

THE KILMAINHAM MEETING REPORT.

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Most of you are familiar with the conditions of the buildings and surrounding yards when we took possession in May 1960.

One is inclined to forget what faced us at that time and it will do no harm if I go over the scene very briefly.

The only cleared area was the yard leading to the stone breakers compound where the 1916 leaders were executed, and the west yard leading to the lower paved area where the Invincibles made the supreme sacrifice.

The south yards were almost impassable and it was with considerable difficulty that one could approach the south east corner of the jail.

The east yards and all yards in and around the Infirmary and Governors section, in other words, the whole of North East section of the Jail was completely blocked.

These areas were the nearest approach to a jungle that one could see. Trees stood 20 to 30 feet high from a dense undergrowth of briars, brambles and ferns.

The boundary walls were draped with luxurious growths of ivy and to add to our difficulty there was plenty of rusted barbed wire concealed in the undergrowths.

The condition of the buildings were undesirable. Every roof was beyond repair with the exception of the Infirmary Block and the West Wing of the old Administration Centre.

Portion of the roof of the central compound had collapsed and half of the roof of the East Wing,

'98 section, had fallen in.

In other sections portion of the roofs and intermediate floors were on the point of falling.

Light and Water were non-existent and sanitation equipment had either been removed or smashed. Doors and windows had either been completely removed or were rotten and beyond repair. That is a thumb nail sketch of what it was like.

The coats came off, and then the shirts, and within five weeks all yards and passages were cleared and the flames and smoke from burning trees, ivy and brush wood, were shooting high over Kilmainham.

Then came the task on demolition of roofs, and floors which were in danger of immediate collapse. This dangerous dirty and tiring work was centred mostly in the East Wing of the '98 section and the east wing of the Administration Centre.

It was not until the August period that we were able to get a good look at what faced us.

And when we did see it, I for one felt like rolling up my moleskins and going home.

After obtaining all opinions, especially from the men of the building and allied trades it was decided to break the job into six sections and this decision was made after some false starts and organization difficulties.

I think it is essential that all of us should be aware of these sections since it may not be too obvious to everyone moving in and out of the Jail.

Section No. 1. Is the Central Compound and this section

is under the control of Jim Bruce (Carpenter)

Section No. 2. The East and South Wings of the '98 section

comes under the control of Paddy Earley

(Carpenter)

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- Section No 3 Comprises the West and North Wing of the '98 section and is controlled by Paddy Kelly (Carpenter).
- Section No 4 The old Infirmary and East Wing Administration, and now Administration offices, sees Joe Collins (Carpenter- in charge).
- Section No 5 The West Wing and Centre Administration Block is under the control of John Sammon (Clerk-of-Works and Carpenter).
- Section No 6 Yards, External Walls is under Geo. Tully (Contractor & Tiler).

A seventh squad comprising fitters, plumbers, electricians, welders, acts as a supporting group to the sections mentioned, and this seventh group is under the general guidance of Harry White (Contractor & Plumber).

That, briefly, is the organization of this project within the walls of Kilmainham.

The planning behind these sections is done by a Site Committee consisting of -

Four Carpenters,
Two Bricklayers.
Two Plumbers.
Two Electricians

and Three others.

Bearing in mind the very wet Summer of last year and the rain during the winter and early spring of this year the progress has been good.

It can be said that May to September 1960 was a period of cleaning and demolition while the essential services of light, and power, water and sanitation was pushed ahead, and in places, in a most temporary manner.

In the central compound the problem of scaffolding was one of much discussion and trial and it is a tribute to the skill and competence of the men serving in this section that access and working platforms to the roof was achieved.

The period of October, to January was one of prefabrication of timber, roof members for the

roofs of No 1 and No 2 Sections, and during this period work pressed on in the old Infirmary (No 4 section) and the old Administration wing (No 5. Section).

February to May period saw the timber panelling to the North Section off the Central compound completed, and the roof trusses to the East Wing 98' section almost completed.

The Infirmary (now our administration offices) is now almost completed and John Sammon at the West Wing is about to hand over the keys.

Bye and large the story of the Labour Task Force, is one of achievement for the first year, but I will say something more on this matter later.

I now want to mention names of men who have, by any standard, given tremendous service.

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| (1) Jack Hanratty | 924 hours. |
| (2) Jim Bruse. | 745 hours. |
| (3) Charlie Gorman. | 720 hours. |
| (4) Geo. Tully. | 716 $\frac{1}{4}$ hours. |
| (5) Joe Collins. | 600 hours. |
| (6) Mick Stafford | 500 hours. |
| (7) Pat Early | 478 hours. |
| (8) Dinny Duggan | 474 hours. |
| (9) Damien Cassidy | 433 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours. |
| (10) Paddy Kelly | 432 hours. |
| (11) John Sammon | 368 hours. |
| (12) Raymond Cassidy | 360 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. |
| (13) Peter White | 346 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. |
| (12a) Irene Connolly | 361 hours |
| (14) Michael Betts | 314 hours. |

I am sure all of us would like to be mentioned in dispatches, nevertheless, the effort

of even 10 to 15 hours is welcomed and appreciated. 5

Altogether there has been a total of 18,419,000 hours worked by men of all trades and calling within these walls, and the value of labour, if you could possibly value it, based on the present market is £8,288. 11. 0.

I have said that my report to you reads like a great success story, it is, but I am sorry to say, that it is entirely due to the herculean efforts of a competitive few. During what I considered, a long winter, we averaged only eight men per night and at times there were only five men. A most depressing sight, when the wind and rain was howling through the open roofs.

Yet the quite confident walk-in of pipe smoking John Sammon, the relentless efforts of John Hanratty, the 'now boy's let's have it' attitude of Jim Bruce, coupled with the fire and brimstone of Charlie Gorman and the quiet unassuming help of Damien and Raymond Cassidy, brightens up the atmosphere and gave courage and hope. I cannot pass from this subject, without adding in Michael Betts, bright and willing at all times and the insuppressable Peter White, I could mention more, but time does not allow it.

You all know of our tremendous task and I appeal to you to lighten the almost overwhelming burden that is being carried by a few men. You can do this by sacrificing a few more hours per week, and get identified with any of the seven work sections I have mentioned.

To complete this job in five years we need a working staff of 70 to 80 men every evening, that is without excessively working any individual. You

now get a different picture of the first year when you realise that October to January the average men per night was eight; February to May the average was 14 per night.

We have all a little time to-night to examine ourselves and lets have a firm resolve that each and every man will at least plug in 250 hours during this second year.
