

TRAVAILS OF A BLACK & TAN

By Jim Herlihy

Black and Tans in Ireland were not usually the subjects of pity; maybe you could spare a kindly thought for Albert Tomkinson, a Lancashire ex soldier, born 14/4/1889 who served his King in World War 1. After World War 1 he married a French girl and lived with her and her mother in Paris. He abandoned the delights of Paris and was next reported as serving with the Black & Tans in Ireland where he narrowly evaded death on several occasions. All of his service in Ireland was in County Leitrim from 1/6/1920 to 3/2/1922. He was disbanded with an annual pension of £46.16s.0d

He returned to Paris to find that his wife had died; he married her cousin who insisted that her mother reside with them. His connubial bliss was thus enhanced by having two mothers-in-law.

Naturally feelings became strained by the competitive aspirations of these madams; Albert appealed to the Courts for their removal but the Judge held against him insisting that under French law he had taken on the responsibility of housing these two ladies under his marriage contract.

'Out of the frying pan into the fire', a new complication arose. A third 'madame' declared that she was really the mother of his first wife and that the original 'lady' was an impostor. This led to legal arguments; the magistrate ruled that he must allow the third 'mother-in-law' to reside with him until her status was settled by the Courts.

Newspaper reports at the time, 1929, say that Albert Tomkinson's statements are unprintable; he asserts that he would rather be back in Ireland with the Black & Tans than living with three rival mothers-in-law.



Typical Black & Tan