

The Kilkenny People reported on the discovery of two bodies, one with a Kilkenny connection on 13th May 1916

GRUESOME FINDS

DEAD BODIES IN PUBLICHOUSE CELLAR

A special staff of the Public Health Department of the Corporation are still engaged in the gruesome work of searching for the bodies of the dead.

On Thursday the dead bodies of two civilians were found in the cellar of the licensed premises 177 North King Street.

A police sergeant reported to Dr. Russell at the Public Health Offices on Wednesday that he had been informed that barrels smeared with blood had been removed from a cellar in the house. Dr. Russell, accompanied by Mr. Moynihan, Deputy Borough Surveyor, went to the place and after excavations had been made, found the bodies of two civilians buried in the cellar a foot and a half deep. The remains have since been identified as those of Patrick Bealin, a foreman in the publichouse, aged 30 years, a native of Castlecomer, and James Healy, aged 44 years, employed at Messrs. Jameson's, Bowe street, and residing at 143 Church street.

*The Kilkenny People reported on the inquest on the bodies of the two men on May 20th:
"Extraordinary Case,"*

BODIES OF TWO MEN FOUND IN PUBLICHOUSE CELLAR.
CASTLECOMER MAN'S SAD END.
SHOCKING DETAILS AT INQUEST.

On Friday the Dublin City Coroner (Dr Louis A. Byrne) held inquests in the City Morgue on the bodies of Patrick Bealen, aged 30 years, and James Healy, aged 44, which were dug up by the sanitary officers on the 10th inst. in the cellar of the publichouse, 177 North King street, Dublin, the proprietress of which was Mrs Mary O'Rourke.

Patrick Bealen had been the foreman in the publichouse, and James Healy, who resided at 7, Little Green street, and previous to the outbreak at 143 Church street, was an employee of Messrs Jameson, Bow street. Bealen was a native of Loon, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, and had been in Mrs. O'Rourke's employment since August last.

The inquest on the body of Bealen was first proceeded with.

Mr. J. J. McDonald, solicitor, appeared for the next-of-kin of both deceased men, and Inspector Travers represented the police.

The Coroner, opening the inquiries explaining the circumstances under which the inquests were being held, stated that on the 9th inst. Sergeant Fox. 28D, was informed by Laurence Darcy, butler, King's Inns, that he had received information that there were bodies buried in the cellar of the publichouse, 177 North King street.

He communicated the fact to the public health Department, and as a result Dr Russell, Assistant Medical Officer of Health, accompanied by Mr. Moynihan, Deputy Borough Surveyor, proceeded to the place, and the bodies of the two deceased were dug out of the cellar by the sanitary staff.

The first witness was Michael Bealen, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, who identified the body of Patrick Bealen as that of his brother. He last saw deceased alive on Easter Sunday

Mrs. Mary O'Rourke, publican, 177 Nth. King street, deposed that on Sunday, 28th April, the military entered her house and made prisoners of all in the house, which included herself and her three children, her cook, and the deceased, who was her foreman. On the following morning the military took the deceased out of the kitchen and said they were bringing him to the guardroom. She did not see him afterwards. He was in her employment since Last August and was a native of Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny.

The Coroner – You saw the military remove this man from your premises?
Witness – The military took him out of the kitchen and brought him downstairs, and I never saw him afterwards.

You have seen the body? – No.

Witness was requested, to examine the body, and on returning from doing so stated she could not swear to it being that of Patrick Bealen.

Mr McDonald (to witness) – Did the Military assign any reason for entering your premises and making you prisoners? – They said they came in for safety.

How many military entered your house? – I could not tell you.

Were there five? – There were more, than five.

They made prisoners of you and the other inhabitants of the house? – Yes.

Did they assign any reason for doing that? – No.

Have you had personally any sympathy with this insurrection? – I have none whatever.

Before the military entered your premises had any provocation been given by you or any of the inhabitants of the house? None at all.

Where did they imprison the deceased when they entered? – In the kitchen; they kept us all together in the kitchen.

On the following morning, when they took the deceased out did they accuse you of having done anything? – No they just took him out of the kitchen and told me they were making him a prisoner and taking him to the guardroom.

Were any shots fired from your house during the night? – No.

So far as you are aware, the deceased was a steady hard-working man? – Yes.

And as far as you know he was not connected with this Sinn Fein movement? – No.

The Coroner – The evidence given, by this lady has caused me to think it would be very necessary to adjourn this case.

Is there any representative of the military here?

Inspector Travers replied in the negative.

The Coroner – Did you notify the military?

Inspector Travers – Yes sir. .

Mr McDonald said he agreed with the coroner. “I think,” he added, “it is a case in which the military ought to be represented. It is an extraordinary case.”

The Coroner-There is a very serious charge here, and I think it would be only right to give the military an opportunity of being present- What I propose doing now is: We have already heard evidence of identification in the case of the poor fellow, Patrick Bealen and I will take evidence of the finding of the body from the Sanitary Department. I will then adjourn to a date to be subsequently arranged. I will also take the doctor’s evidence. I will also take formal evidence in the case of James Healy and then adjourn so as to give the relatives the remains.

Dr .George Pugin Meldon deposed that he made a post-mortem examination on the body of Patrick Bealen and found six wounds in the body which in his opinion had been caused by bullets. One was situated just below and to the outer side of the right nipple. Another was just below the central cartilage of the right side. There was a wound about an inch and a half behind the right ear, and a wound on the right side of the neck. There were I two wounds on the back, one situated at the root of the neck and the other was over the right scapula. One bullet had passed through the right lung, smashing some ribs and making pulp of the right lung. Another bullet had passed through

The wound in the head was a superficial one. Death, in his opinion, was due to shock and hemorrhage from the injuries.

The Coroner-- From your examination of the body would you say that the firing took place at close range – No sir. It must have been at a considerable distance.

There was no singeing? – .No, there was no singeing. In my opinion the firing was not at close quarters.

Mr. McDonald reserved cross-examination.

Dr. Matthew Russell, assistant medical officer of health, deposed that on the 10th inst. accompanied by Mr. Travers, Public Health Office, and three of his men, and also Mr Moynihan, he inspected the cellar at 177, North King street. They examined the floor, and removed some clay which looked freshly dug up. They soon found a cap, and between six and twelve inches from the surface found the body of a man fully dressed, who had since been identified as Patrick Bealen. Having removed this body they found immediately under it another body, fully dressed which had since been identified as James Healy. He found in the pocket of James Healy's trousers a piece of notepaper with the address -Little Green street stamped on it. Mr. Moynihan and witness went to this address, and the friends there recognised the writing as Mr Healy's. They had the bodies removed to the Morgue.

Mr. Michael A. Moynihan, Deputy Borough Surveyor, stated that he accompanied Dr. Russell on the forenoon of the 10th inst to 177 North King street to inquire into a report made to him that was suspected that some bodies had been buried in the cellar They carefully examined every portion of the cellar. The absence of any "spoil" inclined to the belief that the report was not correct. Subsequent search showed that a portion of the floor was somewhat softer than the surrounding portions. There was a shovel in the cellar, and with it he made a trial of the gravel where it was soft. He made an excavation about four inches deep. When the sanitary staff arrived they continued the excavation in his and Dr. Russell's presence, and found the two bodies in the manner described by Dr. Russell.

No further evidence was given touching the death of Bealen.

The inquest on Healy was then proceeded with.

Mrs. Catherine Healy, widow of deceased, who gave evidence of identification stated that on the 29th ult. her husband left 7 Little Green street to go to the distillery and did not return. She never saw him alive afterwards. They lived at 143 Church street until Easter Monday, when the Volunteers took possession of the house and they had to go to 7 Little Green street, the residence of her mother.

In reply to the Coroner, Mrs. Healy said she was informed that her husband never got to the distillery.

A boy named George Fitzgerald deposed he was porter in No. 177 North King street, and on Monday last, the 8th inst, he was washing bottles in the cellar when he got a heavy smell where Guinness's men were taking out some barrels. There was blood on the barrels, which splashed on his boots. He took out the barrels for Guinness and saw the cellar dug up.

Witness was not cross-examined.

Michael Brophy, attendant in the Coroner's Court, stated that when stripping the body of Patrick Bealen he found tied with a bit of boot lace in the back of his shirt £7 in notes and gold and one penny in his coat pocket.

Dr. Matthew Maughan deposed to making a post mortem examination of the body of James Healy. There was an entrance wound of a bullet on the left jaw.

The bullet passed across the mouth, breaking the teeth, and emerged at the angle of the lower jaw on the right, shattering the ramus of the jaw in its passage. Another bullet wound entered tile back on the right side and emerged in front, slightly injuring the surface of the lung in its passage. The vault of the skull was shattered, apparently being smashed by some heavy blunt instrument, the under surface of the scalp showing numerous hemorrhages. The substance of the brain was broken up, the fractured pieces of the skull being driven into it. Death, in his opinion, was due to the laceration of and hemorrhage into the brain. The fractures of the skull were not caused by bullets.

The inquests were adjourned till Tuesday morning at 11 o'clock.

The Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook first published by Weekly Irish Times 1916 reported the adjourned inquest on the bodies.

Two Bodies Buried in a Cellar

Dr Louis A Byrne, City Coroner, in the Morgue on Tuesday, 16th May, conducted inquests on the bodies of Patrick Bealen, aged 30, who had been employed as foreman at Mrs Mary O'Rourke's licensed house, 177 North King street, Dublin, and James Healy, aged 44, employed as a labourer at Messrs Jameson's Distillery, Bow street, and residing at Little Green street. The bodies, which bore marks of bullet wounds, had both been disinterred on 10th May in the cellar of 177 North King street by the sanitary authorities. At the opening of the inquest the previous Friday evidence was heard, and suggestions were made against the military who had been on duty in North King street. The Coroner then adjourned the further hearing of evidence until Tuesday, and notified the military authorities of the adjourned sitting.

Major Rhodes, Assistant Provost Marshal, 59th Division, and Captain Sheppard were present on Tuesday on behalf of the military authorities.

Mr JCR Lardner, MP (instructed by Mr John J McDonald) appeared for the next-of-kin of the deceased men.

Inspector Travers represented the police authorities.

Mrs O'Rourke's Evidence

Mrs Mary O'Rourke, owner of the licensed premises 177 North King street, said, in reply to Mr Lardner, that the military entered her house about 12 o'clock midnight on 28th

April. Her three children, the cook, Patrick Bealen, and herself were then in the cellar for safety. They were there several hours when the military came in. A sergeant and a private came down and searched Bealen and witness's son, who was not 13 years of age. The soldiers subsequently took them all to the kitchen, which was on the second flight of stairs. Two soldiers remained with them, and later on a third came in. An officer came in on Saturday morning, and ordered the soldiers out of the kitchen, saying: 'It is a shame to put them in the kitchen, as it is so small.' To the soldiers he said: 'You have no right to be here: leave the kitchen to the ladies.' Bealen was taken away an hour or two previous to the arrival of the officer.

Dr Meldon gave evidence as to the wounds which caused the death of Bealen. In his opinion the shots which killed the man had been fired from a considerable distance.

Dr Matthew Russell, Assistant Medical Officer of Health for Dublin, gave evidence as to the exhuming of the body of the deceased. It had been buried in the cellar, about 12 inches from the surface. The body was fully dressed. Underneath the body a second body, that of James Healy, was discovered, also fully dressed.

Mr MA Moynihan, Borough Surveyor, stated on searching the cellar he found a portion of the floor softer than the surrounding parts. He made an excavation where it was soft, and the sanitary staff continued the excavation in his presence until they came upon the two bodies. He added that he found the 'spoil' from the grave under the slide by which the barrels were lowered from the street.

Michael Brophy, attendant in the Coroner's Court, said he found tied with a bootlace at the back of Bealen's shirt £7 in notes and gold and one penny in his coat pocket.

Woman's Account of the Shooting

Mrs Roseanna Knowles, 23 Lurgan street, which is close to 177 North King street, stated that during the week of the disturbances a number of soldiers were billeted in her house. She had some conversations with them. She asked the soldiers, 'Was there much killed?' One of them said, 'There was a good deal of our men killed and a good deal of the others.' He further said: 'I only pitied the poor fellow at the corner (O'Rourke's) and the woman who was fainting.'

Did he say why he pitied him? He said, 'I pitied him from my heart, though I had to shoot him. He had made tea for me.'

What else did he say? He said they had brought the prisoner downstairs in O'Rourke's. The soldier said that the man gave him his penknife and his ring. He produced the penknife, but said he had lost the ring.

What happened then? He said that when they brought him downstairs he had not the heart to shoot him straight, and that they told him (the deceased) to go up again, and at the foot of the stairs they shot him—that they 'let bang' at the foot of the stairs.

Military Statement

The Coroner—Major Rhodes, do you wish to say anything?

Major Rhodes—No, but I would ask you to read a statement that had been made by Lieutenant- Colonel H Taylor, Commanding the 2nd/6th South Staffords.

The statement was then read by the Coroner. It was as follows:

'I cannot discover any military witnesses as to the manner in which the two men, Patrick Bealen and James Healy, met with their deaths, but I cannot believe that the allegations made at the inquest can be correct. Patrick Bealen was certainly never brought to the guardroom. To the

best of my knowledge and belief, during the military operations in Capel street and King street, which lasted from 6 a.m. on Friday, 28th April, until the truce was declared on the afternoon of Saturday, 29th (and which were, in fact, continued for some hours after that by the rebels in that area), only those houses were entered by the military which the exigencies of the case rendered actually necessary, and no persons were attacked by the troops other than those who were assisting the rebels, and found with arms in their possession.

Firing from Houses

‘The premises No. 177 North King street were indicated to me as one of the houses from which the troops had been repeatedly fired upon, and the troops were also continually fired upon both during the night of the 26th April and the whole of the following day from the distillery, at which the deceased man, James Healy, was stated to have been employed. The operations in the portion of King street, between Linenhall street and Church street, were conducted under circumstances of the greatest difficulty and danger for the troops engaged, who were subjected to severe fire, not only from behind several rebel barricades, which had been constructed across King street, and other barricades in Church street and the side streets, but also from practically every house in that portion of King street and other buildings overlooking it.

‘Strong evidence of these difficulties and dangers is afforded by the fact that it took the troops from 10 a.m. on the 28th April until 2 p.m. on the 29th to force their way along King street from Linenhall street to Church street, a distance of some 150 yards only; and that the casualties sustained by the regiment (the great majority of which occurred at this spot) numbered five officers (including two captains) wounded, 14 NCOs and men killed and 28 wounded.

‘I may add (1) that the rebels for some hours after the truce was declared continued firing on my men, who, although they sustained several further casualties, did not reply; and (2) that during these continued hostilities after the truce the rebels, by firing on the RAMC (one of whom they wounded) prevented the removal of some of our wounded for several hours, and the latter could only be ultimately removed by means of an armoured car.

‘I am satisfied that during these operations the troops under my command showed great moderation and restraint under exceptionally difficult and trying circumstances.’

Verdict of the Jury

The Coroner having briefly addressed the jury, the following verdict was returned:

‘We find that the said Patrick Bealen died from shock and hemorrhage, resulting from bullet wounds inflicted by a soldier, or soldiers, in whose custody he was, an unarmed and unoffending prisoner. We consider that the explanation given by the military authorities is very unsatisfactory, and we believe that if the military authorities had any inclination they could produce the officer in charge.’

Inquest on James Healy

The adjourned inquest on the body of James Healy, which was also found buried in the cellar of 177 North King street, was then resumed.

The jury returned a verdict in terms similar to that recorded in the case of Bealen.

Mr Asquith and Courts of Inquiry

A large number of questions were put in the House of Commons from time to time regarding

alleged shooting of civilians in the North King street area, and various members urged the Government to hold a public inquiry. On Monday, 17th July, Mr Asquith said he undertook that these cases should be carefully investigated, but there had never been any promise of a public inquiry. Accordingly, after all available evidence had been secured, courts of inquiry were held, and the witnesses examined. The conclusion arrived at after a full hearing in all the cases was that the deaths occurred in the course of continuous and desperate street and house-to-house fighting, which lasted for nearly two days, and in which the soldiers were constantly exposed to sniping from the windows and roofs of the houses. There could be little doubt that some men who were not taking an actual part in the fighting were in the course of the struggle killed by both rebels and soldiers, but, after careful inquiry, it was impossible to bring home responsibility to any particular person or body of persons. He had himself read the evidence taken by the courts of inquiry. He was of opinion that further inquiry would not be likely to lead to any different result.

On 13th May The Kilkenny People reported on the funeral of Patrick Bealen

THE DECEASED'S CAREER

The late Mr Patrick Bealen, who was aged 30 years, was son of Mr. Michael Bealen, of Loon, Castlecomer. He was for many years shop assistant to Mr. Thomas Bergin, Castlecomer, and first manager of Mr Bergin's new premises at Maudlin, Co. Kilkenny, and in both places he was a universal favourite with all the people and gave entire satisfaction to Mr Bergin. He left Mr Bergin's employment in August last, being appointed manager to Mrs. Mary O'Rourke, 177 North King street, Dublin. Mr. Bealen was, while in Dublin, a great advocate of the G.A.A. and took part in the football and hurling matches in which the local clubs participated. In politics Mr. Bealen was a follower of Mr Redmond and the Irish Party, and while in Castlecomer he always subscribed towards the U.I.L. He inherited this spirit of nationality from his parents, his father, Mr Michael Bealen, being for over 30 years a collector in his own district for the funds of the different national organisations from the Land League to the United Irish League. When intimation was received in Castlecomer that he was absent from his employment fears began to be entertained for his safety, and his brother, Mr. Michael Bealen, who is engaged at Guinness's, Dublin, made every effort to trace him, but it was only when the bodies of two men were discovered in the cellar, as stated at the public inquest, that he discovered that one of them was his brother Patrick who had been interred for seven days at least, the body being buried without any coffin. After the inquest on the first day Mr. Michael Bealen obtained permission to bring the remains home for interment in the family burial ground at Castlecomer, and on Saturday evening last the remains were brought from Kilkenny railway station to Castlecomer. In addition to Mr. Michael Bealen, Messrs. Thomas McGrath, Parliament street, Kilkenny, and John Dempsey, of Loon, accompanied the remains. Mr. McGrath had gone specially up to Dublin to identify the remains, he and Mr. Dempsey being relatives of the deceased. The bell of Castlecomer parish church tolled solemnly, and hundreds of the inhabitants of the

district wended their way along the Kilkenny road to meet the remains and indeed it was a melancholy cortege that passed through the town of Castlecomer after 9 o'clock on Saturday night on the way to the family residence at Loon. On Sunday the funeral took place to Castlecomer. and the Loon road was black with people accompanying the remains, all classes and sections being represented, testifying to the deep sympathy which was felt for the deceased young gentleman and for his bereaved parents, brothers and sisters, as well as an abhorrence of the foulness of the deed which ended his young life. The remains were met at Castlecomer by the Rev. Dr. J. Coyne, C.C., who read the funeral service, after which the interment took place in the family burial ground. The chief mourners were:—Mr. Michael (Bealen (father): Mrs Bealen (mother); Messrs. Michael and James Bealen (brothers) ; Mrs. Malachy Lalor, Loon; Mrs. Martin Meally. Moneenroe (sisters): Mr. Thomas Kavanagh, Clashduff (uncle): Messrs. Michael Lalor, Patrick and Malachy Lalor, Martin Meally, Michael and James Meally (nephews); the Misses Bridget Lalor, Mary Lalor, Margaret Lalor, Julia Lalor and Kate Lalor (nieces); Messrs. Malachy Lalor and Martin Meally (brother-in-law): Messrs. James Kavanagh and John Kavanagh, Clashduff : Thomas McGrath, Parliament street, Kilkenny; Patrick Lalor, Kilkenny ; John Dempsey, Loon (cousins). A sister of the deceased, Mrs Mary Delaney lives in Chicago.