

Michael O'Dwyer

Limerick-born seaman who was captured by the Germans during Second World War

THE death has occurred in London of 92-year-old Michael O'Dwyer, born in St Joseph's parish in Limerick city in 1920, who was a former prisoner of the Gestapo during WW2 marks. He was the last surviving Irish witness who gave evidence at the Bremen-Farge War Crimes Trial held in Hamburg 1947.

Michael was an Able Seaman on the SS Kantara when she was attacked on February 22 1941 by the Gneisenau while at sea in the North Atlantic. Michael and the Kantara's crew along with 150 other merchant seamen who had been taken prisoner were transferred to the German supply ship Ermland and then taken to La Pallice in France and transported by rail to Sandbostel/Stalag XB.

All merchant seamen prisoners were relocated from Sandbostel to the merchant seamen's internment camp MILAG Nord at Westertimke by the end of 1942.

On January 27, 1943 Michael and 31 other Irish born merchant seamen were selected

by the Gestapo and attempts were made to get the Irishmen to work on Nazi merchant ships. They all refused and as a punishment the 32 Irishmen were moved to a slave labour camp in Bremen-Farge and forced to work on the U-Boat Bunker Valentin. During their time in the Arbeitslager Bremen-Farge, five Irishmen lost their lives.

Michael was returned to the UK in May 1945 following liberation.

In 1947 a war crimes trial was held in Hamburg to adjudicate on offences against Irishmen. However due to legal issues surrounding the question of neutrals, war crimes perpetrated against the Irishmen in Bremen-Farge had to be reframed by the British prosecutor to read as war crimes against allied nationals and as the Irishmen were not regarded as allied nationals, offences against them were excluded; however their evidence was admissible.

Michael O'Dwyer was one of the three Irish witnesses.



The late Michael O'Dwyer, who was a prisoner of the Gestapo during the Second World War

Michael, who was predeceased by his wife Edith, whom he met in Hamburg during the war crimes trial, is survived by his son Michael, daughter Jacqueline and a wide circle of family and friends. On Wednesday, January 23, Michael's funeral service will

take place in the West Norwood Cemetery and Crematorium, Norwood Road, London at 11.45am.

Now that Michael has passed on, 89-year-old Harry Callan currently living in Dublin is the last Irish survivor of the 32 Irish born merchant seamen captured while

serving on British and allied vessels who refused to work for the Nazis during WW2.

born August 11 1920, died December 30 2012

Peter Mulvany, chair, Irish Seaman's Relatives Association

Michael O'Dwyer;

We invite readers to submit obituaries, of between 300 and 700 words, for this page. Please email obituaries to deaths@limerickleader.ie

Deaths in the past week

ALLEN Mary (née Ashe) of Redgate, Old Cratloe Road, Limerick City. On January 11. She will be sadly missed by her loving son Niall, daughter Fiona (Downes) and extended family.

BYRNES Maisie, (née O'Carroll) of Harding Grove, Bruree.

BYRNES Sheila, (née McMahon) of 3 St. Patrick's Villas, Castleconnell

CATTRELL John, Ballingarry.

COUGHLAN Peggy (née Hanley) of Old Wellington Terrace, O'Connell Ave., Limerick City. On January 12. Beloved wife of the late Stephen and loving mother of Stephen, Thady and Helen.

CORBETT Cornelius (Conny) of Dromindeel, Newcastle West.

CROSSE Kathleen (Kay) (née O'Brien) of Carrig East, Clarina and formerly of Knockbrack, Lisnagry. On January 12.

FORDE Tom of Dromore Rise, Raheen, Limerick. On January 12. Late Garda Stochana. Husband of the late Margaret. Regretted by his daughter Mairead, sons Jerome, Tomas, John and Declan, brothers Jimmy, Hugh and Micheal, sisters Nonie and Nancy and extended family.

HOURIGAN Michael J, Ahane, Lisnagry. On January 12. Sadly missed by his loving sisters Mary (Kelly) and Breda (Keating), brother Dan and extended family.

O'MEARA Michael of Putney, London and formerly of Cooga Upper, Doon. On January 10. Loving husband to the late Nina (nee Anne Long), beloved father to Anne, Cathy, Patrick and Michael. Reposing at Evershed Brothers, 120 Wandsworth High Street, SW18 4JP. Funeral on Wednesday, January 23 at 10am St. Thomas a Becket RC Church, West Hill, and afterwards at Putnet Vale cemetery, London.

MCGARRY Sarah of Lismoyne, North Circular Road, Limerick. On January 14. Late Teaching Staff Coláiste Agus Iosaf and formerly of St Joseph's Convent Secondary School, Abbeyfeale, late Castletroy Golf Club and Limerick Lawn Tennis Club) Beloved daughter of Sarah (Sadie) and the late James. Dearly loved sister of Ann, Derry, Joan, John and Peter.

MC CARTHY Hannah, (née Doody) of Dromtrasna South, Abbeyfeale. On January 9. Deeply regretted by her loving daughter Eileen, sons Tom, Mike and Dan and extended family.

MOORE Patrick (Patsy) of Belfield Crescent, Farranshane, Limerick. Requiem Mass at St. Munchin's Church on Thursday at 11am followed by burial in Castlemungret Cemetery.

MCCOY Ann, (née Hallissey) of White Forge, Knockaderry.

MCNAMARA Seamus, John St. Bakery and Athlunkard Nursing Home. Deeply regretted by his sons John, Michael, David and Donal, daughter Margaret and extended family.

MCNAMARA-CLIFFORD Anthony, Carragh Avenue, Caherdavin Park, Caherdavin, Limerick. Survived by his father Fonníe, mother Pauline, sisters Liz, Majella, Maria, Maureen, Rachel, Susie and Jenny, brothers Peter, Neilie, Frankie, John, Johnie, Paul and Michael and extended family.

MURPHY Tom, Coolruss, Bruree. Late employee of Limerick County Council. Requiem Mass at St. Joseph's Church, Carragh on Thursday at 12 noon followed by burial in the local cemetery.

O'BRIEN Kit, (née Mulvihill) of Carnagh, Ballyahill.

O'CONNELL Michael of Ballybrood, Caherconlish. On January 10. Father of the late Donie; very deeply regretted by his loving wife Johanna, sons, daughters and extended family.

O'CONNOR Michael of O'Connor's Garage, Boola, Broadford, Limerick. On January 10.

RICHARDSON PJ of Lacka, Doon. On January 9. Sadly missed by his loving mother Hannah, brothers, sisters and extended family.

WARREN Michael of Hillview Drive, Caherconlish. Survived by wife Nellie, sons Ian and Michael, daughters Barbara and Mary and extended family.

WOULFE Kathleen of Birmingham, England and formerly of Churchtown, Newcastle West. On December 17.

Picture Special

Limerick and Clare Milk Producers dinner dance



John Collins, Larry Lahiff, Arthur Ruttle, John McSweeney and Michael O'Connor, committee members of the Limerick and Clare Milk Producers at their Annual Dinner Dance in the Dunraven Arms last Friday.

Pictures: Keith Wiseman



Ned and Anna Marie Relihan, Adare



Theresa and Donal Looney, Croagh



Brendan and Anne Lynch, Ballyneety



PJ and Nia Murphy, Cappagh with Tom and Breda Lynch, Ballingarry



Elaine and Sean O'Donovan, Crecora with John and Audrey Hannon, Fedamore



Eddie Scanlan and Christine Cleary, Clarina



Eilish and Lar Lahiff, Ballyclough



Marie O'Connor, Loughill and Kathleen O'Connor, Croagh at the dinner



Ken and Bridget Alfred, Askeaton



Declan and Jean McNamara, Castletroy