

Patrick Casey of Grange Co. Limerick

ON Easter Sunday, 1916, the Limerick City Volunteers marched to Killonan and there set up camp. One of the men who paraded that day was Patrick Casey of Grange, Co. Limerick, who was born on **June 4, 1895**. The plans for the Limerick Brigade, as for the Cork Brigade, in the Easter Rising were linked with the expected landing of arms and when this failed no alternative plans were ready. For Patrick Casey as for the other 176 men who had taken up arms that week-end in Limerick, the conflicting orders and the failure of the arms landing left them confused and helpless. Despondent and frustrated they were demobilised to hold themselves ready for another day.

The young Patrick Casey found work in Cork in the factory of Messrs. Henry Ford and Son and soon entered into the athletic life of the city. He played hurling with St. Finbarr's club and took part in road and field sports. After some time he went to Dublin and found employment with Messrs. Arthur Guinness. Then came an opportunity to return to his native county and he went to work in Ballybricken creamery.

Casey had been continuously active in the Volunteers. Now in the countryside best known to him he began to give his comrades the benefit of his natural qualities of leadership and he was soon to undertake the dangerous and onerous duties of battalion quartermaster, 5th Battalion, Mid-Limerick Brigade. He joined the brigade flying column on its inception and took part in many actions including the ambushes at Grange and Ballinagarde and an attack on the R.I.C. at Fedamore. He was able to keep his men supplied from a secret arms dump in the creamery at Ballybricken.

On May 1, 1921, Patrick Casey took part in his last action against the British forces

of occupation. On that bright sunny morning at Shraharla on the North Cork border between Mitchelstown and Kilfinane, the little group of the brigade column was about to take up positions for an ambush when they were surprised by four Crossley tenders filled with British troops and R.I.C. and supported by an armoured car. The column was under the command of Liam Forde, O-C Mid-Limerick Brigade and Sean Carroll O/C Column. The battle than began that morning was to last for two days and to take a heavy toll of some of the finest and bravest of Limerick's fighting men.

Patrick Moloney has described the battle. "With all the advantages in their favour the enemy opened a withering fire on the exposed I.R.A. men. A running fight followed as the column fought grimly to extricate itself from an almost impossible situation. Captain Paddy Starr was shot dead. Captain James Horan and Tim Hennessy, having been isolated from the main body were also killed. Patrick Casey was wounded and taken prisoner. Next day the same little band of Mid-Limerick men, together with members of the East and West Limerick Brigade Columns were again engaged by the enemy at Lackelly in East Limerick wher Jim^[sic] Frahill, Pat Ryan and Pat Riordan of Mid-Limerick Brigade and T. Howard of East Limerick Brigade lost their lives."

Patrick Casey was taken to Cork Military Barracks on the day of his capture, May 1, 1921, was tried that day by drumhead courtmartial and executed the following day. A British officer stated at his trial that Casey had continued to fire until all his ammunition was used and had sacrificed himself to cover the retreat of his companions.

An outstanding field athlete Casey was over six feet tall, and had played hurling with Ballybricken and Fedamore hurling clubs. He held prizes for many field and road events. His body lies in what was part of Cork Prison yard now incorporated into the grounds of University College, Cork.

[Note the differences between this account and that under 'Ref']

17th Sep 2011

New memorial to patriots including Nenagh man

By Br Dan Fitzgerald

Some of you may know the lines from Laurence Binyon's 'Poems for the Fallen':

They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary
them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the
sun and in the morning,

We will remember them.

Binyon was writing about those who died in the Great War 1914-1918 fighting for the freedom of small nations. They are remembered now on poppy days and honoured in the public media here and elsewhere.

Patrick Casey of Caherelly and Patrick Starr of Nenagh were not among them. They did fight for the freedom of a small nation and consequently met their deaths, one before a British firing squad and the other on the battlefield. Both paid the ultimate price for

their courage and love of their native land. Patrick Casey's fate is unique in the history of the Irish War of Independence as he was the only member of the IRA to be sentenced to death by a drumhead court-martial (a court-martial held in the field to hear urgent charges of offences committed in action) and executed.

In 1921 the Galbally Patrol consisting of soldiers from the Green Howards Regiment along with RIC and Black and Tans based in the village were under the command of Captain Anthony Turton. He studied the tactics of the IRA very closely and developed counter measures. He rarely used lorries but preferred to travel on foot or by bicycle. Thus it was that at Shraherla between Kilfinane and Kildorrery on Sunday morning May 1, 1921 a mixed force of British military and police surprised the IRA in the very act of setting up an

ambush, acting on "information" leaked to them by Turton himself. The British force comprised of about 30 men under the Green Howard's commanding Officer Colonel Marais based in Tipperary town, along with soldiers from the Queen's Regiment based in Kilworth. The military laid down a withering fire from rifles and machine guns as the volunteers hastily retreated. Patrick Casey, James Horan, Timothy Hennessey and Patrick Starr from Silver Street in Nenagh facilitated the escape of their comrades by taking up positions and returning covering fire. Patrick Starr and James Horan from Caherconlish were killed almost immediately. With Hennessey wounded and now surrounded, Casey with an empty magazine in his gun had no choice but to surrender. He was taken by military lorry, along with the wounded Timothy

Hennessey to Victoria Barracks, Cork. At 8.30 the following morning Patrick Casey was court-martialled, and sentenced to death by firing squad.

A phone call to General Strickland determined that he be taken to Detention Jail, now part of UCC grounds and executed that same day. At 6.30pm on that May Monday (25 hours after his capture) Patrick Casey was executed by firing squad and buried in Cork. His case never came before the Judge Advocate General for review before being carried out; he was not given the right to appeal; neither was he allowed time for final visits from family. His case was later brought up in the British House of Parliament by Major McKenzie Wood and by Captain Wedgewood Benn, both of whom had served with distinction in the Great War and were appalled by the misconduct of the mock

trial and hasty execution.

On Sunday week September 25, 90 years after his death, Patrick Casey will at last be remembered and honoured by the unveiling of a memorial to him in his native Caherelly, (near Caherconlish in Co Limerick) by the Patrick Casey Memorial Committee. His comrades who died with him will be remembered too, and we will all be reminded of the huge sacrifices made by a previous generation to win our freedom. We will remember them, and perhaps even strangers passing that way will ponder on their deeds and pray for their eternal rest.

A booklet has been prepared for the occasion by Thomas Toomey, historian and author, detailing Patrick Casey's part in the struggle for Irish independence.