

Commuters who encounter driver **Peter Mulvany** would never guess that he's also a qualified, and a member of The Society of Uilleann Pipers – but it was his role as chairperson of the Irish Seamen's Relatives Association which materialised in one of his proudest feats. He tells Dublin Buzz about the Shot at Dawn Campaign.

# Fighting for Pardon



Private Downey's Memorial



SAD Memorial



James Templeton

**F**irstly, how did you get involved in the Shot at Dawn campaign and could you tell us some more about it?

"In June 2001 following an article published in The Irish Post (UK) on the Irish WW2 merchant seamen's memorial – which we had sponsored and located in the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire – I was contacted by John Hipkin who was an ex-Merchant Navy POW himself. He also told me about his other campaign called the Shot at Dawn Pardons Campaign, set up to campaign for pardons for WW1 soldiers executed for various military offences. He advised that in 1998 the then Secretary John Reid would not go the full way and grant the pardons. John pointed out that

there were 26 Irish born soldiers amongst the 306 executed and he appealed for my help in raising the issue in Ireland. I have no connection with any of the executed soldiers. Just an interest in seeing a wrong righted."

*What has kept you driven to succeed in having the soldiers pardoned?*

"I procured all the court martial files and read and reread them. The issue of an injustice was apparent from a cursory reading. Pardons were granted to officers during and after the War, in contrast to young inarticulate soldiers from working class backgrounds – all volunteers from Ireland North and South – who had previous honourable service, being executed as an example and a deterrent. I

couldn't believe it, yet there it was stated in the files of each soldier executed. The issue of injustice felt by the families and the need to have the stigma of dishonour attached to those Irishmen executed removed in so far as possible, was the driving force behind the Irish Shot at Dawn Campaign."

*What hurdles and challenges have you met along the way?*

"Any initiative in Ireland needed to be able to attract support from all sides of the political and sectarian divide. To be successful, an Irish campaign needed to be Irish based, organised and with an Irish identity. Consequently the Shot at Dawn Campaign Ireland was formed in June 2002 to give a formal structure to the Irish effort. The Churches were then approached and Cardinal O'Connell sent me a letter supportive of our aims, the Church of Ireland came on board later on. The issue was also raised

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politically through my good friend Finian McGrath TD in Dáil Eireann. Newspapers published several articles in support of our objectives. Many local councils followed. Importantly the campaign had to be able to attract support from within Northern Ireland. The DUP-led Ballymena Council declaring its support earlier on helped greatly. The biggest challenge was to generate and attract support from all sides of the political and sectarian divide. The Irish Government, and in particular the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the staff in Iveagh house became the perfect partner in support of the Irish Shot at Dawn Campaign. Indeed they became the persuaders in getting the British Government to introduce the pardons amendment."

*What does the passing of the UK Pardons Amendment mean for you, the people who have worked on the campaign, and the family members?*

"The removal of stigma of dishonour from our families and the satisfaction of knowing that the Irish Shot at Dawn campaign effort was a significant contributor in persuading the British Government to introduce the pardons amendment last August, despite the fact that the British had previously refused to even countenance any further action since John Reid's minimalist action in 1998. The inclusion of the names of our 26 Irish executed on the Irish War Memorial Records in Islandbridge where no record had existed heretofore has also meant a lot to our families."

*What now? What is your next mission? Or are you satisfied to rest now?!*

"Following on from my cancer operation last year, I only returned to work last May. So no more campaigns as I am just thankful that I still have my health and can work."

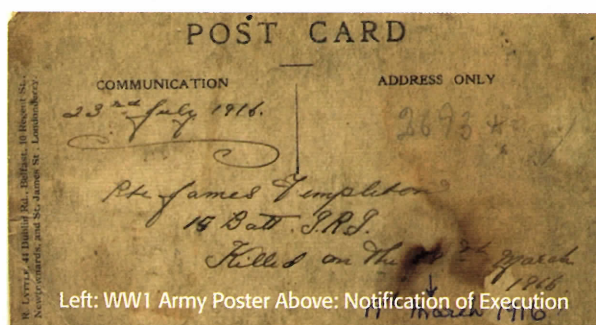
*What is your history with Dublin Bus... have you always been a driver and on what routes presently?*

"I joined Dublin Bus in 2000 and am presently located in Clontarf Garage. I work on the 43 route from Dublin city to Swords. Because of my cancer operation Dublin Bus kindly facilitated my medical condition and gave me this duty on a five-day basis. I am very thankful for their support and understanding while in the process of recovering from major surgery."

*Also, I believe you are a qualified*



Peter Mulvany (far left) next to Irish foreign minister, Dermot Ahern TD



Left: WWI Army Poster Above: Notification of Execution

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*can you tell me more about that?*

"In 1988 following an interest in Maritime History I returned to school on a pilot scheme for the VTOS in Colaiste Ide (I had left school when I was 14 and am now 60). I gained my Senior Certificate in 1990 and Leaving Certificate in 1991. I then did the law part of the Accountancy Technicians course to prepare for the interview in 1992. Subsequently, I applied to UCD Law school as a mature student and qualified with a B.C.L (Hons) Law Degree in 1995 and I pursued post graduate studies in UCD and gained a Higher Diploma in Arts Administration in 1997."

Peter Mulvany is chairperson of the Irish Seamen's Relatives Association (1939-46) and co-ordinator for the Shot at Dawn Campaign Ireland. He is an honours law

graduate and post graduate of University College Dublin, a founder member of the Society for Irish Latin American Studies (Sociedad para los estudios latinos irlandeses del americano, a member of Na Píobairí Uilleann (The Society of Uilleann Pipers), a member of the University College Dublin Alumni Association (An Oifig Forbartha d'Alumni), an honorary life member of the Royal Naval Patrol Service Association, Fleetwood Branch, a member of The Royal Munster Fusiliers Association (1992), an honorary life member Merchant Navy Association-Wirral Branch and member of the Merchant Navy Association (National). ■

*There is a book to be published by a BBC reporter on the Irish Shot at Dawn Campaign due for publication early next year.*