

THE PAPERS OF JOE DENNIGAN

P188



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INTRODUCTION

Background

Joe Dennigan was born in Ballycormack, county Longford in 1910 to a farming family. He had minimal formal education, spending only a few years in Stonepark National School under Master R Hudson, who was his only teacher. After Stonepark he was self-taught from a correspondence course funded by his grandmother. Master Hudson was highly respected in the local community and he persuaded Joe's mother that Joe should have an opportunity to have a career other than that of a farmer which was his expected destiny as oldest son. His father was finally convinced and released him from the farm, and Joe began his career as a journalist (*see P188/38*).

In his early career, he worked for the regional press, namely The Longford Leader from 1925–8, and The Offaly Chronicle from 1929–30. On the formation of The Irish Press, he moved to Dublin to become its political correspondent. The newspaper asked him to accompany the Free State delegation to the Economic Conference in Ottawa, Canada in 1932, and to the League of Nations Assembly at Geneva in 1933. As a result, he became a well known and respected journalist and made many contacts abroad.

In 1933, the Government outlawed General Eoin O'Duffy's Young Ireland Association, which was formerly known as the National Guard, and commonly referred to as 'The Blueshirts'. Dennigan wrote an article for The Irish Press on the announcement of the proclamation and stated that a government source had informed him that a few days grace to leave the Association would be given to its members. However, Commandant E. J. Cronin, the secretary of the Young Ireland Association, was arrested before the notice banning the organisation had been posted in Iris Oifigiúil. He was charged with sedition and membership of an unlawful association and brought before a Military Tribunal in Collins Barracks. Counsel for Cronin called Dennigan as a witness to the defence and asked him to disclose the source who had informed him of the reported amnesty, an amnesty which Cronin claimed was not extended to him.

Dennigan steadfastly refused to reveal the information citing professional ethics as his main reason. As a result he was sentenced to a month's imprisonment in Arbour Hill Detention Barracks and became the first journalist in Irish history to be imprisoned for not disclosing his sources. The case caused a national and international outcry, especially amongst journalists, and Dennigan was treated like a hero on his release in January 1934.

Dennigan continued working for The Irish Press, holding the position of political and special correspondent, and ultimately that of Assistant News Editor, until November 1949, when he joined the staff of The Evening Mail. It is possible that his move to the latter paper was the result of a disagreement Dennigan had with a member or members of Fianna Fáil, who used The Irish Press as their political organ. (*See P188/45*). In 1950 his health failed and he died suddenly on 15 June.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into 5 sections (A-E). Section A contains a handful of letters from editors of the regional press attesting to Dennigan's qualities as a reporter. Section B, the largest section, concerns itself with his imprisonment in 1933/4. There are many press cuttings concerning the case culled from regional, national and international newspapers. There are also a large collection of letters of support from colleagues, politicians and civil servants. Section C contains material relating to Dennigan's death in 1950, including press cuttings of obituaries and appreciations written at this time. Section D contains a small amount of photographs of Dennigan and his colleagues, and finally Section E contains dissociated material such as a draft of an article written by Dennigan and his press identification cards.

Lisa Collins
November 2003

THE PAPERS OF JOE DENNIGAN

A EARLY LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION (1929–32)

- 1 26 January 1929 Letter of reference from A. M. Farrell, The Longford Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., Market Square, Longford, to employers, stating that Joe Dennigan, after 3 years service on The Longford Leader, was a first class shorthand reporter, a good paragraphist and a good writer on any subject, and predicts that he will be a most capable journalist.

1p

- 2 27 March 1930 Letter of reference from James Pike, editor of The Midland Tribune, The Tipperary Sentinel and The Offaly County Vindicator, stating that Joe Dennigan is ‘very active and painstaking with a keen sense of news values’. Adds that he would have no hesitation in confidently recommending him to any newspaper that may require his services.

1p

- 3 29 March 1930 Letter of reference from J. M. Downing, editor of The Offaly Chronicle, in which he states that Joseph Dennigan had worked on the staff of The Offaly Chronicle for 2 ½ years and would recommend him as a journalist of all-round competence. States that his work had always been extremely accurate and written in a very bright and readable style. Also adds that he did a good deal of sub-editorial work and proved to be thorough and reliable.

1p

- 4 24 May 1932 Letter from Frank Gallagher, editor of The Irish Press, to Joe Dennigan, thanking him for the story he gave them that morning. Comments that the story was difficult to get and that Dennigan did it excellently.

1p

B IMPRISONMENT

I Press cuttings (1933–4)

- 5 29 December 1933- File of press cuttings from regional,
3 February 1934 national and international newspapers
covering the Military Tribunal, the
imprisonment of Joe Dennigan for refusing to reveal his source, the
subsequent outrage and support for his stance, and his eventual release on
24 January 1934. 77 items
- 6 6 January 1934 Broadsheet of United Ireland, Vol 1 No. 17,
newspaper of the Young Ireland
Association/League of Youth, the
organisation formerly known as the National Guard led by General Eoin
O'Duffy. Includes article condemning Dennigan's imprisonment for
refusing to reveal the source who informed him that there would be a
period of grace before the young Ireland Association would be banned.
Also contains other articles concerning the Blueshirts, the release of
O'Duffy from Arbour Hill, and comments on political life in Ireland. 2pp
- 7 c. 1934 Edition of Blah, a satirical newspaper
produced voluntarily by a number of
Dublin journalists. Published in aid of the
Newspaper Press Fund which during 1933 dispersed grants and pensions
totalling £358 to members, non-members, widows and dependents in the
Dublin region. Contains humorous fictitious articles, some of which
allude to Joe Dennigan's imprisonment for not revealing his source for an
article while in court. 4pp

II Prison Life (1933–4)

- 8 20 December 1933 True copy of summons issued to Joe
Dennigan to appear at the trial of Attorney-
General .v. Edward Joseph Cronin as a
witness at the Constitution (Special Powers) Tribunal. Issued by
Commandant R. J. Feely, Registrar of the tribunal. 2pp

- 9 29 December 1933 Letter from Joe Dennigan, Arbour Hill Prison, to his wife, Madge, in which he asks her to bring spare clothes and shirts to the prison governor. Lists items as shirts, collars, ties, toothbrush, toothpaste, razor and blades, shaving soap and brush, a suit, shoes and an overcoat. States that the prison is comfortable but warns that she may need to get special permission to see him. Advises that the best plan would be for her to contact her sisters, 'Baby' (Joan) or Rena, to come up and stay with her while he is imprisoned, or alternatively, she could close up the house in Drumcondra and stay in Claremorris. Adds that he can get fruit, cigarettes and sweets in the prison quite easily so there is no need for her to worry about that. Postscript states that he has just learned that if she calls at any time, she will be allowed to see him and can bring his clothes as well.
- 3pp
- 10 c. January 1934 Notice outlining prison routine in Arbour Hill Detention Barracks from 06 30 (reveille), to 17 30 (lock-up) and 22 00 (lights out). Corrections to some times and activities in blue pen.
- 1p
- 11 c. January 1934 Notice outlining rules relating to the treatment and conduct of prisoners in Arbour Hill Detention Barracks. Topics include exercise; talking; cleanliness; attendance at religious prayers and services; remission of sentence; visits; letters; dress; prisoner's reporting sick; smoking; reading; shaving; education; money and clothes; hobbies; and offences against prison discipline.
- 2pp
- 12 c. January 1934 List of food rations allowed for each prisoner in Arbour Hill Detention Barracks. States that the sale of rations is equivalent to that laid down for soldiers of the forces. Also describes in detail the constitution of breakfast, dinner, tea and supper.
- 2pp
- 13 10 March 1997
(28 January 1934) Cover letter from John Horgan, Dublin City University, to Professor Máiréad Browne, University of Technology, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, enclosing a photocopy of the history sheet of Joe Dennigan obtained from the Military Archives. Lists Dennigan's age as 24 and his address as 22 Mannix Road, Drumcondra, Dublin. Remarks include that he was sentenced for contempt of the Constitution (Special Powers) Tribunal.
- 2pp

- 14 c. February 1934 Draft of an article by Dennigan outlining the conditions for prisoners detained in Arbour Hill. Discusses the appearance of the cells; the type and amount of food rationed to prisoners; access to education and pastimes; temperature of the cells; and sanitation. States that Arbour Hill 'was a pleasant surprise in view of the general opinion that it is the nearest equivalent to the rack and thumbscrew which we have yet produced in the Free State'.

49pp

III Letters of support (1933-4)

- 15 29 December 1933 From Frank Aiken, Minister for Defence, wryly welcoming Dennigan to his home which he refers to as 'Grand Hotel Aiken' (Arbour Hill). Thanks Dennigan for accepting his invitation and hopes that he will enjoy his months stay. Also promises him that 'every precaution will be taken to prevent you being annoyed by Press Correspondents trying to interview you either personally or by phone.'

1p

- 16 29 December 1933 Telegram from J. F. B. Livesay, General Manager, Canadian Press Association, to Dennigan: 'Canadian newspapermen congratulate your fine stand for integrity press'.

1 item

- 17 30 December 1933 Telegram from McNally, Daily Express, London, to Dennigan congratulating him on his attitude [in court] the previous day.

1 item

- 18 6 January 1934 From Roy Carmichael, Room 33B, CPR Telegraph Building, 204 Hospital Street, Montreal, Canada, congratulating Dennigan on his 'plucky stand for the journalistic code of honour'. Informs him that the story of his imprisonment for refusing to reveal a source in court, has 'blazoned' over Canada and the United States, getting even more publicity than normal due to his being the Canadian press correspondent. Carmichael discusses his own earlier work as a correspondent for The London Evening News in Dublin, and notes that Dublin was a 'splendid centre for a correspondent. There is always some excitement'. Describes how he augmented his income during this time by selling books he

reviewed for the newspaper to a bookseller in Grafton Street. Also discusses Dennigan's chances of becoming an international correspondent: 'United States newspapers, are, naturally, more interested in Irish than in Canadian news, not only because of the large Irish population, but also because they are not so well-served with Irish news by the agencies, as they are with Canadian.'

2pp

- 19 20 January 1934 From Sam Corrigan, Scribblestown, Castleknock, county Dublin, [cousin], congratulating Dennigan on his stance in relation to the Military Tribunal. States: 'You have proved yourself a good Irishman in every way and in which I am proud to be related to'. Notes that he would like to meet Dennigan in the future and that he is 'proud of his pluck'.

1p

- 20 22 January 1934 Cover letter from J. F. B Livesay, General Manager of The Canadian Press, 272 Bay Street, Toronto, Canada, enclosing an item of interest [not in collection]. States that they have been very gratified to be connected with such a good newspaperman as Dennigan.

1p

- 21 23 January 1934 From [P. MacGann], The Irish Press, 19 Garfield Street, Belfast, in which he notes that he is delighted that Dennigan has been released from Arbour Hill, noting that at least it is not as bad as Crumlin Road [prison].

1p

- 22 24 January 1934 From Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, 7 Belgrave Road, Rathmines, in which she congratulates Dennigan on his release from Arbour Hill Prison. Notes that she has rarely observed more general sympathy and appreciation than was shown everywhere for him in his 'spirited protest'. Hopes that he is not the worse for his time in prison and adds that she knows from experience 'how tiresome and [murderous] such imprisonment can be and how very long a month can seem'.

2pp

- 23 24 January 1934 From J. J. Kelly, Independent Newspapers Ltd., 33 Donegall Street, Belfast, congratulating Dennigan on his release from Arbour Hill, and on his 'magnificent stand for the good old job'. Hopes that Dennigan's wife wasn't too upset by his imprisonment and that the tributes he has received will be compensation for what he has had to endure. 1p
- 24 24 January 1934 From M. J. Maguire, solicitor, 59–61 Dame Street, Dublin, in which he congratulates Dennigan on his action 'in preferring imprisonment to a breach of trust'. 1p
- 25 25 January 1934 From Margaret O'Molony, Glin, county Limerick, to Robert Egan of The Irish Press, asking him to extend her congratulations to Dennigan on his release from prison. 'Journalists throughout the world may well be proud of him and the stand he made for duty and for honours sake.' 1p

IV Dinner in honour of Dennigan on his release (1934)

- 26 26 January 1934 Letter from W. J. Redmond [colleague] from the 'News Room', in which he states that a dinner is to be given in Dennigan's honour by colleagues on the Editorial Staff of The Irish Press at the Red Bank Restaurant on D'Olier Street. States that the toast of the evening will be 'Our Guest' to which Dennigan will respond. Also adds that he hopes everyone is 'keeping fit' after the Arbour Hill visit. 1p
- 27 27 January 1934 Souvenir menu of the dinner held for Dennigan by The Irish Press at the Red Bank Restaurant, Dublin, following his release from Arbour Hill Detention Barracks. Dedication on inside cover reads: 'We his colleagues of The Irish Press Editorial Staff heartily congratulate Mr. Dennigan on upholding the tradition, honour and integrity of the Irish Journalistic Profession'. Photograph of Dennigan on

front cover. Verso contains signatures of attendees at the dinner. Toasts recorded as 'Eire' and 'Ár gCara Uasal' by Proinsias Ó Gallachoir (Frank Gallagher), editor of The Irish Press.

4pp

- 28 27 January 1934 Draft of speech by Dennigan to his colleagues in The Irish Press at a dinner hosted by them in the Red Bank Restaurant, Dublin. Thanks them for all their tributes and notes 'We are all jealous of the prestige of the Press but I must say that when I adopted the attitude I did before the Military Tribunal, I never anticipated that the support and sympathy would be forthcoming so generously...There was a striking unanimity among our own Irish newspapers- though worshipping at different political shrines, they were at one in agreeing that confidences reposed in newspapermen ought to be respected at whatever cost'. Continues by noting that 'When the National Union of Journalists was endeavouring to secure my release, I made it quite clear that I was not to be taken as expressing any regret for the attitude I took up and when they persisted with the application, I took steps to ensure that my position was perfectly clear and that the application should be made on questions of principle alone.'

5pp

C DEATH

I Insurance policies (1939–40)

- 29 1939–40 Insurance policies for Sun Life Assurance Company listing insured as Joseph Dennigan of 1 Belton Park Gardens, Donnycarney, Co. Dublin.

1p

II Condolences (1950)

- 30 15 June 1950 Telegrams extending sympathy to Madge Dennigan from L. Harty, Government Information Bureau; Martin and Rebecca Coffey; Shanley, journalist, Longford; Liam McGowen; staff of The Midland Tribunal; Seán Mac Eoin; Michael Keys, Minister for Local Government; E. Rooney; Deputy Carter; Denis O'Connell, Private Secretary to the Minister for Local Government; Frank Farrell, The Longford Leader; Seán MacBride; Peggy Clarke and Bridie Costelloe, The Irish Press; Gavin, secretary, Department of Local Government;

Grealish, Limerick; Thomas Ó Duinn, The Kilkenny People; O'Keefe, Belfast; An Tánaiste (William Norton) and Mrs. Norton; Cassidy, Derry Journal; Deputy P. Burke; Austin O'Reilly; Spollen, Athlone; Ned Conroy, Longford; and Paddy Clyne, Longford.

26 items

<i>Series:</i>		Letters of condolence to Madge Dennigan from:	
31	15 June 1950	R. M. Fox, 39 The Rise, Griffith Avenue, Dublin.	1p
32	15 June 1950	Alfie Byrne, Dáil Éireann	1p
33	15 June 1950	P. J. Raftery, 64 Upper Leeson Street, Dublin	1p
34	15 June 1950	Frank Gallagher, Editor-in-Chief, <u>The Irish Press</u> , Sutton, county Dublin. <u>Includes:</u> 'Your husband was my colleague in the founding of The Irish Press and in bringing to it his brilliant gifts and untiring energy, he was invaluable in carrying it through to success. All who worked with him will remember him gratefully and will feel deeply with you in this great trial.'	2pp
35	16 June 1950	C. J. P. Farrell, solicitors, county Longford	1p
36	16 June 1950	Joseph L. Mahon, Longford County Council	1p
37	16 June 1950	W. [Myles], <u>The Tipperary Star</u> , Friar Street, Thurles, county Tipperary	1p

- 38 16 June 1950 R. Hudson, Stonepark National School, Longford. Includes: 'He was a brilliant pupil of this school and I had forecast for him a bright future which has been cut off in the flower of his youth'.
1p
- 39 16 June 1950 Tom Palmer, editor of The Sligo Champion. Includes: 'The journalists of the West of Ireland and particularly those members of our Branch of the NUJ (National Union of Journalists) in Sligo and district, owe a very deep debt of gratitude to your late husband, for his work in organising the Union in this area and for his efforts in endeavouring to better the lot of his colleagues in this part of the province. He was largely responsible for the formation of the Union Branch in Sligo and took a keen interest in its progress in view of his former association with the West of Ireland.'
1p
- 40 16 June 1950 Dr. A. D. Woolf, brother of Maitland Woolf, The Avenue, Highams Park, London.
2pp
- 41 17 June 1950 J. V. Mahony, The Irish Independent, Middle Abbey Street, Dublin.
1p
- 42 19 June 1950 [Kennedy], Dáil Éireann.
1p
- 43 22 June 1950 T. J. Manning, Sun Life Assurance, 24 Suffolk Street, Dublin
3pp
- 44 26 June 1950 Michael Lennon, Secretary, Longford County Council.
1p
- 45 24 July 1950 Erskine Childers, Dáil Éireann. Includes: 'I have seen your husband Joe off and on for many years. He was an interesting convivial person and he never became cynical in heart- for this I admired him, because nearly every professional journalist I have met seemed to don a [?] to protect himself from the bad realities he experienced. Joe

always seemed to be able to think of a better Ireland...Just before he became ill I offered to try and secure him his old position or a better one in The Irish Press but he did not think it a good plan.'

2pp

- 46 15 June 1950 Mass cards from staff of The Longford Leader, and from the reporters' Room of The Irish Independent. Also includes memoriam card with photograph of Dennigan.
- 3 items

III Press cuttings (1950)

- 47 June 1950 File containing press cuttings of obituaries and appreciations written for Joe Dennigan following his death in the national and regional press.
- 15 items

D PHOTOGRAPHS (1932–c. 1945)

- 48 August 1932 B/w positive photograph showing group of men sitting in the sunshine on chairs. Left to right: Dennis Smith, W. W. Cunningham, Wilfred Eggleston, Joe Dennigan, and Lloyd Robert 'Law Ears'. Roberts playing with the white dog at his feet 'Solomon'. Possibly taken in Ottawa, where Dennigan was sent as an Irish press representative.
- 8.5cm x 14.5cm
- 49 c.1932 B/w positive photograph showing a side-on view of speeches given at a Labour Party meeting/conference. Banner across desk reads "'Labour Must Rise From It's Knees'-James Connolly". Five men are seated behind a long table, second from left Joe Dennigan; extreme right William Norton, Labour TD.
- 10cm x 15cm
- 50 c. 1932 B/w positive photograph showing William Norton, Labour TD, seated, speaking with Joe Dennigan, standing [at Labour Party meeting?]. Both in three-piece suits, Dennigan also wearing long coat.
- 11cm x 15.5cm

- 51 c. 1932 B/w positive of J. F. B. Livesay of the Canadian Press Association speaking with Joe Dennigan outside a building. Both wearing heavy winter coats, Livesay also wearing a hat and can be seen smoking a pipe. 8.5cm x 14cm
- 52 mid 1940's B/w positive group photograph taken on the occasion of a visit to Dublin of NUJ personnel from London. Three rows, front row seated, all unidentified. Second row, first left Maurice Hickey, Irish Independent; third left Dermot McEvoy; fifth left R.M. Fox, Evening Mail. Back row, first left Bill Redmond, later news editor, Irish Press; second left Maurice Liston; fourth left Joe Dennigan; fifth left Tommy Kilfeather; sixth left Brendan Malin; seventh left Jimmy Moran, Evening Mail; eighth left Martin Coffey. 15cm x 20cm

E DISSOCIATED MATERIAL (1924–1950)

- 53 c. 1924–1932 Press identification cards. Includes: Business card of Joe Dennigan, representative of The Western People; ID card for press representatives of An Garda Síochána made out to Joe Dennigan acting on behalf of The Irish Press. Contains photograph of Dennigan and signature, as well as signature of Eoin O'Duffy, General Commissioner, who issued the cards; and two blank membership cards of the National Union of Journalists. 4 items
- 55 c. 1934 Draft article in which Dennigan states that he had recently seen Seán Mac Eoin at Leinster House 'to review a "a pairing arrangement"' due to the fact that he is studying at the bar and cannot devote all the time he would like to the Dáil though he is a hard worker in his constituency of Longford-Westmeath. Notes that MacEoin is a keen farmer and a lover of horses and comments that his wife is a sister of Major E. J. Cooney and D. Mark Cooney. 1p
- 56 1949–50 Season ticket of Mr. McAvoy, Irish News for Drumcondra F. C. Limited at Tolka Park, Richmond Road, Dublin. 1 item

