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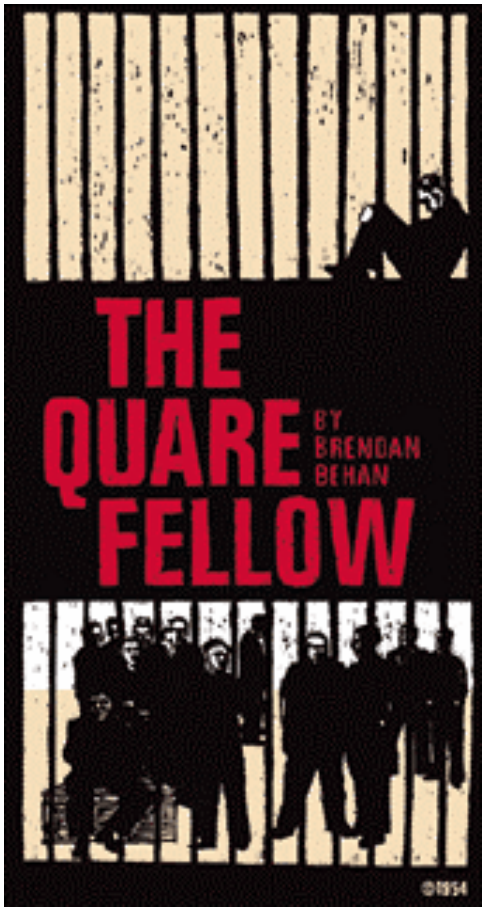

THE QUARE FELLOW

by Brendan Behan

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'The spirit of Behan is one of the most joyous, one of the most precious qualities in the theatre'
The Times

1. Introduction.

This information pack is produced to accompany Oxford Stage Company's production of *The Quare Fellow* by Brendan Behan, directed by Kathy Burke. It contains background information about the company and the play. It is designed to give students and teachers a brief understanding of the play. A follow up Resource Pack will be available to those who decide to book a workshop with Oxford Stage Company.

Oxford Stage Company is offering workshops on *The Quare Fellow*, which endeavour to provide a practical insight into the production and are designed to:

- Inspire young people with a love of theatre
- Develop a keen sense of the play and provoke a spirit of enquiry
- Encourage participants to make their own choices and discoveries
- Explore the world of the play: its rhythm and spirit

It is not necessary for the groups to see the production in advance of the workshop, although it is requested that they do see the production.

For details please contact our Education Associate Jacqui Somerville on 07803 616 224.

Alternatively, call Becky Pepper in our Education Department on 020 7438 9944.

'In Brendan Behan's…tremendous play, language is out on a spree…and spoiling for a fight'
The Observer

2. About The Company.

The award-winning Oxford Stage Company has been offering the best in regional drama for over a decade. Under the leadership of Artistic Director, Dominic Dromgoole, Oxford Stage Company has gained an outstanding reputation for combining contemporary classics, new work and revivals of established masterpieces.

- Oxford Stage Company is committed to producing theatre of the greatest quality, wit and imagination, bringing together the highest calibre of actors, writers, directors and designers to create inspiring work that touches lives.

- Our aim is to expand the recognised canon of great plays, sometimes rediscovering neglected plays or writers, sometimes breathing fresh life into established classics, sometimes presenting adventurous new work, but always ensuring excellent, extraordinary theatre of merit which appeals to different people everywhere.

- Our policy is to operate in partnership with the venues to which we tour and to present our work on the middle-scale (350-900 seats) three to four times a year at presenting and producing theatres - sometimes in co-production - bringing the very best to audiences throughout the country.

- We aim to achieve a consistently exciting education programme and we believe in giving the best young directors, designers, actors and writers of the future an opportunity to work on a challenging, larger scale.

"A riveting 17-strong ensemble revival meticulously directed by Kathy Burke"
"Gallows humour triumphs"
The Daily Telegraph – *The Quare Fellow*

"Roistering and boisterous"
"Excellent performances"
**** The Guardian – *The Quare Fellow*

"Tony Rohr and Sean Campion lead a large cast, every one of whom understands the difficult art of sad, black laughter"
The Sunday Times – *The Quare Fellow*

"Sean Holmes excellent Oxford Stage Company's production"
****The Guardian – *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*

"One of the most reverberating evenings of the year…gripping"
The Observer - *Americans*

"I wholeheartedly recommend it"
The Spectator – *The Cherry Orchard*

"Grips and entertains throughout in this richly enjoyable revival by Oxford Stage Company"
Daily Telegraph – *The Circle*

"What I felt in 1992, when they were first presented in tandem, I now know for sure. Roche's *Wexford Trilogy* is a masterwork"
The Times – *The Wexford Trilogy*

"This is a beautiful, wise and fascinating play, and Oxford Stage Company has given it the fine, long overdue revival it so richly deserves"
Daily Telegraph – *The Contractor*

"The brilliance of this play is undimmed."
****The Guardian – *Comedians*

"A dizzily enjoyable evening"
The Times – *Hay Fever*

"One of the most enjoyable evenings in the theatre for years"
The Independent on Sunday – *Top Girls*

"Theatre of scope, imagination and bloody-minded ambition…we should cherish it"
**** The Guardian – *The Inland Sea*

3. Oxford Stage Company's Education Scheme.

E D U C A T I O N

The Quare Fellow

By Brendan Behan
Directed by Kathy Burke

Suitable for: KS4+

Of interest to: GCSE and A Level English, Theatre Studies and History
BTEC and Degree Level Drama, Performing Arts and Theatre Studies

Oxford Stage Company is committed to delivering excellent and specific education and access initiatives around its artistic programme for all members of the community

Information Resources
A comprehensive Resource Pack will be available free of charge to teachers and group leaders to assist in preparatory and follow up work for the production, providing background information to the production with suggestions of practical activities.

Education Events
As part of every tour Oxford Stage Company offers a wide range of workshops available to Schools, Colleges and other educational organisations (2 workshops are offered free of charge).

Workshops – These exploratory workshops are based around the language, themes, characters and theatre styles of the play, providing a practical insight into the production and are designed to:

- Inspire young people with a love of theatre
- Provoke a spirit of inquiry
- Encourage participants to make their own choices and discoveries
- Explore the world of the play, its rhythm and spirit

The workshops are ONLY available to groups who will see the production. Maximum length of workshop is 2hrs. The maximum number of participants per workshop is 30.

Technical Workshops – Production and Stage Management teams take groups through the technical aspects of the production.

Post Show Discussions – An informal discussion forum with members of the cast and creative team. Open to anyone.

For details please contact our Education Associate Jacqui Somerville on 07803 616 224.

Alternatively, call Becky Pepper in our Education Department on 020 7438 9944 or email info@oxfordstage.co.uk

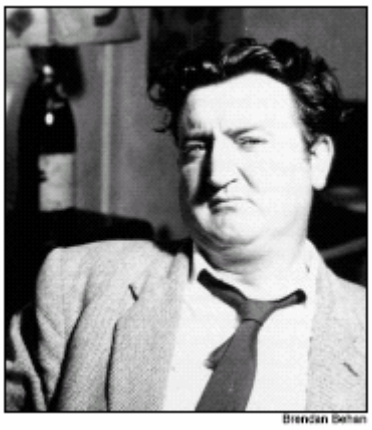
4. Social and Historical context of *The Quare Fellow*

When we come to approaching a text for the stage, it is always important to find out the context in which the play was written. This enables us to understand the 'world of the play' and assists in interpreting the text and shaping the production.

The Quare Fellow is set in an Irish prison in the 1950s on the day before and the morning of an execution. A large cast of colourful characters present a dark but amusing portrait of life inside prison with all its banter, ritual and customs. It is funny and thought provoking and was a subtle condemnation of hanging written at a time when it was still practised in Ireland and Britain. With music, humour and compassion, Behan presents the sparring between prisoners and warders, and the events that lead to the quare fellow's appointed hour.

2004 marks the 50th anniversary of the first production of *The Quare Fellow* in Dublin and London, which ran for an unprecedented six months in the West End. Brendan Behan was born in Dublin in 1923 and it was with the enormous success of Joan Littlewood's London productions of *The Quare Fellow* and *The Hostage*, coupled with his renowned wit, that he achieved international fame.

i) Brendan Behan – A brief history.



Brendan Behan

Brendan Behan was born in Dublin on 9 February 1923. At Behan's birth, his father was in a British compound because of involvement in the Irish uprising of 1916-1922. From an early age Behan was steeped in Irish history and patriotic ballads; however, there was also a strong literary and cultural atmosphere in his home.

At fourteen Behan left school and become an apprentice house painter. He was already a member of Fianna Éireann, the youth organisation of the Irish Republican Army, and a contributor to *The United Irishman*. When the IRA launched a bombing campaign in England in 1939, Behan was trained in explosives and sent to England but was arrested the day he landed in Liverpool. In February 1940 he was sentenced to three years' Borstal detention. He spent two years in a Borstal in Suffolk, making good use of its excellent library.

In 1942, back in Dublin, Behan fired at a detective during an IRA parade and was sentenced to fourteen years' penal servitude. Again he broadened his education, becoming a fluent Irish speaker. During his first months in Mountjoy prison, Sean O' Faolain published Behan's description of his Borstal experiences in *The Bell*.

He was released in 1946 as part of a general amnesty and returned to painting. He would serve other prison terms, either for republican activity or as a result of his drinking, but none of such length. For some years Behan concentrated on writing verse in Irish. He lived in Paris for a time before returning in 1950 to Dublin, where he cultivated his reputation as one of the more rambunctious figures in the city's literary circles.

In 1954 Behan's play *The Quare Fellow* was well received in the tiny Pike Theatre. However, it was the 1956 production at Joan Littlewood's Theatre Royal in Stratford, East London, that brought Behan a wider reputation - significantly assisted by a drunken interview on BBC television.

Behan's second play, *An Giall* (1958), was commissioned by Gael Linn, the Irish-language organisation. Behan translated the play into English and it was Joan Littlewood's production of *The Hostage* (1958) which led to success in London and New York. As before Behan's tragi-comedy deals with a closed world, in this case a Dublin brothel where the IRA imprison an English soldier, but Littlewood diluted the naturalism of the Irish version with interludes of music-hall singing and dancing.

Behan's autobiographical *Borstal Boy* also appeared in 1958, and its early chapters on prison life are among his best work. By then, however, he was a victim of his own celebrity, and alcoholism and diabetes were taking their toll. His English publishers suggested that, instead of the writing he now found difficult, he dictate to a tape recorder. The first outcome was *Brendan*

Behan's Island (1962), a readable collection of anecdotes and opinions in which it was apparent that Behan had moved away from the republican extremism of his youth.

Tape-recording also produced *Brendan Behan's New York* (1964) and *Confessions of an Irish Rebel* (1965), a disappointing sequel to *Borstal Boy*. A collection of newspaper columns from the 1950s, published as *Hold Your Hour and Have Another* (1963), merely underlined the inferiority of his later work. Behan died March 20th, 1964, at the Meath Hospital, just months after his wife Beatrice had given birth to their first child, a daughter, Blanaid Orla Marghead Behan. An IRA guard of honour escorted his coffin and it was said that it was the biggest funeral since those of Michael Collins and Charles Stewart Parnell.

ii) Albert Pierrepoint – The Executioner.

Albert Pierrepoint

Many people are familiar with the names Ruth Ellis, Derek Bentley, Timothy Evans, John Christie and Lord Haw Haw. We know of their trials and their eventual fate at the gallows. What is not so well publicised is that they all met their maker at the hands of the same man. His was the last voice they heard and the last pair of eyes they looked into. That man was Albert Pierrepoint.

Albert was the last of the Pierrepoints to serve as Official Executioner of Great Britain and Ireland. Serving as assistant to his uncle, Thomas Pierrepoint, Albert started his career in 1932 and became Chief Executioner in 1940 at the age of thirty-three. The most prolific hangman in British and Irish history, he was credited with hanging over 400 people. The majority of these took place in Great Britain but he also found himself performing his services in Egypt and Germany where he was responsible for executing around two hundred Nazi war criminals including the 'Beast of Belsen', Josef Kramer.

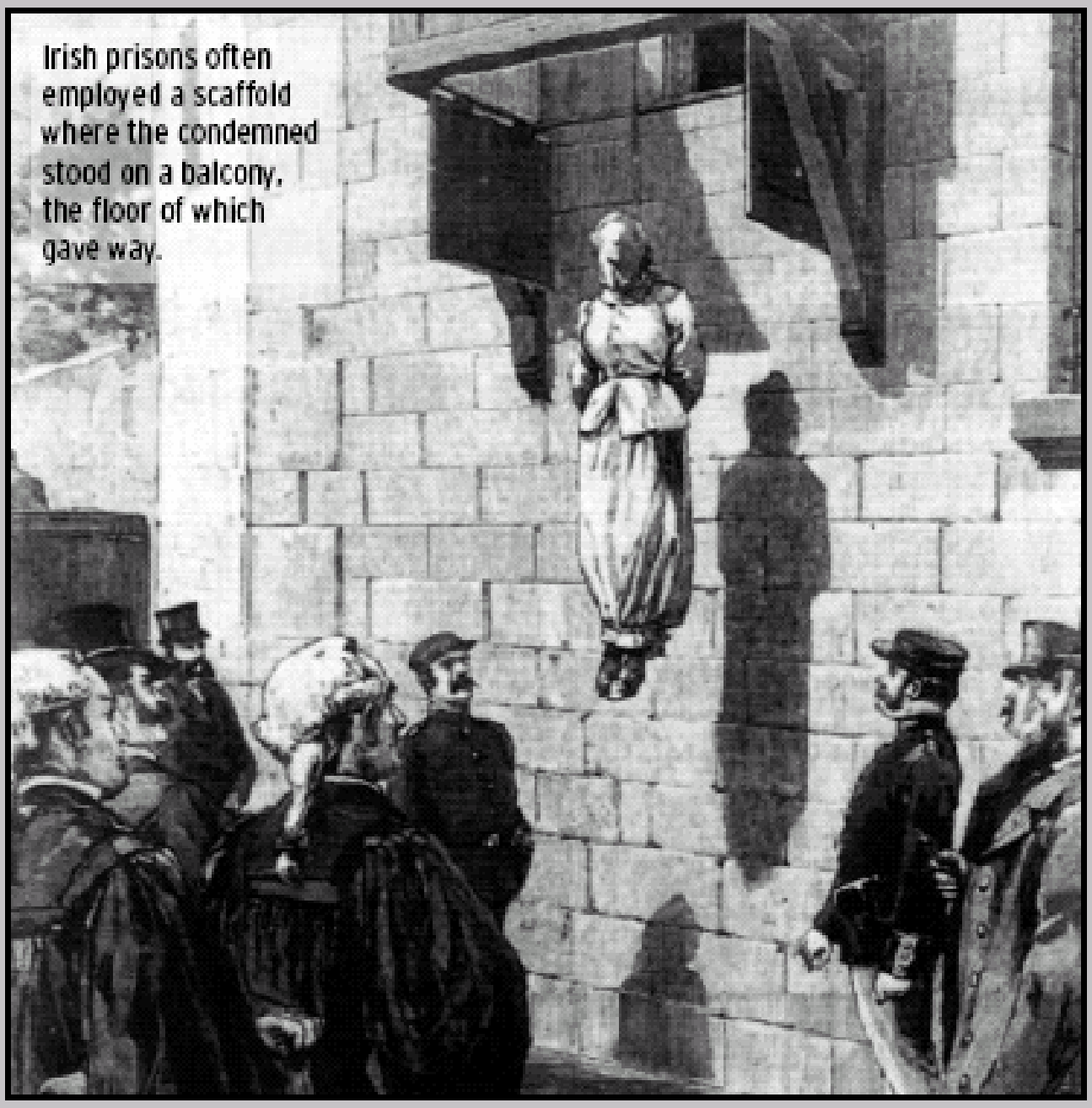
As well as being the most prolific executioner he was also considered the most efficient having been responsible for the swiftest execution on record. It took place at Strangeways Prison in Manchester in 1951. On the 8th May of that year James Inglis was led from his cell and pronounced dead just 7 seconds later.

The position of executioner was unsalaried and Albert, along with his predecessors, was paid per job. In his spare time he kept a pub, curiously named 'The Poor Struggler', with his wife Anne just outside of Manchester.

Albert was committed to his work and sought the most humane and dignified means in ending the lives of all those he executed.

Albert resigned in early 1956 over a dispute about payment and died in 1992, having been the man who carried out more judicial sentences of death than any British executioner in history including 45 men and 1 woman at Mountjoy Prison.

Ironically, he was opposed to the death penalty. In his book ‘The Executioner’, he comments “It is I who have faced them last, young lads and girls, working men, grandmothers. I have been amazed to see the courage with which they walk into the unknown. It did not deter them when they committed what they were convicted for. All the men and women whom I have faced at the final moment convince me that in what I have done I have not prevented a single murder.”



Irish prisons often employed a scaffold where the condemned stood on a balcony, the floor of which gave way.

5. Kathy Burke, Director.

Kathy has worked as an actress in theatre, film and T.V. for the last twenty years. She is best known for her work with Harry Enfield and for the Gary Oldman film *Nil By Mouth* for which she won a Best Actress award at the Cannes Film Festival. She has directed on and off during this time before deciding, two years ago to stop acting and focus fully on directing theatre.

She wrote and directed *Mr Thomas* at the Old Red Lion in Islington, which won a Time Out Award and was later televised by Channel 4.

Other directing credits: *Boom Bang A Bang* by Jonathan Harvey (Bush Theatre); *Kosher Harry* by Nick Grosso (The Royal Court); *Betty* by Karen McLachlan (Vaudeville); *Out In The Open* by Jonathan Harvey and *Born Bad* by Debbie Tucker (both for The Hampstead Theatre).

Kathy is very proud of winning the award for LOADED magazine's Woman of the Year 1999.

After *The Quare Fellow* finishes, she will be doing *Love Me Tonight* by Nick Stafford for The Hampstead Theatre.

6. The cast and creative team

CAST in order of appearance

WARDER DONNELLY	Kieran Cunningham
PRISONER A (Hard Case)	David Ganly
PRISONER B (The Man of Thirty)	Sean Gallagher
DUNLAVIN	Ciaran McIntyre
SCHOLARA (Young Prisoner 1)	Matthew Dunphy
SHAYBO (Young Prisoner 2)	Christopher Logan
WARDER REGAN	Sean Campion
THE LIFER	Gerard Rooney
THE OTHER FELLOW	Tom Vaughan Lawlor
NEIGHBOUR	Tony Rohr
HOLY HEALEY	Gary Lilburn
PRISONER C (The Boy from the Island)	Nick Danan
PRISONER D (The Embezzler)	Paul Lloyd
PRISONER E (The Bookie)	Oengus MacNamara
MICKSER	Jason Kavanagh
THE CHIEF	Gary Lilburn
CRIMMIN	Patrick Lynch
THE HANGMAN	Jay Simpson
NEW WARDER	Gerard Rooney
THE PRISON GOVERNOR	Oengus MacNamara
JENKINSON	Tom Vaughan Lawlor

CREATIVE CREDITS

DIRECTOR	Kathy Burke
DESIGNER	David Roger
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Chris Davey
SOUND DESIGNER	Fergus O'Hare
MUSIC	Philip Chevron

Original music has been composed by Philip Chevron, one of The Pogues. An excellent cast includes Sean Gallagher (*Linda Green),* Jason Kavangh *(Brookside),* Kieran Cunningham (who was nominated Best Actor in the Manchester Evening Awards for *Speed the Plow* at Contact, Manchester) and Sean Campion (*Stones in his Pockets*). The other actors are Tony Rohr (TV's *The Lakes* and *The Weir*), David Ganly (*John Bull's Other Island*), Ciaran McIntyre, Nick Danan, Matthew Dunphy, Gary Lilburn (*The Weir* at the Royal Court), Patrick Lynch (*Juno & the Paycock*, Abbey Theatre Dublin), Paul Lloyd, Christopher Logan, Gerard Rooney (*The Secret of Roan Innish),* Tom Vaughan Lawlor (professional debut), Jay Simpson (*Mother Molly's Clap House* at the National) and Oengus MacNamara (*The Playboy of the Western World*, Manchester Royal Exchange).

7. “In The ‘Joy” A prisoner’s account of Mountjoy Prison.

Website reference http://indigo.ie/~kfinlay/General/convict.htm

(NB – This article has been taken from the above website and may therefore have some spelling/grammatical errors).

Prisoner D 83222, a gambler who had was sentenced to three years in the early 1940s for theft/embezzlement, spent some of his time in Mountjoy Prison and after his release, struggling to make a living, wrote a series of articles in "The Bell" which were later expanded into a book, "I Did Penal Servitude." He was, perhaps, unlucky - the middle classes rarely found themselves exposed to prison life - but his experiences allowed him to write a unique account.

In The 'Joy

At last we arrived at Amiens Street Station. We were put sitting on a platform seat until the car for Mountjoy was ready. People who knew me for many years passed by, looking very embarrassed. We were then walked down the long exit, ahead of the Civic Guards and Mountjoy warders, and in the midst of the leaving passengers. Two men handcuffed together find it very difficult to walk down a steep incline, and we seemed to get in everybody's way.

Eventually we got into the car and drove to Mountjoy Prison. As we drove up the North Circular Road we saw crowds of people on their way to Dalymount Park for an evening Soccer match. Over the ugly drab dwelling-houses for the warders I read: "Built by General Prisons Board, 1894."

On entering the main prison gate we stood between that and an inner gate until warders took charge of us from the Civic Guards. We were brought to a large office, where our names were entered. On our way to the basement cells I got a good view of the interior of Mountjoy Prison. Standing at. the centre between the Governor's office and the Doctor's dispensary, the prison interior presents an impressive sight. Four halls meet at this point: "A" section for men who have been in prison before and sexual offenders and convicts on transfer; "B" section for first offenders and men sentenced to local imprisonment in the first and second division; "C" section for' juvenile offenders; "D" section for remand prisoners, that is men not yet tried. The condemned cell is at the end of "D" hall, and has a red door.

In each hall, stretching away on either side, with an intervening floor space of about twenty feet, I saw nothing but row upon row of cell doors. These rise up to three tiers, and at each end of the hall there is an iron staircase running up to the top. Along each of the rows of upper cells runs a narrow gallery supported on iron brackets and fenced by iron railings. The Catholic Oratory, the library, and the room where the Protestant services are held are situated on the second and third landings between "A" and "D" sections. The basement cells are in 'B" section. Prisoners are only left in these dungeons on the night they arrive.

Sligo Prison is as clean as Portlaoighise Prison, and I do not believe that it would be possible to find cleaner prisons anywhere. All the year round prisoners are whitewashing, painting and tarring. Such a headline is set that prisoners vie with one another in trying to make their cells models. No. 8 cell, E.2, in Portlaoighise, is believed to be the best kept in Eire. The long-term convict in that cell is a powerfully-built, athletic young man, who spends most of his spare cell time in scrubbing, dusting, polishing and cleaning. Having heard of his and other cells in Portladighise, and having come from the very creditable cleanliness of Sligo Prison, the basement cells of Mountjoy were a sorry contrast.

At the first night of Rossa, Roger McHugh's prize-winning historical play, I noticed at least six ex-convicts in the Abbey audience. A play with a prison scene always attracts ex-prisoners. On my way out I asked one of them how he liked it. He liked the play very much, but remarked on what he considered errors in presentation, such as the Prison Governor having a lady as his secretary instead of a warder clerk; an ordinary lock on the cell door, turned by a small key, and the writing of former convicts on the cell wall. Certainly any prisoner who was imprisoned only in Sligo and Portlaoighise could not visualise the possibility of writing being left on a cell wall even for one day. The class officer would very quickly notice it, and the prisoner would first be punished, and then would have to whitewash over the writing.

In Mountjoy, when I was there, however, it was very different. In the basement cell and in the cell in "A" wing, to which I was transferred next day, the walls were covered with writing; some former inmates even expressing their sorrows in poetry. I remember at school, from the first day of a new term, we used to begin scribbling on every available blank space, "Vak 105 days," and as vacation came nearer, day by day, we reduced the figures after "Vak" accordingly. In the same way prisoners in Mountjoy marked the length of their sentences on the cell wall or door, and marked off their term of imprisonment day by day: "Only five more baths"; "Only ten more stews"; "Roll on harvest moon," and similar hopeful calculations and aspirations. To a man sentenced to six months, every day nearer to freedom is so vital that he marks it off on a written or mental calendar. A convict has a different outlook. He usually has had a nerve-shattering experience; his crime and the circumstances which led up to it; that dreadful fear which ever darkens a guilty man, proving that conscience does make cowards of us all; suspicion, questioning, denial; arrest; preliminary trials; remands on bail or in custody; the long final trial; in practically every case all his life-savings spent on his defence; and then a sentence of from three years to life.

A convict takes about twelve months to recover from his first stupor. By that time he has subconsciously settled into the routine of Portlaoighise Prison. Instead of counting days nearer to freedom, the convict awakens to the fact that if he wishes to come through his experience sane he must settle down to prison as a place he has to live in, and make his cell and his general conditions as habitable as possible for himself, and relegate that gnawing desire for release to the back of his mind.

There are about 500 prisoners in Mountjoy. Often 25 enter and 25 leave on the same day. Many are doing very short sentences of from seven days to a month. It is practically impossible to make such prisoners care for the cleanliness of their cells. To a local prisoner a cell is a cage in which he has to exist - a place to spit and scribble on; to a convict a cell is a Spartan home in which he has to live - a place which he must take pride in, and make the best of, for his own physical and mental comfort.

To my eyes the basement cell in Mountjoy was filthy, and I did not take off my clothes that night, and lay on the bed, not in it. After our arrival, about 7.15, a warder brought me a pint of porridge which looked as if it had been cooked since four o'clock, and my memory of it is of a cold, indigestible mass. I pictured those other passengers on the train complaining in their hotels because they were rationed for sugar and butter. The warder apologised for my second meal of that day being so unappetising. He pointed out that, if the war was not on, the ten o'clock train from Sligo would arrive at Amiens Street before three o'clock, so I could blame the Emergency if I was unable to eat my porridge. In my cell I could hear the football fans cheering in Dalymount Park. Until a late hour prisoners called messages to one another from their cell windows: "It won't be long now, Nedser!" "Are you browned off yet, Spiky?" "I hear the Weasel is with the remands for knocking off an empty pram!"

I later learned that "browned off" meant "fed up," and "knocking off" meant stealing; while the remands were the prisoners remanded in custody but not yet tried.

The next morning I was brought before the prison doctors. There are two medical officers in Mountjoy - Doctor J. A. O'Sullivan, Resident Medical Officer, and Doctor W. A. Cooke, Assistant Visiting Medical Officer. Owing to my change in diet, and because I had eaten very little for the previous three weeks, I began to develop boils so I was under constant medical attention in Mountjoy.

In Mountjoy there are 40 or 50 men waiting each morning to see the doctor. When a prisoner arrives, and before a prisoner leaves, he must be examined by the medical officer, so nearly every morning there are a number of both categories awaiting inspection. In addition to men genuinely ill, a number of the " in-and-outs," the old-timers, put their names down each morning for either the Governor or the medical officer. This means that they will have to stand between the four halls, outside the dispensary, for a considerable time. Here they may get an opportunity of cadging cigarettes or butts off remand prisoners, who, because they have not yet been tried, are allowed to smoke in moderation. When the old-timers reach the medical officer or the Governor they have some frivolous complaint or request, and are promptly ejected. All the local prisoners are called into the dispensary before the convicts, so I was often an hour or an hour and a half waiting in the main hall in Mountjoy. Here I witnessed many amusing scenes. An old-timer beside me recognises another "in-and-out" among the "remands." "How're, Murphy? What're up for?"

"For knocking off an overcoat," replies Murphy, "and my name is Churchill this time!" "That's a good one," my companion chuckles; "I must call myself Joe Stalin or Roosevelt the next time; and your religion?"

"I'm R.C. this time. I was a Presbyterian the last sentence and Church of Ireland the time before, so I'm joining Mother Church again!"

A favourite trick of the "regulars" is to change their religion at each conviction in order to touch the clergyman for a few shillings on release. During my month in Mountjoy one well-known Dublin character served three sentences of seven days each, with a different name and religion on each occasion.

When I arrived he was a Presbyterian; on his next visit a Roman Catholic; and lastly, a staunch son of the Church of Ireland. Simon Aleyn, "The Vicar of Bray," who changed his religion four times, between 1540 and 1588, to please each successive English monarch and retain his job, should have been this man's prison chaplain. This prisoner let his humour play in the selection of his aliases, and was finally masquerading under the same name as a very prominent member of the Dáil.

You will often read in the paper that in a Court case the accused man "is of no fixed address." Men who know the ropes give this indefinite description to avoid having their relations disgraced.

Standing in the queue for the medical officer, some of the old-timers used to boast to me what desperate bravadoes they were, how they had held dozens of police at bay and beat up street gangs single-handed. On glancing at their cell cards, however, I found their offences to be such wild deeds as "begging while destitute with no visible means of support," or "obtaining goods to the value of two shillings and fourpence by means of a trick."

One down-and-out, in rags, among the "remands," shouted across to me, "I will be down to the bog with you. I'll be lagged this time!" I later learned that by "the bog" he meant Portlaoighise, and "lagging" meant a term of penal servitude. "I posed as a Senator in the Gresham and cashed dud cheques for thousands," he boasted. By his appearance I concluded that the nearest he ever got to the Gresham was to beg on the path outside it. A few days later this Munchausen appeared in the workshop doing seven days, his offence being not impersonating Senators nor cashing forged cheques, but the less romantic one of "stealing while an inmate of the Dublin Union one enamel mug to the value of eightpence."

On my first morning in Mountjoy, after leaving the medical officer, I was brought to the "Reception," as the prison clothes I came in from Sligo would be sent back there, and I would be issued with a set from the store here.

In Mountjoy the Reception is very large; a whole-time job for one warder and two prisoner assistants; shelves and shelves of prison clothes, baths, weighing machines, and long benches on which the many prisoners, entering or leaving each day, sit while awaiting their turns. The warder in charge, the "reception officer," read over the list of my civilian clothes which I had worn into Sligo Prison, and which had been transferred to Mountjoy with me. When I had confirmed that these were correct, I was weighed, and the prisoners working in the Reception gave me a set of clothes. Most of the prison clothes in Mountjoy are old, patched and ill-fitting. The trousers given me was about two inches too long, and the reception officer advised me to go to the tailoring department in the workshop and get it shortened. The boots I received were two sizes too large, so I was told to try the shoe-repairing shop for a more suitable pair. There were about 25 prisoners waiting in the Reception, so much time could not be spent in fitting each. When I left the Reception a warder brought myself and several other prisoners, who had arrived the previous evening, to the main workshop. The workshop is very large, between 200 and 300 prisoners being employed there. I had to march right through to the tailors' and shoe-repairing sections - "shops" they are called - at the far end of the workshop. Immediately there were hoots and cat-calls from about 50 prisoners sitting on a long bench. These were the "old-timers," the "in-and-outs," the" sons of rest," as some warders christen them. They are supposed to be sewing mail bags, but when I was in Mountjoy they began their day by visiting the Governor and medical officer, and spent a great deal of their time in dodging into the lavatories for surreptitious smokes, and playing practical jokes on first offenders and mental defectives. In running the gauntlet in passing this jeering mob, I felt like I did on the first day I entered a class-room at school. However, their interest in me was transitory, and they soon concentrated their attentions on a simple-minded prisoner, whom they sent like an April fool from shop to shop asking for the keys of the prison gates The tailors and shoemakers soon fitted me out with a better-fitting trousers and boots.

The chief warder, Mr. Daniel Donovan, who has since retired, put me to work beside a Jew who was cutting out material to be used for covering mattresses. During my month in Mountjoy I worked with this Jew, and like "Mad" in Sligo, I found him a good friend. He warned me not to, under any circumstances, tell any prisoner my home address or anything concerning my family or private life. He told me of many cases where prisoners on release went to the relatives of men still imprisoned and obtained money from them, pretending they could get little benefits for the man still in prison. The worst case he had heard of was where a released prisoner visited the wife of a man who had been murdered, and pretended that the murderer had sent him for money for his defence. How true his advice was I discovered on my own release, when I learned that a Mountjoy old-timer who had somehow discovered my home address had written there asking for money.

This Jew was a very intelligent man. He took a keen interest in his prison work. The trading instinct in his blood was manifested in the many little useful gadgets he made out of bits and scraps, and swopped with other prisoners for little things he needed. He was regularly visited by a Rabbi, and he used to look forward eagerly to his coming. During the Jewish Spring Festival, the Feast of Passover, this prisoner was allowed to the prison gate each day to receive direct into his own hands; new eating and drinking utensils, the special food which is used on this occasion, such as Haroseth, composed of bitter herbs, unleavened bread, called Motzas, and a non-alcoholic raisin wine. If a Jew receives penal servitude he is usually kept in Mountjoy for the whole of his sentence, so that he may receive the religious attention of his Rabbis. This Jew who worked with me was very proud of his ancient religion.

He gave me the Talmud, Liberal Judaism, A Book of Jewish Thoughts and Affirmations of Judaism to read to prove that many humane features of the Christian code are also to be found in the Jewish religion. We used to discuss the problems and future of the thirteen million Jews in the world the quarter of a million in Great Britain, the 3,000 in Ireland in particular, and the prospect of Zionism in Palestine. He had all the Jewish love of family life, and said that no one outside his faith could understand the real joy of an old Jewish grandfather and grandmother at the Feast of Passover, when they are surrounded by their numerous offspring.

I quickly captured the spirit of Mountjoy. It is unlike any other prison in Ireland. It is more like an old-time workhouse than a jail. About 500 prisoners, all ages and types; the old-timers, the jetsam of Dublin, incorrigible petty thieves and drunkards who have huge numbers of convictions all for short periods of from seven days to six months; a large number of juvenile offenders who are kept absolutely separate from adults, and who mostly work in the open air at wood-cutting and gardening; many sexual offenders; and a number of first offenders who, because they are only learning prison rules and routine, and are weighed down with scorching worry and sorrow, are often a nuisance to warders and to those "in-and-outs" who look on the 'Joy as a home.

When I was in Mountjoy everything was rather free and easy and very humane; a minimum of discipline. We strolled down from our cells to the workshop, where about six warders exercised a good-humoured control over hundreds of prisoners. The Jew and myself, and the many other prisoners who tried to work as hard as possible at our childish, time-killing tasks, found the warders most anxious to make our lot as easy as possible. Chief Warder Donovan was very popular with the prisoners. He patiently listened to every grievance, no matter how imaginary, and when work was really needed to be done his pleasant manner inspired prisoners to give of their best. The spirit of senior prison officials, Governors, chief warders, and principal warders quickly affects the relations between and attitude to prisoners of the ordinary warders. Subconsciously they mould themselves on their superiors. If the Governor, Chief Warder, and principal warders have a humane outlook, the ordinary warder interprets the rules in a firm but sympathetic manner, and the prisoners give no trouble. If a high prison official is a sadist or an overstrict disciplinarian, or suddenly introduces a more rigorous interpretation of the rules, nerves will snap, the prison will seethe with discontent, and warders will feel that they are standing at the crater of an inactive volcano that is likely to burst into eruption at any moment.

The old-timers are very proud of their long prison records. It is of one of these the story is told that when he was reprimanded by an over-zealous young warder he turned with tears of indignant self-pity to the passing Chief Warder and complained "that he had been coming into the 'Joy, man and boy, for the past 40 years; and had never been spoken to like that before."

Recidivists, that is men who have been in prison before, may be divided into two groups. The convict recidivists, the old "lags" in Portlaoighise are generally of good intellectual and physical calibre. The "in-and-outs" of Mountjoy are of a very different type. The persistent offender of Mountjoy Prison, the "old-timer," is often more of a nuisance than a criminal. Convicted of drunkenness, petty thieving, begging and other offences connected with destitution, these social inefficients are generally of low intelligence and wretched physique. They come and go in Mountjoy with unfailing regularity. They are assisted again and again without making any effort to help themselves. They are our dependent social problem group drifting below the marginal economic line. It is doubtful if they are capable of effort. It is impossible to have strict discipline with men doing very short sentences. Many of these petty criminals have received scores of convictions, men who deliberately break a couple of glasses in a public house in order to get a fortnight or a month in their beloved "'Joy." They say themselves that if conditions were better in the Dublin Union they would never come back to prison, but at present they prefer the amenities of the 'Joy.

Most recidivists have one thing in common - they are exhibitionists. They love to have their cases headlined in the newspapers and talked about by the public. The social nuisance of Mountjoy revels in his prison nickname. Through his many convictions he knows he is looked upon as a "character" in the District Court. When in December, 1944, "Chinny" in a Dublin Court thanked the District Justice for giving him six months; he concluded by saying: "I hope to see you at the Christmas Concert in Mountjoy, my Lord!" This was reported in all the newspapers, and helped Noel Purcell to "bring down the house" when it was included in the script of the Mother Goose Pantomime in the Theatre Royal, much, I am sure, to the chagrin of "Dykie", "Yank," "Bugler," "Dominick", "Merry," and the other old-timers of the 'Joy, who had to think of similar wisecracks to catch the reporter's notice at their next Court appearances.

During my time in Mountjoy "Yank" attained his century, coming in for one month on his 100th conviction. No centenarian ever received more congratulations, and he was envied by many of the young recidivists as a man whose record it would take them a long time to emulate. As I write this, I read in the evening paper that when receiving a short sentence this morning "Yank" angrily corrected the District Justice who credited him with only 118 convictions.

"You'll find it is 119, your Worship, if you consult your records".

"Yank" is jealous of his rising total, and he has to remember his young "fans" in the 'Joy. This morning's case brought him splendid notoriety. He explained at length to the District Justice how he resorted to an elaborate theatrical performance in a chemist's shop, feigning a sudden seizure, and while the alarmed chemist went to the back of his shop to prepare him a reviver, "Yank" stole a bottle of "red wine." By combining this with cider he produced a concoction known as "Johnny-jump-up." He then took the bus to Howth, where he drank his brew and became drunk and disorderly. The Evening Mail gave him an editorial, commenting on the peculiar fact that Howth seemed to be the happy hunting ground for dipsomaniacs "of no fixed abode whose only interest in life is to see how soon they can get intoxicated." This editorial should be the piece de resistance in "Yank's" press cuttings of his many Court appearances. Having drunk a single day of riotous freedom and scored a verbal victory over his Worship the D.J., this Mountjoy Cincinnatus willingly goes back to his plough, in this case the bench of the sons of rest.

Some of the old-timers are quite good workers on the looms and machines in the workshop. When "Dykie" was leaving on release he begged the warder in charge not to put on his machine "some stupid " who might muck it up before he came back.

Some are expert mat-makers, others are good tailors and shoemakers. "Bugler," a street musician, who worked near me, amused me with stories of how he had to study the psychology of the districts he played in. On certain roads in Foxrock and "Kingstown," Rule Britannia always brought a rich reward, while Wrap the Green Flag Round Me and Kevin Barry were the popular items with Northern visitors leaving Amiens Street Station. "Merry," who, when free, frequents racecourses and dog tracks, was a walking encyclopaedia of racing knowledge. "Charley Chaplin" would give a creditable interpretation of the Hollywood film star. He grew a Charley Chaplin moustache for this purpose. "Dominick" could do lightning sketches which, although crude, might have rewarded him with many a penny on a pavement.

We had open-air exercise in Mountjoy for half-an-hour before breakfast and for another half-an-hour before dinner.
The main exercise ground is surrounded by iron railings. In this ground there are four rings of flagstoned paths, each about three feet wide. In between each ring are grass plots. Prisoners who are unable to walk quickly keep to the inner rings, and the men soon sort themselves out; on the outer circle a fairly fast pace is maintained, rather less on the next ring, and so on, until on the inmost of all are the aged, infirm and lame, who, though able to walk, cannot do much more than hobble along. A prisoner who cannot walk for long without resting is allowed to amble up and down outside the exercise ground. In marching around these rings each prisoner is supposed to keep four paces distant from the man in front, and absolute silence is the official rule. In Mountjoy, however, this rule is not strictly carried out. Here the men walked quite close, and warders, unless the Governor or Chief Warder happened to be about, seldom checked us for talking. Occasionally the warder in charge stepped in and re-spaced the marching prisoners, shouting "Break it up there," but very soon the men were again on one another's heels, and chatting in subdued tones. Up to recent years conversation on this open-air exercise was sternly repressed, and the old-timers and old warders have still got a habit of talking out of the comers of their mouths, and resemble ventriloquists in their art of speaking without moving the lips.

In Mountjoy on the four rings, from the outer circle to the inner, over 100 men had exercise at a time. In Portlaoighise each flagstoned ring is entirely separate from the next, and the same size, not being in decreasing circles, in one area, like in Mountjoy. There were six exercise rings in Portlaoighise, three on one side of the E block and three on the other. As only 25 prisoners were allotted to each ring, it was much easier for the warder in charge of each party to enforce the rule of silence and keep the men well separated. The new handball alley in Portlaoighise is a welcome change from this depressing, monotonous and entirely mechanical exercise.

Every few minutes the warder in charge would shout: "Exercise; about turn!" and thus a prisoner had a different man in front of him when he reversed. It was much easier to chat to the man in front than to try to speak to the man marching behind you. Here and there the surface of the paths in Mountjoy was broken and irregular, and handicapped with heavy boots; new prisoners stumbled along. The warder in charge was constantly counting and checking the number of men he was responsible for, and comparing his count with that of the warder who was passing on or taking off prisoners. "Three on, that will be 102" "two off, that will be 97," and so on. In Portlaoighise when a strict old warder was in charge of exercise, to see his lips moving silently, counting, counting, and the corners of the mouths of the old lags twitching as they threw their voices back to the prisoners following them, you would imagine you had strayed into a deaf and dumb or lip-readers' institute, or stumbled on the ventriloquists' union's day out.

In every prison, when the Governor is passing, the prisoners march to attention, and there is dead silence. In Portlaoighise I was locked up on all Sundays, Holydays, bank holidays and half-days at 12.30 in the afternoon. In Mountjoy, like Sligo, I was allowed a second exercise from 2 o'clock until 3 o'clock on Sundays. On this second exercise, after the Governor had passed, prisoners were usually allowed to sit on the concrete foundations of the iron railings. As the weather that May was exceptionally good, we used to enjoy a sun bath.

Many of the' old-timers had spent periods in Grangegorman Mental Asylum, and they certainly were not normal. Their spoken words came from the sides of their mouths, their slant on life from the sides of their minds. One man, from indiscriminate reading in asylums and prisons, misquoted unintentionally, and often amusingly: "What did Mr. Gladstone say in 1863? He said, 'wait and see!'"

"It is a far, far better thing I do now than I have ever done," as Abraham Lincoln said at Gettysburg!

One man warned me not to allow my mother to visit me. He said the worst moments in prison were the visits from home. He told me that the visiting room in Mountjoy is a most repellent place. Imagine, he said, two wire nettings making cages three feet apart, with a warder stationed between them like a keeper at the Zoo. A prisoner is marched down into one of these little cages, and the door is shut behind him. Then a message is sent to the gate and his wife is shown into the cage opposite. That would not be too bad if there were no one else in the other boxes, but all the visits are going on at the same time, and each pair are shouting their conversation in order to be heard above the din. If you could not shout, it became a very painful dumb show. He said the horror of it was so great that I should never take a visit, especially as I could have an extra letter instead of it.

One old-timer, who had been a brilliant teacher before drink ruined him, told me that around this very ring the Irish patriots, - James Stephens, John Devoy, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, Thomas Blake Luby and John O'Leary, had marched at exercise in the '60's of the last century before being transferred to English convict prisons. He told me that Edward Caulfield Houston, who employed Richard Pigott to "search for" the Parnell letters, was the son of a Mountjoy warden. He pointed out that it is only fair to remember that although Richard Pigott is reviled and abhorred as the forger of the Parnell letters, this same Pigott was the only one who saved O'Donovan Rossa's wife from starvation when Rossa was in prison. Pigott paid her passage to America, and gave her some money to face the new land, at a time when the people who afterwards gloated over Pigott's suicide would not sign a petition for an amnesty for the Irish Fenian prisoners, nor give one penny to support Rossa's wife.

Sometimes at exercise two prisoners would start to fight. As they were usually undersized, feeble-bodied creatures, the warder could separate them before they did one another any damage. Beside this main exercise ground was the "death house" where a man was to be hanged later that month. On Sundays the man in the condemned cell attended the same Mass as us, but we could not see him, as he knelt in an alcove at an angle from the altar. On Saturday afternoon the choir had a practice. In the hymns before Benediction, after Mass on Sunday morning, with many juveniles in the choir, there was a beautiful blending of voices. In the well-known hymns, like Star of the Sea and Immaculate, most of the five hundred prisoners joined in.

As in Portlaoighise, the sexual offenders were the most religious. These men are not hypocrites. Warders can observe a prisoner in his cell without the prisoner knowing he is being watched, and time and time again they have seen and heard sexual offenders on their knees, begging the Mother of God to save them from this revolting fiend which takes possession of them at times.

In Mountjoy there are many types. There were men there with me who had practised some amusing confidence tricks in their time. One tall, distinguished-looking prisoner had once sold a quarter of a mile of telegraph poles to a rich farmer. He informed the farmer that he was a Government Inspector, and that as they were replacing the wooden poles with steel ones, he was selling off the wooden poles a quarter of a mile at a time.

On another occasion, posing as a high Colonial police officer, he inspected the R.U.C. in a certain Northern town, being dined and wined by the District Inspector, who finally cashed a dud cheque for him. Once he employed 30 men to dig up a field near a County Dublin public-house. He told the publican to give the men three bottles of stout each at one o'clock, and then persuaded the publican to cash a worthless cheque for him, out of which he paid the men, and left himself a handsome balance. A favourite

trick of his was to visit some district where the Land Commission intended dividing land. Posing as an Inspector, he was usually well entertained by covetous farmers who hoped he would give them an extra acre.

Again, he distributed free potato seeds all over County Donegal. They were always unaccountably held up, and the only crop they ever produced was a number of unpaid cheques, with the ominous words "No Account" neatly written in the top left-hand corner.

Another old confidence trickster who has been in and out of Irish prisons for 56 years, and was the one and only prisoner in Galway Jail when it was closed, has a flair for defrauding fashionable hotels and doctors. With a neat Van Dyke beard, he is remarkably like the film star, Monty Woolley, in appearance.

He stays in a first-class hotel, and when he has run up a bill for about £5 he stages a fainting fit. After the attention of some doctor he quickly recovers and insists on paying him two guineas. He will produce a cheque for £10 and ask the doctor to save him writing a further cheque by subtracting his £2 2s. and giving him the balance, £7 18s. The doctor is only too glad to facilitate such a charming old gentleman who, he concludes, must be wealthy to afford such a fashionable hotel. The con-man pays his hotel bill and is playing a similar trick in some other part of the country before the doctor discovers that his bank account has been debited with an unpaid cheque.

He has insisted on giving subscriptions of £5 to dowagers at church bazaars. "But how careless of me, madam: I have made the cheque out for £10. Perhaps you will be so kind as to keep £5 and give me £5 change!" He has sent a bottle of whiskey to a famous temperance preacher, and a book on The Evils of Gambling to one of our leading bookmakers, always making a few pounds on the transaction, but always also ending up in the 'Joy. He is at present hibernating in an Irish local prison doing six months. A provincial newspaper gave him half a page recording how his first sojourn in Mountjoy was in 1889, and now, in 1945, after 56 years, he has actually spent 38 full years in prison all in short local sentences, never receiving penal servitude.

In the present case he succeeded in cashing a dud cheque for £30, part of which was for an expensive dress for his imaginary grand-daughter. "The dear girl wants to be the belle of the Military Tattoo Ball at Ballsbridge, and I am quite sure she will. It was the same when we were in Bombay. Every young officer worshipped her. The Colonel's daughter smiled on them as 'well and all that sort of rot, you know!" There are many modern books in Mountjoy Prison library, especially in the instructional section. I enjoyed Sean O'Faolain's King of the Beggars, Alfred O'Rahilly's Money, and Father Myles Ryan's Irish Martyrs of the Penal Laws during my month in Mountjoy. Unfortunately, some of the prisoners tear pages out of books, which makes it most aggravating for the next reader when he finds the most vital part of a serious work or the most exciting part of a novel missing.

I was astonished how widely read some of the old-timers in Mountjoy were. "Show me what you read and I will tell you what you are" would hardly apply to these men. Two cells away from me there was a prisoner who has been described as the worst ruffian this country has ever known. He has been so described not only Judges, Barristers, Solicitors and Civic Guards, but also by his fellow-prisoners, not one of whom would speak to him. I had hardly arrived in Sligo Prison when I was told to beware of him if I should come into contact with him m Mountjoy or Portlaoighise. I am afraid that everything that is said of him is true, and yet he is one of the best-read men in Ireland. A man of some education before he adopted a career of crime, he has spent many years in prison - doing long and short sentences. During the past 14 years he has been out of prison only for a few weeks at a time. One of his studies is Napoleon I., on whom he has read innumerable books. Sir Walter Scott, Thiers, Fournier, Holland Rose, Sloane, Ludwig, Fox, Masson, Hall, Duchesse d'Abrantes, Levy, Fisher, Stourm, Maitland and Barry O'Meara were but a few of the writers on the "petit caporal " from whose works he could quote at length. What a thesis he could write on Bonaparte if he could be weaned from crime! When I see this criminal re-appearing in the Court reports in the evening paper I can picture these people beside me in the tram visualising an illiterate low-browed Bill Sykes Then I remember him as I knew him, walking behind me at exercise in Mountjoy, tall, handsome, in cultured accents quoting Napoleon's "Love is une sottise faite a deux"; "Soldiers, from these pyramids forty centuries look down on you"; That man made me miss my destiny!" "If I had been my own grandson, I could have retreated as far as the Pyrenees"; and I wonder if Robert Louis Stevenson had not some grounds for his Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde after all.

When next you give a penny to a down-and-out, reflect that if he has a prison record he may have read a great deal more than you have. P. G. Wodehouse in Louder and Funnier says that in English prisons they tend to give the inmate nothing to read but things like the first volume of Waverley and Marvels Of Pond Life, while in American prisons P. G. Wodehouse is widely read. There is often a true word spoken in jest, and in Portlaoighise Prison I have on many occasions actually issued to a new prisoner a volume of Waverley as his fiction and Marvels of Pond Life as his educational book. In Mountjoy, however, P. G. Wodehouse is very popular, so your destitute man may be able to quote Jeeves, Bertie Wooster, Mr. Mulliner, Ukridge, or the Oldest Member for you. If you are a crime novel fan, that down-and-out you see shivering on the pavement, if he has experience of prison, has possibly read detective and mystery literature from Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins, Bram Stoker, Conan Doyle, and Edgar Wallace down to the latest writer of thrillers. Authors seem to know little of prisons and to be entirely unaware of the large numbers of readers in prisons to-day. Novels dealing with crime or criminals are full of the most glaring errors. A man doing a six months' sentence is described as a convict whose head is shaven. A convict in a novel is generally an undersized little man, always a burglar, who speaks and writes a soft of pidgin English: "De cops am on to youse!" "Youse are for de jug" and so on. Tradition dies hard, and when Dickens created Bill Sykes the reading public adopted that subnormal brutal moron as the typical criminal, and even E. W. Hornung's gentlemanly Raffles was looked on as the exception which proves the rule. Authors and the reading public would get a surprise if they discussed books with even an average "in-and-out" in Mountjoy.

In Mountjoy about 400 of the 500 prisoners, including the juveniles, were all locked up at 4.30 each week-day until 7 o'clock the following morning. On Sunday in Mountjoy all prisoners were allowed out for a second exercise from 2 until 3 o'clock. When I was there the hundred prisoners who were allowed down to the workshop from 5.30 to 7.30 were all men who were doing sentences of six months or more. We were supposed to work, but very little work was done; games of shove-ha'penny played with buttons; improvised draught boards, and even primitive packs of cards appearing. Although strictly according to the rules, I should not see a newspaper for 12 months, at recreation in Mount-joy and Portlaoighise I was able to get a quick glance at other prisoners' papers. In Portlaoighise the only newspapers permitted are those published on Saturdays and Mondays, the papers printed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays being apparently considered subversive.

On the other hand, in Mountjoy prisoners order their papers for alternate days, and so at recreation I could usually get a glimpse at the day's news. The Court cases were eagerly read, because when a man was sentenced he would make his appearance in the workshop a day or two later: Although in Sligo and Portlaoighise our last meal was at 4.30, in Mountjoy on our way back to our cells, between 7.15 and 7.30, we were served with a piping hot cup of cocoa, which was most acceptable.

During my month in Mountjoy two more convicts arrived. Each had been sentenced to three years' penal servitude. They were both men with university educations. Rory, the son of a distinguished father and family, had the appearance of a matinee idol and the accent of a B.B.C. announcer. He had been born with the literal silver spoon in his mouth; wealthy, good-looking, clever, the world seemed at his feet. He had been at our most famous Catholic secondary school, and then suddenly, towards the end of a brilliant university course, he turned to a career of crime. He had received a few short local sentences, and this was, his first term of penal servitude. He had a keen sense of humour and was an excellent mimic.

Peadar had never been in prison before. He was a very tall, good-looking young man. After a distinguished university career he had worked hard in his prpfession, and the sky seemed his limit when he suddenly committed a sexual offence. One day when I had been waiting in the main hall for the medical officer, I had seen Peadar in his own clothes, well dressed, debonair, self-confident, on his way to his trial. Now that he was convicted, sitting dejectedly in the workshop in prison garb, he looked a very different man. With his own clothing he seemed to have cast off every link which bound him to the past. He sat there with such despair on his face that it was considered safer to place him in a treble cell with two other prisoners. In Mountjoy there are many of these treble cells, where epileptics, mental defectives and men suspected of suicidal tendencies are looked after at night by two reliable prisoners. In Portlaoighise the treble cells are only used in extreme cases, where a man actually attempts suicide. There, a man believed to require watching is allowed to sleep in his own single cell, but Observation is marked in large letters in red ink on his cell card. The warder on night duty watches such a man all through the night, flashing his night light through the spyhole to see that everything is all right at least once every hour.

Rory and Peadar are free again now. I saw them at the opening of the Jack B. Yeats' National Loan Exhibition. They were standing behind the Minister for Justice, both looking very arty and audibly enraptured over the colour vistas of Blackbird Bathing in Tir-na-nOg. A celebrity-infected female enquired from me in awed whispers as to the identity of two such obviously distinguished artists. "Two of our most promising Post-Raphaelites," I countered. "But don't ask them for autographs. It only upsets them."

At a recent lecture I attended in the Broadway, District Justice Henry A. MacCarthy, who with his psychological approach to offenders is revolutionising the Irish Bench, declared that destitution cannot be divorced from delinquency. Mountjoy Prison with its hundreds of "down-and-outs," its pitiful procession of humanity, its pathetic and hopeless collection of human wreckage proves how true this is.

Prison clothes have, a devastating effect on the appearance of formerly well-dressed men, like Peadar. On the other hand, prison clothes improve the appearance of some of the destitute. Cringing, craving cadgers I had often seen supplicating tram queues at Nelson Pillar assumed a new strange dignity in the communal atmosphere of the 'Joy, where all prisoners are presumed to be equal.

Many prisoners are as intolerant of one another as the outside world is intolerant of all criminals. In Mountjoy the men convicted of "clean" crimes used to speak with abhorrence of "those unnatural beasts, the sexual offenders" - while the men convicted of "heinous" crimes, the sexual offenders, spoke with contempt of "the thieves and murderers." In prison I was not intolerant of anyone, no matter what his offence. I found some good in every prisoner. Most of the warders had the same attitude. They were tolerant even to the intolerant. They never referred to the crime a man was convicted of. To them a man was decent, no matter what his offence, if he acted decently in prison.

One June afternoon, Rory, Peadar and myself were called out of the workshop and given baths. We knew from this that we were leaving for Portlaoighise the following morning. although Rory had never served a term in Portlaoighise, he had learned all about it from convicts who had been there, and his summing up was that its discipline was very strict, but the amenities were better than in Mountjoy. We were examined by the medical officer. At recreation that evening many prisoners said good-bye to me and wished me luck. I did not sleep well that night. I had learned poetry the previous evening until it was too dark to read further, and now when I awoke from my troubled, fitful dreams, I kept repeating it to myself. Sligo Prison was behind me; I was finishing with Mountjoy in the morning. Another journey to fear lay ahead; but I had only 50 days of my sentence completed, and I had 761 more days to do - 761 days of 24 hours with 60 minutes in each hour. I did not fear the prison with its discipline that lay ahead. I had always been used to discipline, and I knew that by having no grievances and acting in just, my ordinary natural manner I would not be bullied or ill-treated. The thing I really feared was death: death before I could make good again; make good the injury I had done to my dear ones; make good by degrees my defalcations; make good the injury I had done to my better self. My

mind was full of intangible, illusive, fugitive fears, and in a forlorn cell fear is the most devastating of all emotions. That night the wind blew very cold through my cell window.

I have just come back from the Gaiety, where Hilton Edwards in the name part and Meriel Moore as Lettie Quincey gave memorable performances in Thomas Job's crime play, Uncle Harry. I was particularly interested in the final scene, which takes place in the office of a Prison Governor. Lettie Quincey has been convicted of murder and will be executed the following morning. There were a few errors. The Governor addressed the convicted woman as Miss Quincey. He would, in fact, have called her Quincey, not using Miss. He left her alone with her brother without even keeping her under observation from a distance. Actually a condemned murderer is never out of sight, even for a moment.

But the thing which struck me as most significant was the audible contempt of the audience for the hangman, Mr. Burton. When Uncle Harry spoke of Mr. Burton as a hangman, the executioner vehemently and somewhat plaintively claimed that he was a civil servant - that title more cherished than a saint's halo by bourgeois aspirants! Behind me was a famous doctor with a party of friends. He seemed to voice the sentiments of the entire audience when he exclaimed. "A hangman! What a nauseating profession!" Prison memories flooded back to me.

An old warder who had been often present at a hanging in Mountjoy told me that a famous hangman frequently complained of how the world treated him. He found himself friendless, lonely, a social outcast. To kill in the name of one's country is a glorious feat, one rewarded by medals. But to kill as the hangman does in the name of the law, that is a gruesome, horrible function, rewarded with scorn, contempt and loathing. Why, asked the hangman, why is this? Why should the hangman be universally avoided like a pestilence? Is it because he, the hangman, executes a law which, when they once come near it face to face, all men instinctively revolt from?

The hangman's is the one irrevocable act in a capital crime, but when a man is hanged in Mountjoy is it not the public, the men and women of Eire, who hang him? The public never likes to cut itself in on the blame. We like to watch these things from afar. In a murder case, the preliminaries, the remand from Court to Court, the trial, conviction and appeal of the guilty man are exploited to the full by the newspapers to gratify the morbid public. When he is finally condemned he suddenly ceases to be "copy," and his execution is generally only given a few lines in an obscure part of a paper. Has the mental sadism of the public been sufficiently gorged, and does it shrink from reading the details of the logical conclusion to its lust for revenge? Through your perverse insensibility to the pain of others, combined with a sensibility to your own pain, can you not endure to think or read about what another man has got to endure? Punishment by death for a death is vengeance pure and simple - the old Mosaic Law of "an eye for an eye, a life for a life."

The death penalty has been retained in Eire from a warped sense of justice resting in revenge and from sheer inertia of conservatism. What exactly is justice, why does killing satisfy it? Fear of the death penalty does not prevent a man from committing murder. Jealousy, hatred, sex feeling, or political fervour often combine to cloud the judgment and stand in the way of the normal exercise of reason over a long period of time. Hence the crime which results, though it seems to be carefully premeditated, is none the less the product of prolonged emotional reaction. Such emotions often reduce the human being to almost an automaton before he commits murder. Does the public really believe that the threat of the hangman's noose deters such a potential murderer? Two wrongs do not make a right. A man sent to penal servitude for life will have his freedom restored some day. When a man is hanged the State cannot restore the life it has taken.

George Bernard Shaw holds that there is not very much difference between the death sentence and imprisonment for life. He says: "Each is a method for taking a criminal's life, and when he prefers hanging or suicide to imprisonment for life, as he sometimes does, he says in effect that he would rather you take his life all at once, painlessly, than minute by minute by long-drawn-out torture." In actual fact, of course, a vast gulf lies between death and a life sentence of penal servitude, and there was never yet a condemned convict who refused a reprieve or who did not ardently long for one.

The law is what the majority of citizens want it to be; otherwise it would be changed. Before the war the death penalty had been abolished in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Austria, Roumania, Italy, Portugal, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Uruguay, most of the Cantons of Switzerland and 12 States of the American Union. The last available reports from Sweden and Denmark showed that since the abolition of the death penalty there has actually been a decrease in such crimes as were formerly punished by death.

While I was a prisoner in. Mountjoy a man was hanged. A warder, who guarded him in the Court described the tense moment when the foreman of the jury, having given the fateful word "Guilty," a small black cap was placed on the Judge's head, who then addressed the prisoner by name, saying: "The sentence of the Court upon you is that you be taken from where you now stand to the place from which you came, the jail, and that from there you be taken to the place of execution, the gallows, and that you be there hanged by the neck until you be dead, and that your body be buried within the precincts of the prison in which you are confined. And may the Lord have mercy on your soul." When the man left the dock under sentence of death he was taken downstairs and searched to the skin. From that moment until he was dead he was under constant supervision of warders."

The warders work in pairs, in eight-hour shifts, and not for one moment is a condemned murderer out of their sight. They accompany him on exercise and sit on chairs with him in the condemned cell playing cards or other games. At night the light is lowered and the warders sit at the table keeping the convict in bed under constant surveillance. They make tea for him during the night if he feels like it. The doomed man is given any food he desires, provided it is sanctioned by the prison doctor. He can have

an occasional bottle of stout and plenty of cigarettes. He is visited daily by Sisters of Charity, and near the end he can have morning Mass and Communion.

I was told that many Irish Catholic murderers become very religious and completely resigned. It must be a strange feeling knowing exactly when you are fated to die, and not to be cut off like ordinary men in the midst of their sins. This man who was hanged during my time in Mountjoy told the hangman and warders present at his execution that he would pray for them that night in Paradise. He had absolute faith. One of the warders who guarded him on his last night told me that this murderer said he felt exactly the same as he had felt on the morning- he had made his First Holy Communion thirty years before. "A nice holy feeling, not exactly understanding what lay ahead."

Six months earlier he had first appeared before the preliminary Courts, and ever since he had fought a desperate losing battle, dying bit by bit a thousand deaths, drawing ever nearer to the brink of eternity. The newspapers had paraded his family for purposes of sensationalism. The gloating public went on an emotional spree, crowds gazing at his house, pointing out his relatives, and through their morbid curiosity causing untold suffering to his dear ones. Ten days before he died he was informed that all petitions had failed, and he would get no reprieve.

The State can be very cruel at times, and there was a case not long ago where a murderer was informed on Christmas Eve that he was refused a reprieve and was doomed to die: There was an ironical happening some years ago. It was feared a doomed murderer would die if not immediately operated on. The best medical skill was obtained. The murderer's life was saved, and on the day when the doctors pronounced him finally out of danger he was hanged! A famous Prison Governor has declared: "An execution is the worst ordeal that the officers of a prison can undergo. They "have the culprit in their custody for a considerable time awaiting trial; they may be asked to advise him about his defence; they are present at his trial, and they receive him back again to prepare him for what is to happen three weeks later. They have in a sense grown almost fond of him."

A warder who has endured the nerve-wracking experience of watching a murderer's last days has asked: "Is the State justified in taking advantage of the economic necessity of its individual members, and so compelling them to carry out such tasks as a warder guarding a convict in the condemned cell? Make no mistake about this: warders do not sit in the condemned cell with a doomed murderer, escort him to the scaffold on the morning of the execution and see him plunged to death for the pleasure of the job."

From the day when we learned that this man was definitely to die, a dark a pall of depression settled on the prison, fraying tempers and shattering nerves. This cloud of gloom spread outside the prison walls, shadowing the homes of the warders. One warder who had looked particularly worried, confided to us: "My wife is going to have a baby. This hanging is getting on her nerves as much as if I was the bloody hangman." The terrors of dying are limited; the terrors of killing are not limited.

It was a most truing time for those warders in the condemned cell who played cards with the victim and in many ways endeavoured to keep his mind off the grisly business ahead. To them he was not a murderer, but just another human being. The strain told on every warder, because each felt a participant in the preparation for the cold deliberate killing. They tried to nerve themselves for the hangings by reminding one another that they had seen worse things done in Flanders or during the Black and Tan or Civil War. But to kill in the burning heat of battle as a patriot is infinitely easier than to slay to schedule as a minor civil servant.

The priest who attended the victim, the good Sisters of Charity who brought him consolation, those men who guarded him by day and night lest by suicide he should cheat the State of the satisfaction of slaying him, all who watched his doomed and darkening days drag away, felt what a fearsome thing a bureaucratic killing can be. The tenseness grew, the air seemed charged with electricity, the strain reached breaking point. I never experienced such a sensation; 500 prisoners, and everyone connected with the prison, from the highest officer to the youngest child of a warder, all in a state of suspended apprehension - waiting - waiting: while in the condemned cell the central figure of the nerve storm was praying aloud: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

At last the dread day dawned. It was a shining summer morning, for Nature is no respecter of the macabre. From an early hour we, first offenders, were on our knees reciting Rosaries for the doomed man. As eight o'clock approached his time on earth became shorter; an hour, ten minutes, a minute. At last as the bell of a neighbouring church tolled the fatal hour we knew a life was passing out. At that solemn moment every prisoners who retained a finer feeling or a semblance of sensibility shivered in his cell; while those old-timers who treated the tragic happening as an obscene joke, banging their stools against their cell doors, and shouting such cries as "One off" or "Another for the high jump," were the sewer rats of our economic latrines, whose subnormal state is not a slur on their progenitors but on the social system that suckled them.

Eight o'clock. The murderer was dead. Justice satisfied; a life was snuffed out for schedule. The State, the men and women of Ireland, had sent a soul through the shadows. As I hope that the day is near at hand when the hangman's rope, his pinions and all the accoutrements of his art will find their place as barbaric relics in our National Museum or Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, it may interest the public to know the intimate details of the actual hanging.

The condemned cell is on the ground floor of Mountjoy at the end of D block. It has a red door. It is a double cell. In the side wall nearest to the end of the building there is a door which opens into the "death" house, which is right behind and level with the condemned cell. As some doomed men become prostrate with fear it is easier to carry them over this level crossing to death than drag them up steps to the scaffold. The essential parts of the scaffold are few. There is a heavy cross beam into which bolts

terminating in hooks are fastened. The ends of the cross beam are let into the walls of the "death" house. The hooks hold the rope. The hangman uses a -¾-inch rope of fine strands of Italian hemp. It is 13 feet 1 inch long. A brass ring is worked into one end through which the other end of the rope is passed to form the noose. A leather washer, which fits the rope tightly, is used to slip up behind the brass ring in order to prevent the noose slipping or slacking after it has been adjusted. The scaffold proper, or trap or drop as it is variously called, is the portion of the structure to which most importance is attached. It consists of two massive oaken doors, fixed in an oak framework on a level with the floor and over a deep bricked pit. Both doors must necessarily fall at exactly, the same moment. Their great weight, for they are of three-inch oak, causes them to drop very suddenly, even without the weight of the victim, and they are caught by spring catches to prevent any possibility of rebound.

The hangman has to understand the mathematics of his art. The drop must be of sufficient length to cause instantaneous death, but it must not be so great as to outwardly mutilate the victim. Death must be caused by dislocation rather than by strangulation. From the weight and build of the convict the hangman calculates the length of drop required. A man weighing 10 stone 4 lbs. requires a drop of 5 feet 6 inches, while a man of 15 stone requires a drop of only 2 feet 1 inch. The rope is adjusted behind the left ear of the victim, and is thus best calculated to cause instantaneous and painless death by doing three things: causing strangulation, dislocating the vertebra, and internally rupturing the jugular vein.

The pinioning arrangement, like the rest of the essentials for an execution, is very simple. A broad leather body belt is clasped round the victim's waist, and to this the arm straps are fastened. Two straps an inch and a half wide, with strong steel buckles, clasp the elbows and fasten them to the body belt, while another strap of the same strength goes round the wrists and is fastened into the body belt in front. The victim's legs are pinioned by means of a single two-inch strap below the knees. The rest .of the apparatus consists of a white cap, shaped somewhat like a bag, which pulls down over the eyes of the doomed man to prevent his seeing the final preparations.

The hangman is under very strict rules. He has to sleep in the prison the night before the execution and make the necessary tests in the apparatus. His diet is carefully prescribed lest he attempt to keep up his nerve by artificial means. At 7 o'clock, Mass was celebrated in the condemned cell, the doomed man and the warders who guarded him receiving Holy Communion. At the end of Mass the priest gave the Papal Benediction.

At three minutes to 8 that melancholy morning the hangman entered the condemnned cell, carrying with him the official document giving him authority to hang the convict. The victim said good-bye to the warders who had kept him alive for his death. The hangman pinioned his arms, and then a mournful procession made its way to the scaffold: the Prison Governor, Chief Warder, principal warders and several ordinary warders, the prison doctor, an official representing the State, and the victim walking between the hangman and the priest, who was already reciting the prayers for the dying. As they walked, the hangman placed the death hood, the white cap, upon him who was about to die. Just as they reached the scaffold the hangman pulled the cap over the victim's eyes and placed him under the beam, pinioning his legs. The hangman adjusted the rope, pulled the bolt, and the trap fell at 8 o'clock precisely, only three minutes having elapsed since the hangman entered the condemned cell.

A neat job; perfect timing. Death was instantaneous, but the body was left hanging for an hour. It was then lowered into a coffin and carried to the mortuary. A crowd of people had gathered outside the prison and recited the Rosary for the condemned man. A note pinned to the main gate announced that that day was fixed for the carrying out of the judicial penalty. At about three minutes past 8 a warder came from the prison and over the first note he nailed a second, which read :-

"Declaration of Governor:-
"I, the undersigned, declare that judgment of death was this day executed on in Mountjoy in my presence.
"SEAN KAVANAGH, Governor."

There was an inquest held by Doctor D. A. MacErlean, City Coroner, at 10 o'clock, on the executed man. At the inquest Mr. Sean Kavanagh, Prison Governor, said that the execution was carried out without a hitch. Doctor J. A. O'Sullivan, Prison Doctor, gave medical evidence. After the inquest the victim was buried in the prison grounds. Everything was conducted with decorum and solemnity. The man who was hanged took a life, so you, the men and women of Eire, took his life. The thing we call Justice was satisfied. Nowadays when I see men and women positively gloating over the approaching hanging of some murderer in Mountjoy, I wish that it would be possible to make them change places with those unfortunate warders in the condemned cell.

Until the public is sufficiently aroused against the futility and needlessness of legally taking human life, I would suggest that on the morning of a hanging in Mountjoy 12 responsible citizens should be selected from the jury panel, and with the same number of T.D.'s and Senators, be all compelled to be present in the death-house at that always awful moment when the spark of life is crushed from a man the State has doomed to die. If this witnessing of an execution was made a civic duty, the repugnant horror of and his responsibility for legal slaying would be impressed upon the average citizen and public representatives. The abolition of the death penalty would soon follow. In the meantime, why shun the hangman? He does your dirty work, and does it damned efficiently.
Hearing old warders describing little incidents they remembered from "The Troubled Times," I regretted that some of our present literary warders were not in the service at that period to write a full prison history of the epoch. One warder who had guarded Terence MacSwiney and Tomas MacCurtain in November, 1917, remembers that when in August, 1918, Mrs. MacSwiney brought their infant Máire to see her father in Jail, Terence said: "I am so glad Máire was born in Cork, the city where she will probably have to fight for her freedom." On Tuesday, 10th July, 1945, in Cork, the city where she was born, Máire Nic Suibhne, M.A., only daughter of Terence MacSwiney, was married to Ruaidhri Brugha, only son of Cathal Brugha. Fittingly, the ceremony was performed by the Rev. Father Augustine, O.F.M.Cap. Father Augustine had officiated at the wedding of Terence MacSwiney,

on 9th June, 1917 and had sent him many inspiring messages during his long hunger-strike. He had also sat with the dying Thomas Ashe. The cry of the dying MacSwiney, retold in prison, is the one I like to remember him by:

"I shall be true to you, my fair colleen;
I shall be true to you for aye."

When Thomas Ashe was dying in the Mater Hospital, Father Augustine said to him in Irish, "God is good and has a good Mother," and Thomas replied in Irish, "Yes, indeed, Father." Prison Warder Edward Fitzpatrick, who was present, was afterwards complimented by Tim Healy at the historic inquest for his kindness to the dying man. When the eighteen-year-old Kevin Barry was hanged on 1st November, 1920, his was the first execution in Mountjoy for over 20 years. When a warder told Kevin that a newspaper had attributed to him a remark "that he was proud to die like Roger Casement," Kevin laughed and said: "I never made such a heroic remark, but those newspaper people are able to swing the lead." Hearing that his mother was visiting him for the last time he put on his trench coat with belt, as the nearest semblance to a soldier's uniform in his possession. When Kevin was hanged, and Father McMahon descended to the pit and anointed his still warm young body, some of the warders present sobbed aloud.

There were many executions from that on. On Monday, 14th March, 1921, six Sinn Feiners were hanged in Mountjoy. There were many touching little incidents from this mass execution still remembered by Mountjoy warders: Thomas Whelan giving a box of chocolates to Lettie Mann, his landlady's little daughter, and his last words on the scaffold: "Tell Father Union I wore my Sodality medal when I was hanged." When Sister Monica, a Bon Secours Nun, said to Francis Flood on his last night on earth: "I will pray for you until nine o'clock to-morrow." "Why," said young Flood, "delay until nine o'clock; I will be in heaven shortly after eight and I will pray for you." Patrick Moran, of Crossna, introduced an auxiliary who was guarding him as well as warders to the patriot priest, Father Michael O'Flanagan, saying, "I want you to shake this Auxie's hand, Father, because he is one of the best"; Bernard Ryan's last words to his mother and sister: "Be brave like the women of Cork" Patrick Doyle's last words were: "My poor little Kathleen will lose her daddy"; Thomas Bryan to his wife: "Tomorrow I step from Mountjoy to heaven to join Pearse's Brigade and to watch over you." Thomas Traynor was executed on Monday, 25th April, 1921. At his last farewell to his wife and children he took his five months' old baby, Sheila, in his arms, and to his weeping son he said: "Don't fret, Frank boy; keep on with the bagpipes as if I were there to hear you playing them."

On 7th June, 1921, Edward Foley and Patrick Maher were hanged in Mountjoy. They wrote a last letter jointly from the condemned cell, ending: "We gladly give our lives that a smile may lighten the face of our dear Dark Rosaleen. Our souls shall go to God at seven o'clock in the morning, and our bodies, when Ireland is free, shall go to Galbally." An auxiliary who was guarding him gave Edward Foley a pair of scapulars which he himself had worn during the Great War. On the same morning a "Black-and-Tan" was hanged in Mountjoy. He, too, had had a pathetic parting from his wife and child the previous day, and he died as bravely as the two Sinn Feiners.

Then came the dark days of the Civil War. Erskine Childers, whose Riddle of the Sands I read in Mountjoy, was executed on Friday, 24th November, 1922. A fortnight later, on 8th December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, exactly one year after the signing of the Treaty, Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellowes, Joseph McKelvey and Richard Barrett were taken from their cells in Mountjoy, where they had been imprisoned for five months, and executed as a reprisal for the shooting of Seán Hales.

Two hundred minds with but a single thought, and that single thought, escape, was Arturo Giovanitti's description of the jail where he was imprisoned. That may not be true of Mountjoy, where many of the "in-and-outs" are there practically by choice, but escape and famous escapes are always a favourite prison topic. One Mountjoy warder still remembers the chagrin of the Governor on reading R. C. Barton's letter on St. Patrick's Day, 1919, informing him that owing to the discomfort of his cell the occupant felt compelled to leave Mountjoy and requesting the Governor to keep his luggage until he sent for it.

And Saturday afternoon, 29th March, 1919, when the warders on recreation were called back from the Bohemians-Belfast Celtic match at Dalymount Park to find that J. J. Walsh, Piaras Beaslai, Padraic Fleming and 17 others had held up warders with cell spoons disguised as guns in their pockets, and escaped.

And Saturday, 14th May, 1921, when Emmet Dalton, in making a vain attempt to rescue Sean MacEoin, tied the Mountjoy Governor up in his own office. And Sunday, 30th October, 1921, when Linda Kearns - who later comforted the dying Cathal Brugha - by leading Miss Coyle, Miss Burke, and Miss Keogh to freedom from Mountjoy earned the distinction of being the first woman ever to escape from an Irish jail. The warders pointed out that as Mrs. McWhinney, Linda Kearns is now one of the most active members of the Visiting Committee to the women's prison in Mountjoy, while Sean Kavanagh, who was a fellow-prisoner with her in 1921, is now Governor of the jail.

On Tuesday, 8th May, 1945' when Britain was celebrating V.E. Day and Grafton Street, Dublin, was thronged, I noticed, Mary Comerford having a quiet cup of coffee in the Palm Grove. I remembered that' it was exactly 22 years before, onTuesday, 8th May, 1923, that Miss Comerford escaped from prison with Miss Barry, Miss Taaffe, and Miss Duggan. Other things old warders remember are: Laurence Ginnell drawing up in a Mountjoy cell his famous 14 points for Irish freedom which Dr. McCartan then communicated to Sean T. O'Kelly and President Wilson in Paris; Frank P. Walsh, of New York, Michael F. Dunne, of Chicago, and Michael J. Ryan, of Philadelphia, representing the Irish Race Convention, causing a sensation by their report on prison conditions in Mountjoy in 1919; and the resignation of the present Visiting Medical 'Officer to Mountjoy, Doctor W. A. Cooke, on 11th April, 1920, as a protest against the treatment of political prisoners on hunger-strike there. From what I heard in Mountjoy, and also in Sligo and Portlaoighise prisons, I have come to the conclusion that many of the present improvements in English and

Irish prisons are due to the activities of some fearless Irish ladies. From Grace Plunkett drawing sketches of Maud Gonne and Peadar O'Donnell in a prison cell to Mrs. Charlotte Despard keeping an all-night vigil outside Mountjoy, a group of our brilliant unconquerable women have fought unflinchingly not only for political prisoners, but for ordinary prisoners as well. Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, Helena Molony, Dora Maguire, Bridie O'Mullane, Mary Comerford, Linda Kearns, Nora Connolly-O'Brien, Sheila Humphries, Kathleen Lynn, Mary and Annie MacSwiney, Grace Plunkett, Eva Gore-Booth, Mrs. Despard, Countess Markievicz, Madame Maud Gonne McBride, and countless others never ceased in their efforts to focus attention on, and improve, prison conditions. The writings of John Mitchel, O'Donovan Rossa and Michael Davitt display a certain pharisaical attitude towards the "common criminals" with whom they were herded. How infinitely more Christian was the attitude of Constance Georgina Gore-Booth, Countess Markievicz, who, when she found that her companions in Aylesbury Prison were all murderesses, tried to study their backgrounds, bring rays of sunshine to their darkened ways, and later by articles and lectures on Break Down the Bastilles improved the lot of all prisoners, men and women.

The outstanding personality, however, in modern prison reform is Maud Gonne McBride, she of whom Yeats has written: "Maud Gonne has made Cathleen Ni Houlihan a divine being fallen into our mortal infirmity."Countries as far off as Russia have invited her to inspect and suggest improvements in their prison systems. For 50 years since she visited the forgotten treason-felony convicts in Portland Convict Prison; in Paris in her fearless paper, L'Irlande Libre, and in Ireland with her Prisoners' Defence League, this Irish Joan of Arc has succeeded in turning the searchlight of publicity on the dark places of imprisonment.

A Mountjoy warder described to me a Sinn Fein prisoner on transfer from one jail to another as being "as happy as if he was going 'to his own wedding." On the morning that Peadar, Rory and myself left Mountjoy for Portlaoighise our unhappy state of mind was proof enough of the infinite difference between the mental outlook of a political prisoner and a convicted criminal.

When my cell was opened in the morning, my good friend the Jew, in the next cell, gave me as a parting present all his butter from the previous day which he had saved for a tit-bit for my breakfast. After breakfast, Rory, Peadar and myself were searched and weighed. We were brought into an office where there were a plain clothes detective and two Civic Guards in uniform. Rory and Peadar were handcuffed together. I was handcuffed alone, as in Portlaoighise I would be a star select first offender and would be kept separate from Rory, who was a recidivist, and Peadar, who was a sexual offender.

We were marched out of the prison to where the prison van, the "Black Maria," as the hull of a great dead ship, awaited her cargo. Once when I was ill my mother had read to me a description of the feelings of a prisoner on entering a "Black Maria." Now at Mountjoy gate I seemed to see my mother beside me and that prisoner's feelings became mine. In me, also, the grim appearance of a prison van in the street had always aroused an awed reverence for the distressful plight of those inside it, an almost maddening craving to know what had been the cause of their law breaking, the nature of their crimes; how far their present degradation would morally uplift them; what was happening to their human belongings, what would happen to themselves when they were once more free; whether indignation, revolt, dull indifference, remorse, or the harrowingly abject penitence so frequent in suffering beings was uppermost in their minds.

Now I myself was one of the criminals. I should know the sensations of a prisoner in a" Black Maria" from actual experience, literally from within. Time seemed to pass very slowly, but rather from an intensity of interest, an acuteness of minute observation on my part. Here I was a handcuffed criminal, about to travel through the streets of Dublin in a "Black Maria." And yet in no sense could I feel myself a criminal. In all my time in prison I never met a prisoner who looked on himself as a criminal. Like the difficulty of making a defeated country or cause acknowledge that God was on the side of the victor's big battalions, virtue-conscious people despair of making criminals proclaim their unworthiness in the comforting manner of Uriah Heep in Millbank Penitentiary.

To-night, before I wrote this, I was at Denis Johnston's lecture on A Portrait of Dean Swift in the School of Art, Kildare Street. Behind me was a former acquaintance sitting beside one of Dublin's most picturesque professional peasants. The latter spoke to me, so I introduced him to my former acquaintance. This celebrity chaser was obviously delighted with the introduction, but also annoyed that I was in a position to patronise him. He could forgive me if I had become degenerate or prisonised. He would have been condescendingly bounteous if I had seedily sidled up to him outside Davy Byrne's or the Dawson Lounge to touch him for five bob.

Yes, it is tantalisingly difficult to inculcate into criminals the fact that they are criminals. That day in Mountjoy I had to look again and again at my degrading clothes and the handcuffs on my wrists to realise that this was really happening to me. A shout from one of the warders who accompanied the Civic Guards and detective awoke me from. my reverie.

"Get up in the van, you ---s." A warder turned to me.
"Come on, you fat sow. Climb up. You'll have to move quicker when you get to the Bog."
"The Bog"? I asked.
"The Bog is Portlaoighise Prison," he replied. "Mountjoy, 'The 'Joy'; Dundrum, 'The Drum'; Grangegorman, 'The Gorman.'

We scrambled into the prison van and started for Kings-bridge.

" Thank goodness we're finished with Mountjoy," I murmured. One of the warders turned on me like a mother defending her young.

"The 'Joy's all right," he said angrily. "Why, it's only a convalescent home. Wait till you get to the Bog. There's where you'll know what discipline means. You'll get 'the digger' and a kick in the pants if you sneeze sideways You'll have to be on your' toes all the

time." He turned to Rory. "Were you ever in the Bog?" "No," replied Rory, "but I know the little piece the Governor will recite to us on our arrival. Here Rory with his powers of mimicry gave, as I later found, a creditable imitation of the Portlaoighise Prison Governor's accent. "Two of you have not been in trouble before. You have been transferred to us from a local prison. You will find life here somewhat different. For one thing, the discipline is stricter. But if it is, I think you will find the living conditions much better. If you want to know anything consult a warder, a principal, the Chief or myself. Do not ask advice from other convicts. The old lags will give you wrong advice and then laugh when you find yourself in trouble. If you keep the rules, the time will pass quickly enough. If you break the rules, I can assure you, my friends, that we will make you very sorry for yourselves indeed. Take them away!"

A warder gaped at Rory. "You know it word for word all right, Oxford accent and all; but I can tell you this, my fine gentleman: You'll spend many a day on bread and water in 'the digger.' I have seen many a fellow like you with a joke on his lips on the way to the Bog, but there was damn little laughter left in him when he came out."

As he finished prophesying, the prison van arrived at Kingsbridge. With my fettered hands I found it hard to get off the van, but Rory and Peadar were much worse handicapped. They were handcuffed together, and as Peadar was head and shoulders over Rory, they had extreme difficulty in reaching the ground. Like two spanceled goats dragging against one another over a fence, these poor fellows winced with pain as they struggled down. We were put standing in front of the booking office while the warder arranged about tickets or passes. The detective and Civic Guards stood beside us. In our dreadful prison frieze and horrible caps we were a conspicuous sight. Every person coming to the booking office stared at us. Peadar was well known on the Limerick line. Several people recognised him and nudged their companions to have a look. At last we got on the platform.

Then our ordeal and agony really commenced. The warders seemed to think there was a special carriage engaged for us. The Limerick Junction Races' were on that day. The train was crowded. The warders walked us slowly up and down the full length of that long train, but they still failed to find the reserved carriage. Every head was out of the carriage and corridor windows to stare at the peep-show. You know that poem, Maud Muller, by the American poet, Whittier, containing the lines:

"Of all the sad words of tongue or pen,

The saddest are these: It might have been."

I had learnt it from beginning to end the previous evening in Mountjoy. I now repeated it slowly word by word to keep myself sane. Peadar looked ghastly. He kept repeating aloud, "Christ Jesus, have mercy on us. Christ Jesus, have mercy on us." The Civic Guards and detective who accompanied us were decent men with human feelings. They turned angrily on a warder.

"For God's sake do something, and stop making an exhibition of these poor devils before the whole train."

The warder pushed us into a fairly empty corridor carriage. People crowded around us. A tall, thin, dyspeptic-looking crank of a man demanded angrily that we be removed. "I am keeping these seats for friends who will be back in a moment." A lady held up a little child to see what the row was about. "Who are the funny men, mammy?" lisped the child.

"Hush, darling," came in a stage whisper from the soothing mother, "I think they are lunatics ! The warder hustled us out again. Up and down the platform again, up and down.

At last a railway official found us a carriage Some book makers and their clerks made room for us. The corridor was crowded, and as Peadar's case had created a stir in the news papers, a constant stream of passengers pretended to look for the toilet and stopped outside our carriage to peep in at us. Men do not change in appearance when they are found out. You could see the disappointment registering on the faces of the morbid crowd when they realised that we had not grown horns on our foreheads or cloven feet.

One of the bookies, who looked as if he lifted his elbow too often, produced cigarettes and offered them to us. Peadar and myself were non-smokers, but Rory grasped eagerly at the last "fag" he would smoke for at least two years and three months. A warder commenced an argument about Eire's Constitution with a bookie's clerk. The clerk was inclined to be communistic. The warder held that Eire was the most Christian country in the world, and that our Christian Constitution was an example to the rest of mankind.

I thought of that parade up and down the platform and of the little innocent child's amazement at our dreadful degrading clothes. I thought of Our Lord and Mary Magdalen. A man I knew well in my hey-day came into the carriage to speak to the friendly bookie. The latter produced a flask of whiskey from his hip pocket and offered my former friend a drink. My friend declined with thanks, stating emphatically that he had given up drink and was definitely "on the water waggon" for life.

Then suddenly he saw me. He took a moment or two to realise that this wretch in shame's uniform was the same man who had "seen his full house" in the Grand in Trainore last 15th of August. Then he swore "pledge be damned," took the bottle of whiskey from the bookmaker, drained it at one swig, and by the time we got to Portlaoighise he was a very drunk man indeed. From the time we left Kingsbridge until we reached our destination one of the warders never stopped talk4ng. He seemed to have an ambidextrous tongue. His monotone haunts me to this day. The bookie looked at his watch and swore that if the train would not hurry up he would miss the first race. I reflected on the time, so short ago, when every moment seemed important to me too.

And now time was of no consequence at all. In prison we got an hour and a half for meals that took five minutes to eat. We were brought to the chapel half an hour before Mass. If we complained of the slightest ailment we were locked up as "sick in cell" until the doctor .saw us hours afterwards. When we became inmates of Portlaoighise Prison we would be locked up every Sunday, Church Holyday, bank holiday, and special half-day from 12.30 in the afternoon until 7 o'clock next morning. On my very first day in Sligo Prison I had realised how little time really matters. At three o'clock on that glorious April afternoon my clothes were taken from me.. I was given only a shirt to wear. There was nothing to do but to get into S, bed. As I lay there I wondered if the busy hurrying world was all wrong and if these prison institutions were on the right track with their yogi contempt for time.

At last we arrived at Portlaoighise. "Good-bye, you poor ---s," said the genial bookmaker. One of the warders looked wonderingly at him. Then it dawned slowly on him that this bookie had sympathy for us. For 30 years prisoners were just numbers to that warder. "One on" when a man came; "One off," when a man died or was released. The men who passed through prisons had long since ceased to appear human beings in his eyes. He looked on them impersonally, not as real people; as a bank official going on the Exchanges secures his own thirty shillings in an inside pocket with a safety pin, while at the same time he carries a thousand pounds of the bank's money nonchalantly in his outside pocket. At the same time that warder is a decent man to his wife, family and neighbours. He struggled for a moment to see the bookie's point of view. But thirty years of routine and red tape won the battle in his dull brain. A Portlaoighise warder put his head into the carriage:

"Come on you ---s," he ordered. "On the double."

We got out of the train. Some Portlaoighise prison warders awaited us. Again there was a delay at the barrier, and all the leaving passengers had to elbow their way past us. Then we were marched ahead of our keepers through the town of Port Laoighise, a full quarter of a mile to the prison.

8. A morning in the ‘Joy by Róisín McBrinn, Assistant Director.

As I was in Dublin over Christmas, I went to Mountjoy Prison on behalf of David Roger – The designer of *The Quare Fellow* – in order to pick up a couple of photographs but I ended up getting a full tour of the prison and having a fascinating chat with my ‘guide’, Officer Mick O’Mahony. Mick, or Mr. O’Mahony as he requested I call him within earshot of the prisoners, has been working as a prison officer at Mountjoy for the past nine years and has become something of a self-appointed archivist of the place. Between himself and four other retired officers, a small museum has been created in the grounds of the prison housing artefacts, photos, press cuttings and clothing from Mountjoy’s past. This was the first place I was brought to.

I was allowed to take photos of whatever I wanted until I was brought into a tiny room at the back of the museum. Inside there were three large chests and before opening them, Mick stressed that I could not photograph their contents. Once I had agreed, he revealed a collection of nooses, sand bags, handcuffs and cat-o-nine tails. The reason I couldn’t take photos of them was because this was the actual equipment used in prison punishments and executions and, as some of the victims’ families were still alive, it was deemed an overly sensitive subject. I didn’t know what sand bags had to do with the whole process, and when I asked Mick he explained that they would have been filled to the approximate weight of the person to be hung and then hung from the noose to ensure the rope had no elasticity, ready for the following day’s execution. It was a strange, and slightly nauseating feeling handling ropes that had been responsible for killings.

However, it was far from the bizarre sense I got when I walked into the ‘Hang House.’ Although I have never been to one, I have often heard people talk about their visits to Auschwitz and other Nazi Concentration Camps. They describe an eerie feeling that has a foreboding weight and a shiver that gets deep inside you. This is exactly how I felt when I walked into the tiny hut connected to the end of Mountjoy’s D wing. It is a two-storey building and the ‘ceiling’ of the lower floor is in fact the trap door that the executioner released to hang the prisoner. There is a door on the top-storey that leads to the condemned man’s cell. The whole process was very rapid and, apparently, the deed could be completed in eight chimes of a bell.

All of the prisoners hung in Mountjoy were also buried there and their families were not allowed to see their corpse. In fact, the only way they knew the execution had been carried out was by hearing a single chime on the entrance bell and then a notice was placed on the main door declaring the prisoner’s death.

I was also brought inside the prison itself and I got a look at one of the cells. The infrastructure has changed little since it was built by the Victorians so much so that they do not even have sanitary facilities in the cells.

Although Mick was charming and thoroughly obliging, I was glad when the large gate was shut and bolted behind me at noon. I would not wish a night in the ‘Joy on my very worst enemy.

Róisín McBrinn, Assistant Director.

TIMELINE Key events in the history of capital punishment during Brendan Behan's life

1923 9th February. Brendan Behan born in Dublin.

1925 5th August. The hanging of Annie Walsh at Mountjoy, the only woman to be executed in Ireland.

1932 Aged nine, Behan joins youth organization connected with the Irish Republican Army.

1933 The Children and Young Persons Act prohibits the death sentence for persons under 18 at the time of the crime.

1939 Behan arrested on a sabotage mission in England and sentenced to three years in borstal.

1942 Behan sentenced to 14 years for attempted murder. Spends time in Mountjoy Prison and Curragh Military Camp.

1946 3rd January. Last hanging for treason, William Joyce - better known as "Lord Haw Haw".

1946 4th January. Theodore Schurch becomes the last person to be executed for offences committed under the Treachery Act of 1940.

1946 Behan released under a general amnesty.

1947 Behan imprisoned again in Manchester for allegedly helping an IRA prisoner to escape. Starts to write short stories.

1948 April. The House of Commons votes to suspend capital punishment for five years, but this is overturned by the Lords.

1952 Behan's radio plays *Moving Out* and *A Garden Party* broadcast in Ireland. Behan deported to France.

1953 10th November. Last hanging under military jurisdiction.

1954 20th April. Last hanging in Ireland at Mountjoy Prison; Michael Manning, who was convicted of murder.

1954 19th November. *The Quare Fellow*, first production at the Pike Theatre in Dublin.

1955 13th July. Ruth Ellis, the last woman to hang.

1956 March. Death Penalty (Abolition) Bill passed by Parliament on second reading. Overturned by the House of Lords.

1956 May. *The Quare Fellow* produced to great acclaim in London by Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop.

1957 March. The 1957 Homicide Act, limiting the death sentence to five categories of murder: 1. committed in the course or furtherance of theft; 2. by shooting or explosion; 3. whilst resisting arrest or during an escape; 4. murder of a police or prison officer; 5. two murders committed on different occasions. Generally seen as a fiasco.

1957 23rd July. John Vickers, first to be executed under the provisions of the new Act.

1957 *The Big House* commissioned and broadcast by the BBC.

1958 *Borstal Boy* published.

1958 16th June. First performance of *The Hostage*, written in Gaelic under the title *An Giall*.

1963 15th August. Last hanging in Scotland: 21-year-old Henry Burnett executed at Craiginches Prison in Aberdeen for the murder of sailor Thomas Guyan.

1964 20th March. Death of Behan, aged 41.

1964 13th August. Peter Anthony Allen (at Walton Prison Liverpool) and Gwynne Owen Evans (at Strangeways Prison Manchester) last people to be hanged. The executions took place simultaneously at 8.00 a.m.

1965 1st November. Last passing of the death sentence in England - on David Chapman at Leeds. Later commuted to life imprisonment.

1965 8th November. Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act passed, effectively abolishing capital punishment but providing for another vote "within five years". Treason, piracy with violence and arson in Royal Dockyards remained capital crimes.

1969 December. Parliament confirmed abolition of capital punishment for murder.

10. An interview with Kathy Burke.

Kathy comes home

Directing Brendan Behan's *The Quare Fellow* was a chance for the actress Kathy Burke to get back to her roots. But the highlight must be taking a cast of 17 men on tour.

Sunday February 1, 2004
The Observer

When I first decided to take off the tap shoes and concentrate on theatre directing, Dominic Dromgoole got in touch to ask if I'd like to do something with Oxford Stage Company. My reaction was negative. What I enjoy most about directing is the chance of working things out with the writer, plus I need their approval and I like the chat. I didn't want to work on dry, old plays written by the dry, old dead. Luckily for me, he ignored my ignorance, phoned back a year later and said: 'What about The Quare Fellow by Brendan Behan? It's not been done for 20 years, bit neglected. It's the one set in a prison, loads of blokes but a bit odd and tricky.'

I remembered reading the play. I'd read all Behan's plays years ago along with Borstal Boy (his most famous book, bought for me by my dad) and various biographies written about him. If you were second-generation Irish, there was enough great writing and enough great people to choose from if you wanted to understand your roots and my main man was Brendan.

I drifted off with myself for a bit, thinking about the old friend. At 16, you could ask me anything about Behan's plays and I would bore the arse off you for hours with my wit and knowledge. Aah, I thought, I'll have no problemo with this one.

Looking at The Quare Fellow again some 20 years later, it shocked me how hard I found rereading it. The premise is simple enough. It takes place the day before and the morning of a hanging; easy enough to find an atmosphere there but the language had become alien, the structure seemed all over the place. I kept losing track of who was who and I didn't find the jokes funny. Also, a play set in a prison with no fisticuffs or even a hint of a rape was a wee bit strange. Where was the drama? I shat myself, so I phoned Dominic back and said yes.

A couple of months later, I was reading this and that and drinking with this and that, all in the name of relearning about Behan. I had to. Everything I thought I knew had gone out the window. Self-obsession, spliffs and the odd shandy over the years had nothing to do with it of course - I was just older.

There are bundles of stuff written about and by him, more than enough to choose from and he comes across as one of those characters who did his own thing in his own way but was seemingly totally entertaining. He had a twinkle about being bisexual, loved to sing and was a bit of a wind-up merchant. There was a dark side, too, but that's not surprising when you think he was on the booze from around about aged eight (rewards for having a brilliant mind) and he was known to get a bit mouthy here and there and act the clown which some people, of course, didn't like. He'd also been a political prisoner and this gave great credit to his writing; he'd been there, done that. And even though he comes across as a bit of a loon at times, he was and still is deeply loved by many.

I was delighted that I still liked the man. Never mind the drinking and the rebellion, which were obviously what impressed me when I was young; now it was his warmth, wit and sense of fun that pulled me back. But I still had problems with the play.

The text I was working from was the one they did at Stratford East with Joan Littlewood directing. Now, she was a genius who put Behan on the map, but I felt what they did with the play was great for 1956 but not so great for now. Along with the doubts I mentioned earlier, it was a bit diddily-di for my liking and I found the songs, which Littlewood had added, softened it too much. There's a vaudeville feel to it which I liked, but in a lot of ways I found it frustrating. Blimey, like a dodgy arranged marriage, I was committed but not in love. I began to doubt that I was the right person for the job. I needed to think, man.

I had a drink, then another. I needed to squirm into it, understand it word for bloody overwritten word. I sat down at the laptop and started to copy the play out in proper, big-page script form from the book. And I mean copy it, as in type it. (And I don't mean adapt it - I wasn't being clever - I mean copy it.) Hours flew by without my noticing. I switched the phone off. I drank coffee when I normally drink tea; I played records from the Thirties and Forties instead of listening to the radio; I smoked even more than usual. It was fantastic. Acting out the writer without having to do any of the graft, it was like posh colouring-in. But the best thing was that it worked.

Suddenly, I could see all the jumbled-up characters (there's 23 of them) and they helped me get below the surface. The play is so repetitive and everything is so spelt out that it was blooming hard finding the heart of it, but now things were getting clearer and the nothing-happeningness of it didn't bother me at all because it was filled with such a brilliant bunch of misfits. Everything that was needed was there. I just had to do a bit of twiddling with bits of dialogue and I was doubtful still about a couple of the songs, but it felt like it could work. It felt for the first time like a new play set in the late Forties instead of an old play stuck in a rut. I could now get on with the job.

I got together with David Roger who was on board to design the set. We scratched our heads for yonks over it. This is a touring production with a very small budget, so it's full of problems (prisoners shouting out of cell windows etc. Where the frig do you put them?) and we knew we didn't want it to be an accurate layout of Mountjoy (Dublin's jail where the play is based). We looked at old photos, read articles about 'the Joy', chatted away with Chris Davey and Fergus O'Hare (lighting and sound respectively) and together we've come up with a simple but effective way of making it work.

Phillip Chevron was on next to do the music. I first met Phil about 15 years ago when he used to play with the Pogues and I used to jump up and down in front of them. He's the perfect man for the job, a Dubliner with a fantastic knowledge of music and a massive fan of theatre.

Getting the cast together was great fun. Dominic worked out 23 characters could be done with 17 actors. SEVENTEEN MEN. Of course, there was a lot of nudge, nudge, wink, wink from mates about that one. To my shame, I only knew a handful of Irish actors but word had got out that the play was happening and I started to get letters from Behan fans who wanted to be a part of it, no matter how small the role.

Some people got it wrong, of course. My association with Jonathan Harvey (Beautiful Thing, Gimme Gimme Gimme) probably had something to do with that, with at least four letters expressing an interest in being in The Queer Boy by Brenda Behan.

I had a laugh flitting about seeing various plays with an Irish theme, the best being a production of The Lieutenant of Inishmore which I saw in Manchester. I found four actors from that one but then frightened Dominic with a text message saying I'd offered parts to three ushers and a barman. About five days before Christmas, the whole cast was on board and I was chuffed to bits with the lot of them.

Two weeks before rehearsals, I was cool, calm and collected. A week later, not so good. What the hell was I doing? Then I got an email from a bloke who said his dad thought he was at school with my dad in Galway. He scanned down a class photo to me and then, for the first time in my life, I saw a photo of Paddy Burke as a child. He stood out a mile off, the old man in shorts, letting me know it was a grand idea.

We're now in rehearsal and so far so good. The vibe is generous and everyone's mucking in. Just come and see it and if you don't like theatre, get yourself a copy of Borstal Boy - it's a great read by a great man.

Life and times of an improbable goddess

1964 Born at the Royal Free hospital in north London on 13 June.

1970s and 80s Trains at the Anna Scher drama school in Islington. Scher describes her as 'the funniest woman on television and one of the most empathetic actors I know'.

1982 Swedish director Mai Zetterling casts 17-year-old Kathy in Scrubbers, a low-budget women-in-prison drama. Advises her to 'make sure they don't put you on the corner and make you a clown. Graft hard, write, produce, do different types of work, find out everything there is to know about this job and then you will have power... never be a puppet letting others pull the strings.'

1990 Writes and directs Mr Thomas, starring Ray Winstone, at the Old Red Lion theatre in Islington. 'I'd do bits of directing, or stage management jobs at the Old Red Lion when I wasn't acting. I always wanted to be versatile because of the way I speak and how I look.'

1990 Starts working with Harry Enfield, a collaboration that will extend to the 2000 film, Kevin and Perry Go Large. According to Enfield: 'She's a natural - and not just at comedy. She's lovable, she's got people's sympathy. The thing about her is that you feel for her. If you don't like someone, then you can't find them funny. There are so many people who are in love with Kathy - including my dad. He's excited about me getting married because it means he'll get to meet Kathy at the wedding.'

1993 Wins a Royal Television Society award for her performance in Mr Wroe's Virgins, which includes a nude scene. 'I must be the only actress in history who has been asked to be naked for untitillating reasons. It was as if the producers thought, "We want to make sure people don't get off on this - we'll get Kathy Burke."'

1993 Spends four months working with Mike Leigh on his play, It's a Great Big Shame, at Stratford East. Leigh calls her 'one of my favourite actresses'.

1994 Plays abused beauty therapist Sharon in the BBC's Common as Muck: 'I liked her because she wanted to start again. Lots of women get involved with someone who's not good for them and don't realise they can escape.'

1995 Directs Jonathan Harvey's play Boom Bang-a-Bang at the Bush Theatre, a relationship she repeats in 2001 with his Out in the Open at the Hampstead Theatre. Harvey gushes: 'Like Judi Dench or Julie Walters, Kathy is someone people want to spend time with... She could play Eva Braun and you'd warm to her.'

1997 Wins best actress at Cannes for her performance as Ray Winstone's wife in Nil by Mouth, the directing debut of her old teenage boyfriend, Gary Oldman. 'I'd see Kath every day of my life if we weren't both so busy... making Nil by Mouth, we laughed all the time. I'd beat her up in front of the camera, then we'd go over to the pub for a drink,' says Winstone.

1999 Stars as Linda in Harvey's sitcom Gimme Gimme Gimme, for which she wins a British Comedy Award as best actress in 2002. Kathy's modest verdict: 'About time.'

2002 Makes her last film appearances before directing full-time, in Shane Meadows's Once Upon a Time in the Midlands and the adaptation of Meera Syal's novel, Anita and Me. Syal sums up most people's feelings: 'Kathy Burke, you are a goddess.'

Robert Colville

13. Production photographs for The Quare Fellow.

Prisoner B (Sean Gallagher), Dunlavin (Ciaran McIntyre) and Prisoner A (David Ganly)

Mickser (Jason Kavanagh) and the other prisoners in the yard.

Scholora (Matthew Dunphy) and Shaybo (Christopher Logan)

The prisoners exercise in the yard with Warder Donelly (Kieran Cunningham).

Warder Regan (Sean Campion).

Crimmin (Patrick Lynch and Warder Regan (Sean Campion)

The Lifer (Gerard Rooney), Prisoner E (Oengus MacNamara), Prisoner D (Paul Lloyd), Neighbour (Tony Rohr), and Prisoner A (David Ganly).

4. Follow up work on The Quare Fellow

- Status Games – Exclusion

1. A theme within the play is exclusion, and with that comes, isolation, separation, and difference. Through using cards and the following exercises you can explore and discuss the issues of exclusion.

2. Every character makes and entrance and every character makes an exit, and so much can be observed from their body language that tells us whether the character is a high status character or a low status character. Take a pack of cards removing the Kings, Queens, and Jacks. You are going to use the Tens, representing high status, down to the Aces, representing low status, (colour and suit of card is not important). Sit the group at one end of the room. Place a chair, facing the group at a similar distance between the door and the group. Offer a student a card from the pack, they look at the card and give it back memorising it. They leave the room, re-enter as the status on the card, and sit down on the chair. The group guesses as to the status of the student. Do this several times to give the whole group a chance of exploring the game?

3. Ask for a volunteer to sit on the chair. The group then tells the volunteer how to sit on the chair as a status 1. They then suggest slight adjustments to take the status up to a 2. The exercise continues until they have moved the volunteer through each status up until 10. The volunteer then silently, begins at one again and over 30 seconds, moves from status 1 through to a status 10. The group observes and discusses where the power centre is and what the exercise reveals about status and physicality.

4. Next look at HOW OTHER PEOPLE SEE YOU. Continue using the cards, distribute a card to each student, and ask them to place it on their foreheads, enabling everyone else to know what their status is but they do not. The exercise only works if people commit to not letting others know too soon what numbers they are. Once you have distributed the cards, give the scenario, which needs to be acted out amongst them. They must create a believable restaurant. By talking to each other and by the way people respond to them they will discover what their role is within the structure of the restaurant. Some of them may discover they are waiters, expensive clients who demand excellent service or washer uppers or vegetable peelers. Let the exercise run on for some time and then without looking at their cards they must stand in a line, from a designated point representing 1 status to a designated 10 point representing high status. Wait till they have settled where they think they should be and get them to look at their cards. Discuss how they discovered their status. Some of them will start to be experiencing what it feels like to be excluded.

5. Distribute the cards again as in (4.) this time they must create a hip celebrity party with a couple of high status hosts. The party is an excuse to network and although everyone has a right to be there the lower status of the group will find themselves physically excluded. Run the game for the same length of time, and at a suitable point stop them and get them to stand in a line between 1 to 10, putting themselves where they think they should be. Discuss how people felt as high or low status and how real the exercise was?

- Creating their own play/story – using the central idea of QUARE FELLOW

1. Sit the group in a circle, placing one student in the centre. The student in the centre represents the character at the heart of the story.
2. Give this character a name chosen by the group.
3. Background information: This character has been in prison for some time and is about to face the death penalty and be hung the next day. Decide within the group, what the character has done, and what is their history.
4. Ask the students around the circle to think about who they could be in relation to the characters life. They could be a sister, brother, mother, father, social worker, friend, warder, soldier, hangman or government official.
5. In turn each student around the circle stands up and is asked: “Who are you?” and then is questioned further about their relationship to and opinion of the character. At the end of their admission they sit back down and the next person

in the circle stands up. The exercise continues until all the students have furthered the story about the character by adding their dynamic.

6. The group then stands up and the character has a chance to confront the outer circle of characters and people in their life to add on their perspective. Once the central character has spoken to every character on the outer circle sit the students down and discuss the findings of the exercise.

Creative Writing around text - Imagining situations:

Write tomorrows headlines; next year's headlines; the headlines in a hundred years. Then write a short monologue based on a character you can imagine in any of the situations invented. Read it to the group. Make a scene from it.

2. Creating characters:

Think about someone you have seen today who you didn't know. Try to describe him/her in a stage direction. Now write his/her thoughts.

3. Shaping a scene for dramatic effect:

Write a scene of hum-drum dialogue from last night at home . Try to make it as boring as possible, almost as if it could be any night in your family at any given time. Discuss it with a partner and add a sub-text. Re-write the scene.

4. Working on character definition in a scene:

Imagine dogs can talk. Write a scene set in a park between different sorts of dogs trying to capture their behaviour in the way they speak and act. Consider the plight of one of the characters in the play and write a letter to a close relative or friend about your dilemma and how it makes you feel and what you perceive will be the outcome.