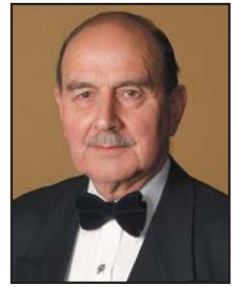




THE DEPOT



Brandon K. Colvert

History stood still for a short while on Friday 18th May 2007 when Garda Commissioner Noel Conroy launched a well researched publication, 'THE DEPOT' by Author Donal J O'Sullivan at the Officer's Club, Garda Headquarters in Phoenix Park. Ireland is justly proud of the 'The Depot' acknowledged by historians to be the cradle of modern policing world wide. We came to witness a revelation of over 160 years of history.

B Colvert Reports

Mr Pat McGee, Curator Garda Museum was the MC

"Mr Commissioner, Mr Donal O'Sullivan, former Commissioner Mr Doherty and invited guests, I welcome you to the Officer's Club for the launch of this new publication entitled 'The Depot'. I especially express my thanks to the Garda Commissioner, Mr Noel Conroy, for affording time in his busy schedule to launch this very fine publication by Mr Donal O'Sullivan capturing the history of the Depot from 1839 right up to the present day. I ask the Garda Commissioner Mr Conroy to officially launch this book.

Garda Commissioner Mr Conroy

"My friend, Donal, family, colleagues and guests, I am delighted to be present this evening to launch Donal's book. It is an absorbing and a very important read, not alone for former and present members of the Garda Síochána, but really the public generally in so far as it clearly describes, in word and picture, the

origins of our service to the Irish people. From my perspective I may be the only serving member in the organization trained in The Depot and is still serving, though about to be kicked out soon.

One of the important people during my training was the former Commissioner, Mr Eamon Doherty, present this evening. I can tell you he was a gildy man we had to be very correct in everything. He set very high standards rather like Mr Staines the first Garda Commissioner. Standards were prescribed in difficult times when the economy of this country wasn't as it is today, but nevertheless members of the Garda Síochána went out and did their duties without fear or favour. I pay tribute to the parents of those very young people who served us well in hazardous times.

When you read this book you may note that in 1926 we had over 800 stations in our small country. Today we have over 700 stations and I'm sure that many of our serving and retired members will agree that this errs on the side of generosity. The 1920's were troubled times at our foundation bearing in mind that it was set up as a non-armed force and all those young men went out doing their job to ensure that peace and tranquillity prevailed.

In recent times An Garda Síochána fulfilled our role in bringing peace to our land. Our politicians did a remarkable job in arranging the cessation of hostilities, while the Garda Síochána played a vital role in ensuring that people involved in terrorist activities were dealt with and brought to justice.

'The Depot' is an excellent read and what can I say about Donal? Donal has worked assiduously on this his 3rd book of police history; he pointed out to me a short while ago that we are the oldest headquarters in Europe if not the world. Look at the edifice



Inspector McGee, Curator/Archivist described the eminence of location and introduced the speakers



Commissioner Conroy addressing the assembly

built by the British but of course it was Irish labour; obviously we had certain things in mind at the time so labourers did a good job. Donal, I wish you luck with the sales as I know that you have dedicated all profits to the 'Irish Hospice Foundation'. So, Donal, I give you the podium as I officially launch your book titled 'The Depot'. Thank you."

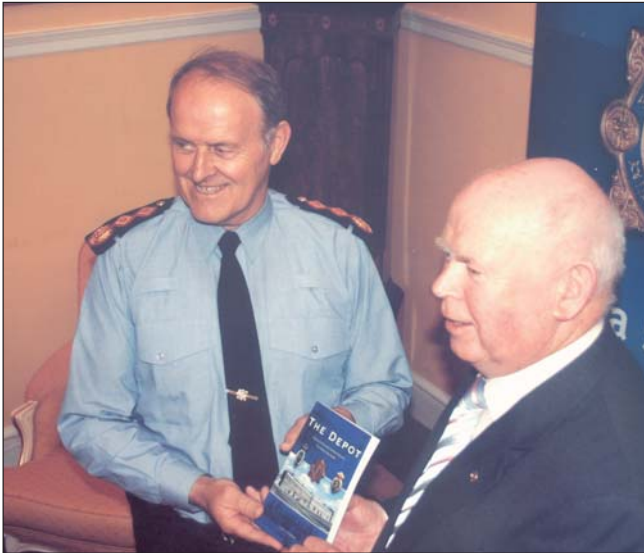
Donal O'Sullivan

"Thank you very much Commissioner; that's a sort of a hard act to follow".

"First I thank Mr Conroy for coming here today to launch 'The Depot' and I deeply appreciate your support for my work, I really do. There



Donal O'Sullivan offers a history lesson laced with humour



'The Depot' is revealed

are other people I must thank: Fintan O'Connell, my printer; the management and staff here at the Officer's Club for making it available to us; Sergeant Damian Hogan and his assistants for organizing the reception; Kevin Donoghue; Ray McHugh, Brendan Walsh and Marie Egan of the press office; Inspector Pat McGee who is also the Garda archivist who assisted with the proof-reading; retired C/S Noel Anderson; former Commissioner Mr Eamon Doherty and retired Superintendents Pat Kenny and PJ McGowan; Detective Inspector Martin Cummins of Blackrock; and Mr Hugh Forrester the curator of the museum in Belfast, for their valued assistance and to everybody

else who assisted me. Last of all, but not least, I thank my family and especially my wife Olive. She tolerated a disorganized house while this book was in preparation.

My motivation for writing was that I always had a soft spot for the Depot. On April 4th, 1957 I reported at the Guard Room for my recruit training; this time 50 years ago I was square bashing out there and I can tell you the weather was damn warm that particular year and we were wearing the 'bulls wool' uniforms. As my interest in policing grew so did my interest in the Depot and its background. Only about 10 pages in magazines have been written about this Depot in the last 80 years and it deserved more than that. Before 1922 the only decent feature was written in 1852 by the Governor General of Canada in his book about policing in Ireland.

To me 'The Depot' seems to stand out and proclaim to everybody *men and women may come and go but I go on forever*. From my research I am confident that The Depot is the oldest policing establishment in the world. It has been in continuous use as a police training and administration establishment for 165 years. When it was built Queen Victoria was only 3 years on the throne. It was there before the Great Famine. It survived the Rebellions of 1848, 1867, 1916, the Land Wars and of course the War of Independence 1919-22. When the county constabularies were set up in 1822 they had four trainee establishments; in Philipstown in Co. Offaly for Leinster, in Armagh for Ulster, in Ballinrobe for Connaught and one in Ballincollig in Cork for Munster. Four provincial police forces with diverse systems so Mr Peel thought wise to bring them all together; the Irish Constabulary became one unified force. It was decided to construct one central training location and that is how the Depot came into being and it was completed in 1842.

The highest standards of policing in the world was here at the Depot and the people in England copied it, the people in Canada copied it, everybody copied this form of training and many were sent here to later establish police forces in many parts of the world. Next heads of police from all over the world came to do their command and control courses. Right here where we are at the moment they would have been accommodated upstairs. Back in the early 1900's you had men – there were no women at that time by the way – men of all colours, men with varied uniforms, marching and parading out in the square with ordinary RIC. It must have been a wonderful sight. Coincidentally one of the most recent sections set up in the Garda Síochána deals with inter-cultural relations. I can tell you folks there were good inter-cultural relations here more than 100 years ago, so they were ahead of their time.

Several historic events took place; I'm definitely not going to recount all, but I think three of them certainly deserve mention: the first was in 1867 when the Irish Constabulary were bestowed with the title The Royal Irish Constabulary by Queen Victoria and a massive function took place on the square. Then there was great excitement in 1897 when Queen Victoria was asked what she wanted for her birthday, or more appropriately what she wanted for her Jubilee and she said she wanted the RIC mounted troop from the Depot to be her bodyguards, the sovereign bodyguards in London; that was a massive honour for the RIC. There was an event held here in April of 1922 in this building when the RIC officers disbanded. They had met for the last time and there was a speech given at that time by the County Inspector which has lived on in police folklore ever since. And on



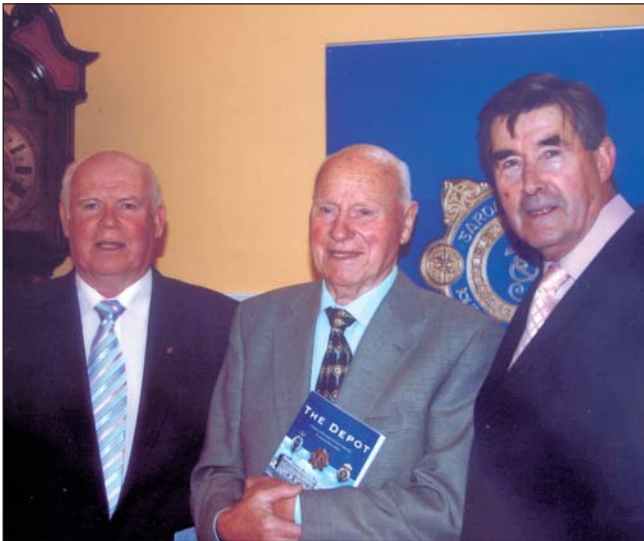
Commissioner Conroy, Mrs Olive & Donal J O'Sullivan



Happy Family Circle. Commissioner Conroy (uniform) with Colm (son) & Ursula O'Sullivan, Mrs Olive and Donal O'Sullivan and daughters Dearbhla O'Sullivan & Olivia McGowan

the same occasion the RIC officers donated a beautiful silver cup to Mr Tim Healy the new Governor General of the Irish Free State as a token of their good will. That cup by the way is over in the Garda museum. It is well worth seeing.

On the same occasion the RIC officers donated a famous regimental snuff box which they had here. Some of you are familiar with the huge dining-room upstairs; every King, Queen, Prince, VIP who visited this place for almost 100 years took snuff from that silver



Stalwarts: The author with comrades former Commissioner Eamonn Doherty & retired C/S Noel Anderson



Commissioner Conroy accepts an historic picture from Mr O'Sullivan

box and it was a huge thing. So when they broke up on that particular night they donated the snuff box to King George V. So I hope that when the Queen comes over that she puts into her handbag that snuff box and that she brings it back to where it belongs, I am sure Commissioner Conroy would accept it. So let's hope that she does that. It's in Prince Philip's study at the moment.

The greatest legacy left was this training establishment and headquarters and while there was a delay the Irish Tricolour unfurled over the clock for the first time on 17th December 1922. The Depot served the

Garda Síochána very well with its trainee establishment for the force until 1964, then training moved to Templemore. About 14,000 members of the Garda Síochána were trained here. Thousands more came back for driving courses, promotion courses, all kinds of courses, and I concur with the Commissioner that he, as far as I could trace, is the last man standing in the force who was trained here at the Depot. So congratulations Commissioner.

As the Commissioner says, we can never understand or comprehend fully what the people of the first decade went through. It was unbelievable and great credit to the Depot, the people who manned it. Every decade since 1922 has brought its own problems and challenges for the Garda Síochána but that is the nature of police work the world over.

When I was researching material for the book I was struck by great similarities between An Garda Síochána and the RIC each have made huge contributions to forces abroad; so much so that this Depot was referred to as the cradle of policing in the modern world. The Garda Síochána since 1989 has sent members abroad on peacekeeping missions to trouble spots all over the world; many members of the Garda Síochána hold prestigious and high rank abroad. I think the time has come for some who have been on duty overseas to write a book about the peacekeeping mission which the Garda Síochána has been involved in because if you let those things go you will encounter the same problems as I've had, somebody maybe in 20 or 30 years time in trying to get facts and figures. Now friends I'm issuing a challenge to those with experience to get down to the task it's certainly merited because the reputation of the Garda Síochána is the talk of the world in those peacekeeping missions.

Any police force in the world would be very glad to have this Depot as its administration headquarters and An Garda Síochána can be justly proud of it. Not only is The Depot the administrative headquarters of the Garda Síochána, it's also a pivotal arm of government administration; an institution in its own right and I think that's the best way I can describe it. Its history has been closely entwined with the political, economic and social history of Ireland for the last 165 years. It is located in the most central and prestigious location in Ireland, here in the Phoenix Park. Everything about this place is magic. Please God it will serve the Garda Síochána for another 165 years

I have no hesitation whatsoever in calling the book simply 'The Depot' and everybody who has seen the title has said yes you did the right thing. But I got a bit of a set back a few weeks ago there. I've a grandson who is aged 11. Lately he is starting to take an interest in pop groups and those 3 or 4 weeks ago he told all his friends about me writing the history of the 'Point Depot'. So certainly there are more depots but there is only one Garda Depot. I hope that the book will enlighten everybody and that you a greater appreciation for the place.

I want to thank Marie Egan and her staff from the press office who are involved in all the arrangements this evening; Pat McGee for being a very capable MC and in particular Damian Hogan as well. And my sincere thanks to you Commissioner for coming along to this evenings launch and before I finish I just want to make a presentation to Commissioner Conroy.

I have here the photograph taken on the square, possibly 1924. Mr Eoin O'Duffy is standing up in the back of an open car addressing what I consider to be approximately 600 men. The fellows without uniforms are hidden away in the back.

The Garda Band is at the very back. There are 2 or 3 people at the side taking notes, probably the press. Mr Duffy is standing up in the back of the car and sitting in the car and on the left hand side is a man with plain clothes, sitting in the back is a man in full uniform. Is there a message in this historic picture? Maybe history will repeat itself; we may see Mr Conroy addressing 600 men on the square standing in ZJ 5000, you all know the car I'm talking about. ZJ 5000 Commissioner would be the car for the job. I present this picture with my compliments".

Addendum

'THE DEPOT' is a fascinating history of a beloved Alma Mater. It is published with the approval of Mr Noel Conroy, Commissioner of An Garda Síochána, by Navillus Publishing. Printed by Inspire, Design and Print, Skibereen, Co. Cork. The Author is Donal J O'Sullivan who has five other publications to his credit. He has packed 160 years of history into 248 pages and will be a handbook reference to the thousands of members who view The Depot as a special place in memory.

The book price is a moderate £10-00/€15 and may be purchased at the Bar in the Depot or at Garda College, Templemore. You may also order a copy at Garda Press Office, Garda HQ, Phoenix Park Dublin and mailing charge has been waived. You may wish to be generous in placing an order because any profit on sales will be devoted to the Irish Hospice Foundation.

