

President's Impressive Plea At Bruff For Unity In Irish Ranks

ANYTHING between six and ten thousand people, many of them Old I.R.A. men from all over County Limerick, packed the town of Bruff on Sunday to honour some of their dead comrades in the 1917-1922 fight for Irish freedom.

They were there also to see the President, Mr. Sean T. O'Kelly, unveil a memorial to Brigadier Commandant Sean Wall, who was shot dead by Crown forces at Annacarty in May, 1921, and to a number of his fellow East Limerick Brigade men who fell in action in the fight.

In the course of an eloquent speech, the President made an impressive plea for unity in the Irish ranks. Stressing the importance of forgetting past differences, he said that "while we stood together and fought as an united people the might of Britain sought in vain to defeat and destroy us." Expressing pleasure at how the men of the East Limerick Brigade agreed to sink their animosities in carrying out the Bruff memorial project, he appealed to them to "cement that unity and to widen its scope." "The restoration of unity," added the President, would bring many blessings on Ireland.

AMONG those on the platform with the President were Mr. Liam Purcell, Uregare, who presided, Sean Wall's brothers, Very Rev. T. Canon Wall, P.P., Ballinacorney, and Mr. Liam Wall, his widow, Mrs. Bridie Wall; his son, Rev. G. Wall, C.C., St. Mary's, and his daughter, Miss G. Wall; Mr. Donnchadh O'Brinain, T.D., Parliamentary Secretary; Mr. J. J. Collins, T.D., Chairman, Limerick Co. Council; Mr. Tadg Crowley, T.D., the Co. Manager (Mr. F. J. Meghen); The Acting Co. Secretary (Mr. A. McMahon); Mr. Leo Broe, the Sculptor; Mr. E. J. Sheahan, F.R.I.A.; Major-General Liam Hayes, Mr. Nicholas O'Dwyer, M.P., Mr. Thomas Moloney, Miss Bridget Wade and Messrs. Joseph, Patrick and John Wade (sister and brothers of Vol. Henry Wade), Messrs. Joe and John Conway and the Misses Conway (relatives of Captain Martin Conway); Messrs. Patrick and James Moloney (brothers of the late Ned Moloney).

Before the President's arrival in Bruff, the Limerick Co. Council (all members, with the Chairman, Mr. J. J. Collins, T.D., in attendance) held a special meeting in the Court-house to sign an address of welcome to Mr. O'Kelly. The address was signed by the Chairman, Senator Sean Hartney; Mr. D. J. Madden, T.D., and Mr. D. P. Quilsh, who was a member of the East Limerick Flying Column.

COUNTY COUNCIL ADDRESS.

The President then received the County Council's illuminated address of welcome from Acting Co. Secretary A. McMahon.

The address, which was read by Mr. McMahon, said: "It was in the last days of 1920 that Martin Conway, Eamon Moloney, John Quinlan, Henry Wade and Daniel Sheehan made the great sacrifice. Five months later Sean Wall went the same hard road to death, just one year after he had been elected Chairman of the Limerick County Council. The soldiers of the Republican Army were aided in their fight by many local authorities whose resistance to the British regime proved an important factor in bringing about the collapse of foreign rule in Ireland. Limerick's Republican Co. Council, having declared its allegiance to Dail Eireann, the elected Government of the people, bent all its energies towards the realisation of national aspirations. Not, however, confining its efforts to the immediate and tremendous task of overthrowing the occupying forces, the Council under the Chairmanship of Sean Wall, initiated many major improvements in this existing Local Government Code.

"In the important work of rebuilding the nation, the housing of

of the country at certain periods made more vigorous and sustained efforts for freedom than others. At one time it was the men of the North under the O'Neills and O'Donnells who strove to drive out the invader. At another period the men of Desmond carried the greater part of the burden of the fight. The men of the West and the men of Leinster made most courageous efforts in 1798 to end British rule in Ireland. The heroism of the men of Mayo and Wexford brought to their two counties credit and renown because of their gallantry then.

"It is to the eternal credit of the men of our time that the last fight to smash foreign rule in Ireland, which was organised on an all-Ireland basis, was carried through with cool, calm judgment and directed during the six or seven years that the struggle lasted with a skill, a thoroughness and a persistency that redounds to the credit of the men, alive and dead who directed and controlled it with such supreme courage and efficiency.

THOMOND NEVER FAILED.

"It is well known, or at any rate it should be well known, to every citizen in our land that Thomond never failed when the drums beat to battle in the fight for Irish freedom. We know from our history the noble part played so often in that fight by the men and also by the women of Limerick City. There is nothing more inspiring in our history than the gallant defence put up by Limerick against the powerful well-organised, well-equipped Williamite armies in the late 17th century. What schoolboy has not been thrilled, too, by the story of the gallant raid of Sarsfield and his men to destroy the English ammunition dump at Ballyneety?

"All the accounts we have read of brave deeds done in different parts of the country by heroic men in freedom have been matched in this Limerick area by the heroic men of our own day. Some of these were our own friends, brothers and comrades, and many of them—alas, too many—never survived to celebrate the victory they gave their lives to achieve.

IN THE NAME OF ALL IRELAND.

"I am, indeed, happy, as President of Ireland, to come here to unveil this monument to Sean Wall and his gallant comrades and to all the fighting men of the East Limerick Brigade. In the name of all Ireland and in the name of the men who fought in every county of our land I salute the noble and gallant dead. I beg of you, men and women of Limerick, to honour them, to treasure their memories and never to forget them in your prayers.

"Most of you who are listening to me are I am sure, familiar with the stories of the fights waged in this East Limerick area by the Army of the Republic during the 1917-1922 period. The memories of these days, of heroic comrades and

late them specially because they submerged the differences, prejudices and animosities that unfortunately have divided them, as they divided so many of the best men of Ireland, during the last thirty years.

"When, thirty to forty years ago, we of the old Sinn Fein movement were, in Ireland's name, acting together, planning and fighting for the independence that was Ireland's due, we would never admit that all the might of the then greatest imperial power in the world could ever divide us. In the days from 1916 to 1922, small nation as we were, and without the resources necessary for such a campaign we put up a fight against Britain that won the admiration of the whole world. The heroism and devotion our people displayed in this most unequal struggle has never been surpassed. While we stood together and fought as an united people the might of Britain sought in vain to defeat and destroy us.

"That is why all of us whose memories carry us back to the great days of 1916 to 1922, and the successes we achieved before division came, are saddened sometimes when we cast our minds back over the years from 1922 to this year of Our Lord.

THE IRISH LANGUAGE.

"One of the primary aims of our movement always has been the restoration of the Irish language as the spoken language of the people. That part of our work made giant strides in the decade which ended in 1922. Never was there known before such enthusiasm for the learning and speaking of Irish as was experienced in those years. On all sides, in every corner of the country, during the day and well into the night, all classes of our people worked with joy in their hearts to learn the old language. This was equally true of every class of the community. Classes for the learning of Irish were even frequent among those who might be called the people of the Black North. Oh, but we were gloriously enthusiastic and optimistic in those years. We believed that inside a very few years the restoration of Irish as the spoken tongue of our people would have been successfully accomplished.

"Much earnest and enthusiastic work has been done in the last thirty years in the language revival movement. Much still remains to be done. I sometimes wonder if we shall ever witness again the heart-warming enthusiasm for the restoration of the Irish language that Ireland knew thirty years ago.

WHEN THE OLD UNITY IS RESTORED.

Perhaps we shall when the old unity which formerly existed in the National ranks shall have been restored, as please God, it will I am strongly of the belief that the restoration of the Irish language to its rightful place is essential if Irish nationhood and true Irish culture are to be preserved.

"Therefore, I beg of you all who have the true spirit of Irish nationalism in your hearts to cleave to the Irish language. I appeal to you to learn to speak the language and to work with enthusiasm for its restoration. Let us say with

William Rooney, poet and friend of my youth—

"O dear dark head bowed low
in death-black sorrow
Let not thy heart be trammelled
in despair;
Lift, lift thine eyes into the
radiant morrow,
And wait the light that surely
shall break there.

"What, though the grave hath
closed above thy dearest
All are not gone that love thee
nor all fled,
An though thine own sweet
tongue thou seldom hearest
Yet shall it ring again, O dear
dark head."

CEMENT THE UNITY AND WIDEN ITS SCOPE.

"It truly gave me infinite pleasure when I heard that the East Limerick Brigade had agreed to sink all the differences and animosities that have kept them in different camps since 1922. It brought joy to my heart to know that these men had agreed to unite their forces to erect this monument to their fallen comrades in arms. I have for long hoped and worked and prayed for an early end to the disastrous division in the Republican ranks that has existed for the past thirty years.

"May I appeal to you, men of East Limerick, now that you have come together for one worthy purpose, to cement that unity and to widen its scope. If you do this your excellent example will have heartening effects over all the land. Let the good news be spread abroad that the men of East Limerick have shown the way. Let all Ireland know of your good example, and loyal Irishmen will be encouraged to follow your auspicious lead.

"It cannot be denied that much progress, industrial and economic has been made here in the last thirty years. I think it is undeniable, however, that the division in the Republican forces which has existed for a generation has been an obstacle to the much greater progress which could have been made.

UNITY WOULD BRING NEW HOPE.

"If the unity that existed from 1917 to 1922 could be restored it would bring new hope, new heart and new life into all Ireland. Spiritually its effect would be most powerful. Its power for good in Ireland's industrial, social and economic life would most assuredly be immense.

"May I appeal to you then, men and women of East Limerick, to send forth from Bruff, in the name of the brave dead who died to establish the Republic, a call to the loyal Republicans of Ireland together. Call to them to unite to complete the giant tasks they set out to accomplish in 1916. Remind them to look back on the marvelous achievements of the 1916 to 1922 period. Then as a united and determined people they accomplished seemingly impossible feats for Ireland.

"If with unity we can get restored again the spirit and determination of these glorious days, it is possible that some way may be devised to heal the gaping wound of emigration through which the life-blood of Ireland is ebbing.

WOULD BRING MANY BLESSINGS.

"The restoration of unity would bring many blessings on Ireland. Above all it would make possible a revival of such spirit, such enthusiasm and determination as would under God, make it certain that the final goal would be accomplished by ending partition and thus bringing the whole thirty-two counties of Ireland under the flag of the established Republic.

"Let us again, using the words of John Kells Ingram, pay our tribute to the men of our day who by their sufferings and sacrifices accomplished that which brave

the people was an urgently necessity and Co Limerick remembers with deep appreciation the aid and encouragement given in this work by your Excellency when, as Minister for Local Government and Public Health you were in happy association with the Co. Council in the erection of over 1,300 cottages throughout the county."

DEEP APPRECIATION.

The President expressed deep appreciation of the Council's address. "It is my experience of Limerick City and County," he said, "that in times of danger, no better or truer Irishmen could be found than those of the City and County of Limerick. One of the first counties and cities in the land to declare allegiance to the Republican Dail were Limerick City and County. That is to your eternal credit. I had to come often to Limerick as Propagandist Officer in my youth. I have known sincere and true Limerickmen in all sorts of strange places—in jails in Ireland and England. And I know, as well, how courageous and patriotic the women of Limerick can be and have been."

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

Speaking in Irish and English, the President said that tributes no less ardent than those written of the 1798 men by John Kells Ingram were due to the men of their day who rose out in such numbers and with such dauntless courage. They fought for the same cause for which so many suffered, sacrificed and died, not alone in the '98 Rebellion but in every fight for Irish freedom down the centuries.

"Without desiring to detract in any way from the heroism of the men of '98, or wishing to draw comparisons between them and the men of our day, a procedure which would be unprofitable, I think we may claim that the men of our time were as good as the best," he continued. "They not alone fought and sacrificed and suffered as did the men of 1798, but those who survived saw their fight for freedom carried almost to complete success. The patriotic men who kept the spirit of Irish freedom and love of independence alive by their continued efforts down the centuries deserve every honour that the nation can give them. But I think you will agree with me that the men of our time, who won the measure of independence we now happily possess, deserve from this generation special recognition and gratitude.

NO PART LACKING IN MEN OF COURAGE AND DEVOTION.

"I think one can say truthfully that no part of Ireland is lacking in men of courage and devotion and fidelity to Ireland. It is true, too, that during the struggle for freedom so long drawn out some parts

of their brave deeds are to-day vividly before all minds.

"The record of the East Limerick Brigade entitles it to an honourable place among the best fighting forces of the Army of the Republic. I believe it is correct, too, to say that credit must be accorded to East Limerick for the formation of the first active service unit of "flying column" in Ireland during this period.

THRILLING TALES.

"Some of the thrilling tales of the fight waged in Limerick East and West have been already told and published in that interesting book, 'Limerick's Fighting Story' I hope a copy of this book is in every Limerick household.

"It is true nevertheless, that not everything has been recorded. The full muster roll of the men of Limerick who took part in all these encounters with the British during the years in question is surely a long one. I hope a full and accurate list has been compiled. A complete record should be made of all the engagements in which these men took part. Copies of these records should be made. Even though they may be only typewritten, these copies should be bound and one copy sent to every Public Library in Limerick city and county. This much is in honour due to the memory of the gallant men who played their part in this heroic struggle.

GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR A FREE IRELAND.

"Sean Wall, Commander of the East Limerick Brigade was typical of all that is best in Irish manhood. He was a wise, bold and a helpful leader, a brave soldier, a helpful and cheerful comrade and as was proved when he was elected Chairman of the County Council, an able and just administrator. His dead comrades, Capt. Conway, Lieut. Quinlan and Volunteers Moloney, Sheehan and Wade, were true to the best traditions of this great and noble county. What greater praise can one give them? All of them gave up their lives so that Ireland might be free. What nobler sacrifice could any man offer on the altar of Irish liberty? Each one has earned well the honour done him to-day.

IMPORTANCE OF FORGETTING PAST DIFFERENCES.

"It is with very special pleasure I learned that the men of the Old East Limerick Brigade had agreed to ignore past differences, come together and unite their efforts to make this Memorial to their fallen comrades possible. For this I offer my warmest thanks and congratulations to all the gallant survivors of the fight. I offer them my most sincere congratulations for accomplishing the worthy object that brought them together. I congratulate

men of other generations failed to win

"Then here's their memory may
it be to us a guiding light,
To cheer our strife for liberty
and teach us to unite
Through good and ill be Ireland's
still
Tho' sad as theirs your fate,
And true men be you men like
those of '98"

VOTE OF THANKS

Mr. Purcell proposed a vote of thanks to the President for his attendance. It was a real privilege for them to have in effect their own Ard Ri present to honour the memory of those who had fallen in their efforts to achieve an Irish Government for the Irish people.

The vote of thanks was passed with acclamation by the throng.

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OLD I.R.A. MEN MEET THE PRESIDENT.

A large group of old I.R.A. members wearing their service medals, marched two miles out of Bruff to meet the President who was accompanied by his ADC, Col. S. O'Sullivan. A guard of honour was formed by East Limerick Flying Column veterans led by Mr. William McCarthy, Emly. The President then led the procession to the town. He wore his Easter Week and Black-and-Tan war medals and was followed by a parade of detachments of East Limerick Brigade survivors under Mr. Donnchadh Hannigan; of Mid-Limerick Brigade survivors under Mr. Liam Forde, and of West Limerick Brigade men under Mr. J. J. Collins, T.D., Chairman of Limerick County Council. The members of Limerick Corporation under the Mayor (Mr. K. Bradshaw); of Limerick Co. Council of Cumann na mBan, of St. Mary's Boy Scouts (to whom Father Wall is Chaplain), and other City troops, under Diocesan Commissioner J. C. Duggan, and of the Limerick Fire Brigade joined in the parade as it neared the town. When the President reached the platform he inspected a Guard of Honour of East Limerick Battalion F.C.A., under Lieut. J. Fitzgerald and Lieut. S. South. A force of Guards under Chief Superintendent T. Dirreen, Supt. H. J. Keegan and Inspector T. Griffin, also attended.

LAST POST.

Before the unveiling ceremony the Last Post was sounded by the No 2 Army Band under Capt. R. E. Kealy.

Other bands who participated were the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band, and the Staker Wallace (Martinstown) Pipe and Drum Band.

Mr. Liam Purcell presided on the platform and briefly welcomed the President.

(Mr. Purcell himself played a very active part in the Anglo-Irish struggle and on his farm was the special dug-out used as H.Q. of the East Limerick Brigade).

HISTORY OF BRIGADE'S FIGHT

Mr. Donnchadh Hannigan also welcomed the President and gave a lengthy history of the fight of the East Limerick Brigade. He told of the fine Friday morning in May, 1921, at Annacarty, when Sean Wall was shot. "We had been up since two o'clock that morning," he said. "Sean's wife, who knew, was an expectant mother at home and we felt that it was very necessary for that reason alone that he should survive. He was also so important to us as an officer that his rescue, if he should fall into enemy hands, was essential. But Sean, knowing that Crown Forces were in the neighbourhood, didn't want to get the family in whose house we were staying into trouble. He left the house, and we didn't know that a few yards away he would be captured. In one desperate attempt to rescue him we failed. When we saw some of our men fall we never knew that Comdnt. Wall was killed, too, while he was in the enemy's hands. Were it not for his important position as Brigadier Commandant and as Chairman of Limerick Co. Council I have little doubt Sean Wall would be alive to-day."

SENATOR O'DWYER.

Senator Martin O'Dwyer explained the difficulties and delays with which the Memorial Committee had been faced since the project was mooted first some years ago. Were it not for the co-operation and help of the Committee members that day's ceremony would not have been possible. He paid a special tribute to the sculptor, Mr. Broe of Dublin. "I can honestly say that this is one of the finest works of sculpture in the country," he added. "It is one that we can all be proud of. It is a fitting reminder of the dead who have gone before us."

The Senator paid a tribute also to Mr. P. J. Sheahan, F.R.I.A., Limerick, who designed the monument.