearse Column from the day it was formed and was a Section Leader during all its operations. The weeks of campaigning entailed constant movement across Fermanagh from base to base and always under enemy pressure. Higher planning envisaged a combined attack with other units on an important British installation.

On New Year's Day the Column decided to strike at the enemy in, one of his bases before withdrawing, from this operational sector. Brookeborough was picked as the target. The time: 5.30p.m. that same day.

An early evening attack was decided on for several reasons –not least that the enemy was growing accustomed to late night or early morning strikes.

The general plan was to enter the town by commandeered transport, lay mines under cover of L.M.G. fire, make the enemy surrender and demolish the post. The move from the base took longer than expected, and attack time was consequently delayed, making the H-hour 7 p.m. rather than 5.30 p.m. A lorry was seized.



The 14 men of the Column lined the sides. The R.U.C. post lay on their right, an inverted L-shaped building, as they rode into Brookeborough. Twenty yards beyond the barracks the truck stopped. Each man quickly moved to his allotted job. Seán Sabhat mounted his Bren gun on the truck floor (from that position he could give constant cover during the withdrawal), his number two beside him. He focused his sights on the shadowy building and waited. Then on the signal he opened fire in short rapid bursts. The attack was on.

Shops and houses lined Brookeborough's one street—the town from which Stormont's puppet Premier takes his English title. He has an estate and residence at Colebrook nearby. The Column was divided into assault and cover groups for the operation. The former consisted of minelayers and submachine-gunners. The cover party was grouped around the Bren gun and a number of riflemen. One rifleman cleared civilians off the streets and ensured that the line of withdrawal would not be blocked. The driver and a rifleman remained in the cab of the truck. A rifleman covered the left side of the street. The assault party, which was to take cover in the barrack's rear via an unlocked iron gate, found the gate barred and moved to a nearby porch instead.

The whole operation, which was to be brief, hinged on speed, mobility and surprise. And also on a factor discounted up to then, for they had never failed before—two mines. One mine was made up on Sunday—it was now Monday—and the operation was to take place that evening.

The majority of the column had been through a number of operations and each man knew his particular job. In the cold darkness of 7 p.m., no one in Brookeborough (an almost 100 per cent. Unionist town) paid attention to the truck driving down the street. The barracks was quiet. Children ran home when the column man cleared the streets. One man with a car tried to

block the way, but under a lowered rifle muzzle, changed his mind. The line of withdrawal was clearly understood— first road to the right of the fork. The men were all in position. Seconds only elapsed since the truck halted. Surprise was complete.

## The Attack

The leader of the assault group and a minelayer ran forward to the barrack entrance.

A policeman jumped to the doorway and was driven back by a burst from a Thompson.

The mine was laid. Both men moved back to the cover of the shop. The Bren was scattering its bursts along the building. The mine was to be detonated electrically. The man at the mine lay on the footpath and made the connection.

"The mine won't go off," he shouted to the assault leader. A second man went forward to the entrance and laid another mine.

He straightened the cable and tipped the wires.

Nothing happened. The second mine wouldn't explode.

Somebody aimed a burst of fire at the mines. They didn't detonate. The garrison was now firing on the truck with an L.M.G. from an upper window on the street end of the inverted L—almost directly downwards. The column commander was on the street ordering his men to withdraw.

They saw him stumble and go down. The fire was withering as the assault group ran towards the truck. One man lobbed a grenade through the barrack lower window. Feargal O'Hanlon was with the assault. He had the Molotov cocktails. A burst of fire



caught him in the legs as he made the truck.

Another assault man had his forehead grazed by a bullet. He was the Volunteer who laid the first mine. Seán Sabhat stayed by the Bren until they riddled him. He emptied three magazines into the enemy post. His number two was shot in the back and thighs. Once the mines failed, the position in the open truck was untenable.

No one could foresee the failure of two mines, and if the Bren stopped, the assault group would be exposed and helpless. So Seán Sabhat stayed behind the Bren until a hail of bullets cut him down. He told his number two, "I've got it," and spoke no more. The driver was waiting for the withdrawal signal, his hands on the wheel, the engine running. A burst tore the right door, roof and floor of the cab, and a bullet caught his foot. Then as he shifted position, another burst came between him and the rifleman on his left. "I didn't believe we'd ever get out of there alive," he said. "But everyone was very calm!"

When I look back I think it was another man was sitting behind that wheel." The Column Commander dodged bullets by rolling and crawling across the street. He was hit as he climbed into the truck, which first reversed and then lurched forward, at least two wheels flat from bullet holes. They picked up the rifleman who had cleared the street and drove with a stuttering engine out of Brookeborough. Six of the Column's 14 men had received wounds of one kind or another.

## The Withdrawal

Police rushed into the street, firing as they ran and throwing grenades. There were three explosions. The lorry was shot through with bullet holes. Its tipper kept rising and the lads hammered on the cab's roof to tell the driver. He straightened it out as the truck swayed over the roadway.



"Coming to the bends was the worst," he said.

"I thought we'd roll over a couple of times."

"I kept her on the road as best I could," the driver said.

"At first I couldn't understand why the boys were hammering on the cab, and then I couldn't find the tipper control."

It was later they discovered that they also had a burst fuel pipe. The withdrawal line had been worked out but now with six casualties, a change of plan was imperative. As they drove towards a crossroads, they saw the lights of a police patrol car move down a road on their left. They took the road to the right, realised that it was wrong, and halted.

The police car, then about a hundred yards away, opened fire. The truck reversed and went straight ahead. The police car did not attempt to follow. They were going now about 15 miles per hour and were visible to many people along the route. At Altawark Cross, there was a farmhouse. A Sacred Heart lamp was lit in the kitchen. The truck stopped. The Bren was mounted. The Column took up defense positions. Two men went to the door and knocked, but got no reply. One got in through the back, but there was no one inside. They saw a light in an outhouse and went to investigate, while others took Sáan and Fergal to where the light was. Both were unconscious. Seán Sabhat's pulse was still beating. A Volunteer said an Act of Contrition in his ear. They laid the Freedom Fighters gently on the ground and covered them. The badly wounded Column Commander took a leading part in these arrangements. Now he said he would stay behind with a loaded gun in his hand and wait for the enemy. He felt his wounds would hold the remainder back. The Column second-in-command took charge and ordered the O.C. to come with them.

They divided the arms and moved up a byroad to a farmhouse a



few hundred yards away.

They asked the people of the house to get a priest and doctor. Now many car lights covered the cross they had left. There was intense shooting and they could hear the bullets crash into the abandoned truck. Silence..... and later there was more shooting.

Locals said the police and Specials had shot up the dwelling house and outhouses.

There were bullet marks every-where. They said it was lucky there was no one in the house.

## The Inquest

Describing the finding of Seán Sabhat and Fergal O'Hanlon, a police spokesman at the Enniskillen inquest said the two men "had been abandoned by their comrades." They also said that Feargal O'Hanlon's life could have been saved if given proper medical attention. But Feargal O'Hanlon was in the hands of his enemies within ten minutes of being wounded. They had ample time to save his life — were they so inclined. His comrades fear that Feargal O'Hanlon died in the hands of his enemies during the last burst of fire heard from the crossroads. Police admit they opened fire on the truck, dwelling house and outbuildings, when they reached the cross. There is evidence to substantiate the charge that these helpless Freedom Fighters were manhandled by police and/or Specials.

At the inquest, Seán Sabhat's head was bruised and discoloured. When his comrades left him, his body was unmarked except for bullet wounds, and the only post-mortem was that held by the enemy.

A column withdrawing under the circumstances described here

and suffering almost 50 per cent casualties could not hope to take two unconscious men across a mountain. To have attempted it would have hastened their deaths. The wisest course was to get local help and leave the wounded as comfortable as possible until that aid came. This they did.

## The Aftermath

Facing the column now was the problem of getting the four wounded men to a doctor.

They decided to cross un-armed into the '26-County area. One took a compass bearing for a point on the Fernanagh-Monaghan border. It led across Slieve Beagh. The mountain march took five hours. They halted as little as possible, for rest made it all the more difficult for the wounded (and two were badly shot up) to keep going. But numerous times they were forced to lie low on the sodden ground as lights and flares lit up the countryside. The big search for the guerillas was on. They came to a house just on the Border and the wounded were rested and fed. The man in charge went for a doctor and was arrested by 26-County authorities two hundred yards from the house. Then the wounded were pounced on by military, who covered the approach of Special Branch men to where the helpless and, unarmed men lay.

Subsequently other members of the Column were seized. The wounded went to Monaghan Hospital.

The remainder were taken under armed escort to the Bridewell, Dublin, held in solitary confinement for 48 hours, then charged with "Failing to give an account of their movements during New Year's Day"—a day they spent in Occupied Ireland fighting the enemies of our people and country. For this "crime" they were sentenced to six months' imprisonment in the Dublin District Court.



Following the sentence, the men who fought at Brookeborough attempted to explain their position so that the Irish people might read and understand. The District Justice intervened and told them sarcastically that he was not interested in their views. The same District Justice failed to reply when asked if it was true that he was an ex-officer of the British Army. The case was closed. The comrades of Seán Sabhat and Feargal O'Hanlon were lodged in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin.

## Conclusion

Why did the two mines fail at Brookeborough? One of the mines was made up on the day before the operation; the other that evening. The Volunteers were by now seasoned men who had used mines successfully in a number of operations. Let it be also remembered that the guerrillas travelled great distances in all kinds of weather and dumped their supplies in many areas. Explosives were carried in sacks on their backs. Brookeborough would undoubtedly have been a great tactical success but for the failure of the mines. It marked a setback for the Column, for two brave Freedom Fighters died. In Ireland's resistance every man is an individual and his loss a heavy cross. But the men who fought at Brookeborough have gleaned one piece of knowledge that is of inestimable value to them —and indeed to the Resistance Movement as a whole:

THEY KNOW NOW THAT SEÁN SABHAT AND FEARGAL O'HANLON  
DID NOT  
DIE IN VAIN AND THAT THE FIGHT OF THIS GENERATION FOR  
FREEDOM

WILL BE REMEMBERED BY THE IRISH PEOPLE.

They know, too, that the Cause of a free Ireland is winning  
and that no power on earth  
can stop it. Tyranny must be resisted and beaten; there is no  
other way.

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*Pen and Ink drawing by Seán Sabhat commemorating Wolfe Tone and other patriots*



## Lean SIAD Iorg NA LAOCH. ..

### Seán Sabhat

"Tá Seán Sabhat marbhe maraíodh e le piléar agus é ag troid go fiocmhar i n-aghaidh na Ngall." B'shin an scéal brónach a leath ar fud Luimní agus ar fud na hEireann ar an dara lá d'Eanáir 1957. D'fhéachamar ar a chéile le h-uafás in ár súilibh. Seadh! Bhí sé fíor\_\_bhí laoch Luimní, laoch cumasach ardaigeanta imithe ar shlí na fírinne ó'n oíche roimhe sin nuair thuit sé san ár i mBaile Brookeborough, Co. Fhearmanach.

Dialdh ar ndialdh thánig gach duine ar eolas. Leis an eolas thánig brón thar chuimse, doilgheas chroí agus sileadh frasach deor. Thosnuigh na daoine ag smaomeadh --- Seán Sabhat marbh! Ní fada gur thuigeadar cén fáth agus láithreach bonn bíodar bródúil, mórtasach as an éacht a rinne sé. Rinneadar iarriacht a rá len a chéile i n-árd a geinn is a ngutha gur bheannuigh Seán dóibh as Gaeilge uair nó do; gur labhruigeadar leis sa Chonradh nó sa Réalt---ar aon agó go ndearnadar teangmháil leis, pé lughaide é, tráth.

Nuair a thánaig a chorp fé chlúdach bhláth-fhleascanna thar an mbóthar fada óBhaile Mhuineacháin go Luimneach lean na mílte é agus bheannuigh na mílte eile dhó agus é ag sciorradh thart. Ag tarraint ar theorann chathair Luimní bhí 20,000 ag fanúint ar feadh dhá uair a chloig fán mbáistigh chun Seán Sabhat a fháiseadh len a gcroíthe. Chulamar ar gach taobh dinn daoine ag paidreoireacht go h-árd agus go h-íseal brónach agus an fheartain ag teacht go tiubh. Seadh! Bhí Píarsach, 1956, ag teacht abhaile chun a chathair dhúchais. Féach an fáilte 'tá roimhe! Cinnte, is follusach, tá croí na ndaoine san áit ceart fós.

## An tSochraid

An lá dar gcion fé chlapsholus thráthnóna Eanair agus 50,000 ag mairesáil go buachach ar shráideanna Luimní in a dhiadh h-adhlacadh é I bPlasóig na bPoblachtánach I Roilg Naomh Labhráis imeasc na mairtíreach a d'imthigh roimhe ar chasán cruaidh, achrannach na saoirse. Beidh Seán in a luí annsin go lá an luain agus beidh Luimneach agus Éire mórdhálach as comh fada is a mbeidh modh agus meas ag Gaeil ar laochras agus ar ghaiscidheacht.

## An Fear Féin

Rugadh Seán ar an 8ú lá Feabhra, 1928. Chuidh sé ar scoil ar dtuis go dtí scoil Uinsionn Phóil Naofa, Sr. Annraoi, Luimneach, agus 'na dhiadh sin go dtí Scoil Na mBráthar gCríostúil, Sr. Seasnáin, mar fhan sé go dtí gur dhein sé scrúdú na h-ArdTeistiméarachta. Ghlac sé post annsin mar chléreach I gComhlucht Shéamuis Mhic Mhathúna Teo.

D'éag sé i mbláth na hóige. Duine iomráiteach, cáiliúil a b'eadh Seán Sabhat i saol Luimní ó thánig sé i n-aois fir. Bhí a ainm i mbéal Gael Luimní mar fhéar cróga agus trodaire tostach. Feicim arís é cé go bhfuil sé sínte san uaigh---Seán Rua coiscéim fhada faoi---An fathach gealgáireach ciúin a raibh croí glan macánta an linbh ann. Bhí aithne ag a lán air agus measc aca air dá réir as ucht a uaisleachta, a thréithe dhaonnaí, a aidhmeanna uasnadúra agus a mheon álainn.

## Dílis dá Thír agus Teanga

Níor labhair sé ar aon rud, mórán, riamh liom ach ar aithbheochaint na teangan agus buachaint iomlán saoirse. Bhion an dá aidhm ar a raibh a aigne dírithe i gcónaí. B'iontach an greim bhí aige ar labhairt is scríobhadh na teangan. D'oibrigh sé go dian



le eolas ealaíonta, críochnúil, d'fáil uirthi agus i ndeire na dála d'éirig leis go seoigh. Tá na h-altanna a scrí sé i gcóir "Dord" agus "Rosc" mar chruthúntas ar an eolas sin. Níos déannaí fós nuair d'follsigh sé "Gach" theasbáin sé go soiléir go raibh sé mar mhaighistir ar a cheird.

### Agus é óg

'Sna gasóga a fuair sé an chéad léargus ar an mbrí 'bhí le Tír-ghrá agus náisiúntacht. Chuidigh a chuid scolaíochta fé na Bráithre Críostúla, ar ndó, leis an léargus sin a dhaingniú agus a fhorbairt. Nuair d'fhág sé na Bráithre bhí socruithe aige in a intinn beart eicín fóna a dhéanamh ar son a thíre uair eicín. Níor bhac Seán le cúrsaí an tsaoil seo mórán. Bhí post seasmhach breágh aige ó d'fhág sé an scoil ach bhí beag beann aige ar airgead nó rachmas. Bhí sé sásta leis an mbeagán. Níor ól sé nó níor chaith sé agus pé airgead bhí aige t'reis féachaint in dhiadh riachtanaisí a mháthar, chaith sé é ar chúis na Geilge. Ní raibh Seán mar an gnáth dhuine a rachadh go damhsa nó scannán le cúpla uair a chluig a dhiomailt. Istigh in a sheomra staidéir i dtigh a mháthar théadh Seán len a pheata---cat bán gurb' ainm dó Pangur---ag déanamh dian scrúdú ar stair a thire, a theanga is cultúr a cine. Sa seomra seo a leag sé síos a fheallsúnacht náisiúnta. Timcheall ar bhí leabhraí ár laochra a d'imthigh roimhe sa troid. San áit seo a chum sé a chuid filíochta, a chuid altanna agus díreach san áit chéanna a thánig na léaráidí áilne ón a láimh le h-agmaigh "Dord" "Rose" "Giolla" agus "gach".

Is iomdha uair a buaileas isteach annsan chuige. Bheadh comhrádh eadrainn ar rudaí éagsúla ach i gcónaí tháineamar thar n-ais chun na poinntí móra bhí in a aigne. É ag deanamh iarracht iad a réiteach---an teanga agus saoirse. Bhí buaidh na cainte aige ach ní fhaca mé ar buille é riamh nó feargach. Le guth fearúil iseal chuireadh sé síos go réasúnta agus go h-eolgasach ar an



ádhbhar 'bhi á plé eadrainn agus níor chula mé é riamh ag árdú an ghutha sin nó ag éirí mí-charthanach. T'réis na mblian ag plé leis is féidir liom a rá go riabh aithne thar na beartaibh agam air. Ós rud é go roimmeann Dia na subháileí is féidir liom a rá anois gur roinn Sé a lán ar Seán. Ba naomh é ar a lán slite agus níl sé éasgaidh uasnádúracht na naomhachta a mheas go beacht. Mar sin fágfaidh mé Seán ag Dia ach deirfidh mé nach dtiocfaidh mé treasna ar a leithéad arís mar fear.

Bhi an t-ádh liom bheith leis ar feadh roinnt blian. Ní raibh mise beo nuair bhí an Píarsach ann agus b'iomdha uair bhí aithmhéala orm nach bhfacas é. Ach chonnaic mé an dara Píarsach a n'fhág rian ar m'aighe go rachaidh mé san uaigh.

## **Gael thar na Gaelaibh**

Má chaith Seán a lán ama in a sheomra ag déanamh staidéar ní h-ionann sin agus a rá nach raibh sé gníomhach. Aon ghluaiseacht ar son na Gaeilge bhí i gCathair Luimní len a linn bhí sé ann. Chaith sé na blianta mar bhall de Chonradh na Gaedhilge. Mar uachtarán ar an Réalt rinne sé a lán maitheasca ar son Muire, Mathair Dé agus lucht déirce Luimní. Fhad's mhair Cáirde na Gaeilge d'oibrigh Seán gCoiste. I ngach eagraíocht dá raibh sé páirteach inntí bhí ana-ghlaoch air mar léachtí agus mar chainnteoir. Eisean bhí i ndon díospóireacht shuimiúil a chur ar fail nó léacht bhreá a thabairt.

## **Seadairí na Saoirse**

Um cháisc, 1949, chabhruigh sé le cúigear eile chun Seadairí na Saoirse, a bhunú agus chuidigh sé go mór le páipear na Seadairí, "an Dord," a cur ar fail. San ghluaiseacht seo thánig sé chun aipeachain mar smaointeoir náisiúnta agus mar chainnteoir poiblí. As Gaeilge amháin bheadh na h-óráideacha ag na Seadairí agus is cuimhin liom Seán ar ardán ós coir "micilín" amach ag



cainnt go soiléir agus go díograsach ar fheallsúnacht ceart náisiúnta agus ag an am céanna ag cáineadh droch-staid na tíre. B'aobhinn bheith beo sna leathe sin nuair tháinig na Seadairí ar shráideanna Luimní chun muintir na cathrach a mhúscailt tré Geilge. Bhí tionchur ar leath ag na ngluaiseacht seo ar aigne Sheáin agus ón uair seo amach níor fheach sé thar n-ais le míniú d'fáil ó aoinne ar an chinniúin bhí i ndán dó.

## Giolla na Saoirse

Bhunaigh sé ar a chonnlán féin gluaiseacht eile---Giolla na Saoirse. Tharraing sé buachaillí óga na cathrach isteach inntí chun iad d'íoliúint i gcóir Seadairí na Saoirse ach aois áithrid bheith bainte amach aca. D'fóillsigh sé páipéar dóibh siúd, "An Giolla," gan cónamh airgid ó aoinne. Uaireannta bheadh suas le céad aige sna Giollaí agus chuireadh sé ionadh ar dhuine an chaoi a raibh fear amháin i ndon gach rud ó Ghaeilge go dornálaíocht a mhúineadh dóibh.

Ach d'éirig leis agus tá fir óga na cathrach seo inniu ag guidhe Dé ar son anam Sheáin agus ag leanúint go dluth len a shoisgéal náisiúnta. Beidh toradh as na Giollaí agus na Seadairí fós a fheachaidh chuige nach rachaidh dortú a chuid fola ar neamhní. Le cúpla blian anuas d'oibrigh Seán go dícheallach san F.C.A. agus ina dhiadh sin nArm na Poblachta chun eolais chruinn d'fáil ar chúrsaí míleata. Nuair a d'fhag sé Luimneach chun dul thar an dteorainn le reacht na nGall a chríogadh agus dhibirt as an dTuaisceart bhí réidh in anam, i meoin agus i gcorp le cath d'fhearadh in aghaidh naimhde a thire.

Ar feadh roinnt seachtmhain throid sé go cróga ach thanig an glaoch ó Dia i ndeir na dála i sráidbhaile se Tuaisceart. As a chuid fola tiocfaidh saoirseacht----- níl aon aimhreas faoi sin.

Do ré ba gairid, bhí lán

De ghníomhartha gaisce na ndán  
A chroí mar leanbh bhí grádhach,  
Ár nguí a anam go h-árd.

### Feargal Ó'h-Annlúain

Feargal Ó' h-Annlúain--- ógánach mismiúl, Feagrúil bhí ann. Thuig sé go maith an ród bhí roimhe—an bóthar fada caol sin chun saoirse na hÉireann. Rugdh agus tógadh I Muineacháin é. Ar an 31ú lá Eanáir, 1936, seadh ugradh é agus baistíodh Feargal Máire ó hÁnnluain é I bPríomh Eaglais Naoimh Macartáin. Clann Gaelach de sheana-shliocht Chlainn Uí Annluain do b'eadh a mhuintir agus tógadh I gcreideamh agus meoin na nGael é. D'freastal sé scoil ar dtús agus gan ach an triú bhlian d'aois scoite aige, I Scoil na Naoineán, Clochar lughbhaidh, Muineacháin.

Ba ghaeilge teanga labhartha teaghlach Uí Annluain ariamh agus ní raibh bearla ar bith ag Feargal ag dul ar scoil dó den chéad uair. Tar éis dó an Chéad Chomaoinn do ghlacadh, d'athraigh sé go scoil na mBráthar gCríostúil, mar ba ghnáth do bhuachaillí óga na h-áite. I rith Samhraidh 1945. 1946 agus 1947 d'freascail sé Coláiste Ranna d'feirise, Dún na nGall le bárr-líofacht do chur ar chuid Gaeilge.

I 1948 bhain sé Scoláireacht amach don Mhéan Scoil agus i 1951 bháin sé an Meán Teastas amach le h-onóireacha I ngach abhair. Chur sé críoch ar a chuid oideachais in Ard-Scoil Naomh Macartáin Muineacháin, áit a bhain sé an t-Ard Teastas amach. Tar éis fágaint na scoile dó d'imigh sé ag obair do thógáilí. Ó Lochráin agus a chuid, Teo, mar chléireach chostais. Ó shin chuaidh sé ag obair do Chomhairle Chondae Mhuineacháin mar dreachtóir I nOifig an Innealltóra Chondae. Bhí sé ag obair annsin nuair fuair sé an glaoch chun troda ar son saoirse na hÉireann.



## An Fear Féin

Tá sé soiléar ó bhrón pháistí agus daoine fásta araon nuair cualathas scéal a bháis cén cineál duine bhí ann. Ba dhuine croíúil gealgháireach é Feargal, sciopaidh chun cabhrach ar aoinne bheadh thíos ag coimhlint an tsaoil so. Réidh chun imeartha le páistí -leo siúd a chaith sé cuid mhaith dá chuid saoire---agus anois táid ag fágaint bláthanna fiáine ar a uaigh uaigneach. Sul ar fhág sé a chlann ar 27ú la nollag, 1956, d'innis sé dá mháthair faoi gur thug sé dílseacht d'Éirinn agus gan ach an ceathrú bliain déag scoite aige. Ba Chomaoineadóir laethiúil é ar feadh a shaoil. Tríd tríd a dhialainn tá nótaí ann ag cur l n-iúl dó freastal ar na Sacraimintí.

Bhí an tsuim aige i gcluichí na nGael agus d'imir sé go minic d'fóirne an Chondae i ngach roinn ó aosánaig go sinnsear. Bhí suim aige 'sna cleasa lúith comh maith agus gnóthaigh sé ag an rith agus ag liathróid láime. Agus an tuairim seasmhach aige i ngach rud ---má's fiú rud déanamh in aon chor is fiú é do dheanamh chomh maith agus is féadir.

## Ón A Dhialainn

Ar aghaidh a dhialainn tá scríofa, "dulce et decorum est, mori pro Patria" ( is modhúil is is binn é bas d'fail ar son na Tíre dúchaise). Ar an cúl leathanach scríofa: "To live and so conduct yourself that you will be proud to face the people back home when you return ." an 19ú lá scríobh sé:

"Tá sé 12.30 r.n. anois maidin lae Nollag 19---Táim im luí ag smaoneamh---ní thiocfaidh an lá sciopaidh go leor nuair is féidir liom troid ar son na hÉireann.. Cuidigh Naomh Seán Bosco liom agus láidrig mé."

An 24ú lá Nollag scríobh sé:

"is síor-Nollaig' é coinsias glan. Mean oíche—bhí mé ar Faoisdin—  
mothuigim an-mhaith."

"tá tú imithe uainn, A Fheargail,

Ar shlí na Fírinne,

Ach bheidh tú I gcroíthe Gaeil go deo, Ar a ndearna tú ar son  
Róisín Duibh."

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## THE DREAM

When a young man dies for his country, what does he die for?  
He dies not for green fields, silvery lakes, purple mountains,  
white farm-houses or city streets of pleasant memory. He dies for  
a people.

You may question his wisdom. You may condemn his methods.

You may hint that he was, in his own way, seeking excitement or  
that he was dreaming romantic dreams of glory.

But in these days there are plenty of ways of seeking excitement  
without seeking death.

And in these days the romance of swirling flags and glittering  
swords is gone.

When young men risk death they do so for what they consider a  
worthy cause, the cause of their nation. And in that word nation  
they wrap up the ideas of 'a people.'



They want those people to have liberty to govern themselves properly. They want those people to live in comfort in their homeland, enjoying justice and equality of opportunity.

You may question the wisdom of a young man's methods. You may condemn them.

But you cannot question or condemn the dream for which he died.

If you are anything other than a complete self-centred moron, or a despairing cynic, you, too, have that dream in your heart for your people and your children.

And whilst you discuss the young man who dies does it occur to you to examine your own attitude to the dream?

You may praise or criticise him.

But what, beyond discussion, are you doing for the dream? You watch the young people moving out to England, Canada, Australia and America.

You fume about the over-all disease of 'patronage' and 'influence.'

You rant about Governments and Civil Service.

You complain bitterly about the country's lack of money, of production and prestige.

You talk and debate energetical

But how much do you do?

## A Mother's Blessing

When Ireland is calling, Feargal, my boy  
What more can a fond mother do  
Only search in her heart and say with a sigh,  
"God's Blessing and mine be with you."  
From Nazareth the road led to Calvary's hill,  
And His Mother then showed the way  
A mother should share in the cause of her son,  
When destiny chooses the day.  
When Ireland is calling, Feargal, my boy,  
Her message comes but to the few  
Who, hearing her voice in the tumult of life,  
Are ready to dare and to do

Daring the might of aggression and power  
To fearlessly right a grave wrong  
"May God's Blessing and mine be with you my boy,  
And with Ireland to whom you belong

Con Leith Marti

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## Seán Sabhat of Garryowen (Air: Roddy MacCorley)

'Twas on a dreary New Year's day as the shades of  
night came down,  
A lorry load of volunteers approached a Border town;  
There were men from Dublin and from Cork,  
Fermanagh and Tyrone,  
But the leader was a Limerick man. Seán Sabhat of Garryowen.

And as they moved along the street up to the Barrack door,  
they scorned the danger they would meet,  
the fate that lay in store.  
They were fighting for old Ireland's cause,  
to claim our very own,  
And the foremost of that gallant band was Sabhat of Garryowen.

But the Sergeant foiled their daring plan,  
he spied them thro' the door;  
Then the sten guns and the rifles,  
a hail of death did pour;  
And when that awful night was past,  
two men were cold as stone;  
There was one from near the Border and one from Garryowen.

No more he'll hear the seagull cry  
o'er the murmuring Shannon tide.  
For he fell beneath the Northern sky,  
brave Hanlon at his side,  
He has gone to join that gallant band of  
Plunkett, Pearse and Tone.  
A martyr for old Ireland, Seán Sabhat of Garryowen.

*Written by Limerick man Sean Costelloe*

# *Thank You*

*Coiste Cuimneacháin Seán Sabhat Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the following for their assistance and all their efforts.*

*Mr Brendan Breen who gave us permission to erect the Plaque on this property, The house where Seán Sabhat was born and lived at NO. 47 Henry Street.*

*Mrs Anne Noonan who proof read the manuscript and corrected it.*

*Mr Phil Fitzgerald for all his efforts in producing the artwork and photos.*

*To all those who so gratefully subscribed financing so that this plaque could at last be erected to honour the memory of Seán Sabhat in his native city.*

*We are grateful to Dr. Ruan O'Donnell who delivered the oration at the unveiling.*

*We are proud to have Padraig O'Reagáin, Seán Sabhat Comrade In Arms, President to perform the Unveiling Ceremoney,*

*Thanks to the staff of Ryan Printers for their help and patience.*

*Finally to those who remain faithful to the memory of  
Seán Sabhat.*



# Plaque Unveiling Commemorative Booklet



Photograph of plaque erected at  
47 Henry Street, Limerick City  
Unveiled by his comrade Padraigh Ó'Reagáin  
1st January 2015

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