

LUGS

The Life and Times of Garda Jim Branigan

By

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FOREWORD

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CHAPTER 1

Lugs Branigan - The Legend

When John Alick Branigan from Rodeen Borrisokane, County Tipperary and Ellen Branigan (nee Kavanagh) from Coolroe, Graiguenamanagh, County Kilkenny, gave birth to a bouncing baby boy on 6th January 1910, little did they think that their first new-born infant would one day become not only the most famous ever member of An Garda Síochána but also a legend in his own lifetime. That baby boy, born at 5.45 am at 1, James's Street, in the South Dublin Union - now St James's Hospital - was later christened James Christopher Branigan. His father was an official in the South Dublin Union and the family lived in a house within the complex grounds. The house is still there today, just past the main hospital entrance on James's Street.

Even today, more than twenty years after his death, thousands of Dubliners recall him and his style of policing and it is very common to hear people say "if only we had a few like him around now". If only. Recently a group of solicitors were talking about Lugs in Dublin District Court No 44, Chancery Street, during a recess. All agreed that if he was around now some criminal or other would have put a bullet in him a long time ago. However, the Court Registrar disagreed, saying that the bold Lugs, if he were on the beat today, would still be in Court every day - but it would not be the custody Courts but the Court across the road, meaning the High Court. He would be so tied up in litigation for ill-treatment, slander, deprivation of rights, assault, defamation that he would be tied up in civil actions for the rest of his career. This anecdote highlights a certain aspect of Jim Branigan - his enduring persona.

An indication of the fact that the legend of Lugs still lives on can be gleaned from the media coverage given to his memory. In April 2008 the author Bernard Neary gave a lecture on Lugs at a meeting of the Garda Historical Society in the Garda Club in Harrington Street, Dublin 2. The venue was packed out and such was the interest expressed by members who could not attend on the night that the Society produced a DVD presentation of the lecture to facilitate them. The *Garda Review*, the magazine of the Garda Representative Association, the organisation representing the rank and file membership, then did an extensive piece on the famous Lugs.

On Tuesday 15th February 2009 the Honourable Mr Justice Paul Carney, the eminent criminal Judge who presides over the Central Criminal Court, presented a lecture on policing in Ireland at Maynooth College, as Adjunct Professor of Law for the National University of Ireland Maynooth. Lugs and his style of policing featured in Mr Justice Carney's speech. The following day his lecture was covered by all the print media, including a half-page in the Irish Times. That Wednesday afternoon the RTE radio programme *Liveline*, presented by Joe Duffy, covered the topic. The phones to the radio show were hopping, and all those who aired their views – both young and old – had their own stories to tell. The following Sunday the *Star on Sunday* ran a two-page spread on the famous Lugs. Since the talk by Mr Justice Carney the *Northside People*, *Dublin Central News* and many other local publications have ran stories on Lugs.

It is an indication of the stature of the man that he is still making the headlines so many years after his death, at the age of 76, in 1987.

CHAPTER 2

The Early Years

James Branigan - better known as Jim, 'Branno' and 'The Bran' to Garda colleagues, and 'Lugs' to generations of Dubliners, had two brothers and a sister, John Alick, Frank and Nora. John Alick died in his 8th year, when Jim himself was just ten years old. Nora was born three years after Jim and Frank nearly five years later. Basin Lane Convent beckoned, and Jim started school there when he was five. The school was under the managership of Sister Monica, who lived to receive the President's cheque and was over one hundred years old when she died. His teachers were the Misses Kearney, Bergin and Sutton. A fruitless check at the Convent, Our Lady of Good Counsel, run by the Irish Sisters of Charity, gave no clue of Jim's early school days, for no records were kept there after it ceased operating school classes.

Just one year after Jim started school an event took place which was to forever live in his memory - the Easter Rising. On Easter Monday, 24th April 1916, a knock on the door of the Branigan household was answered by Jim's mother Ellen: "Ah! Willie, come on in", Jim heard his mother say, and in walked William T Cosgrave and Eamonn Ceannt. Mr Cosgrave introduced the young gentleman in his company with the following short sentence: "This is Eamonn, he is in command here". Willie Cosgrave was more than familiar to Jim and his family, for he lived across the street, at 174, James's Street, now Kenny's public house. A simple plaque over the door commemorates his birth and it reads: "W.T. Cosgrave, born here 6th June 1880. Died 16th November 1965".

On that first day of Easter Week, six-year-old Jim saw a British soldier shot dead at the back of his house. The soldier was shot during a sharp exchange of gunfire and Jim recalled being in the scullery of his home when he heard the noise from outside, as if someone was trying to break down a door: "The door opened and I heard a voice saying 'it's all right, Paddy, I'm one of yours'. I then heard two shots coming from under the door. The next thing I saw a Volunteer pointing a rifle from our kitchen window and firing out. Afterwards, when we were being evacuated, I saw a near-dead body being attended to. It was a British soldier". After this incident the Branigan family, along with all the other families in the Dublin Union, were moved to safe quarters at the back of the complex. Jim's house, on Mount Brown Hill, looked across to the Royal Hospital at Kilmainham, "the old fogies home for Chelsea Pensioners" and was in the line of sniper fire, so the family had to be moved for their own safety.

Besides the Dublin Union the Fourth Battalion under Eamonn Ceannt also occupied outposts at Marrowbone Lane, Roe's Distillery, Ardee Street Brewery and Cork Street. On the Tuesday of Easter Week there was fierce hand-to-hand fighting at the Union and in the hospital itself barricades of mattresses and beds were erected. In Marrowbone Lane the Volunteers had to take such cover as was provided by sheds, walls and basement steps. At Rialto the British directed heavy fire at the Irish positions, with the defenders becoming outnumbered and hour by hour forced back into the grounds of the Union. Here they only yielded step by step, foot by foot, until

they reached the shelter of the main buildings, where they resisted overwhelming force from a besieged position.

On Wednesday heavy British forces effected an entry and after fierce hand-to-hand fighting the Irish retired to Mount Brown, where they entrenched. The Fourth Battalion held out for the remainder of Easter Week and when Padraig Pearse surrendered on Saturday, 29th April to Brigadier General Lowe in Parnell Street, resistance at the Dublin Union ceased.

Jim vividly remembered the surrender of the heroic Fourth Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers at the end of Easter Week. He recalled the Volunteers formed in ranks and surrounded by British soldiers before being marched to Kilmainham. He saw his mother bravely breaking the barrier of British soldiers to shake hands with Willie Cosgrave, who was second-in-command to Eamonn Ceannt. Up until his death Jim remembered this day, sadly recalling the Volunteers being marched through the big iron double gate of the Union to face a future of prison and for some, including Eamonn Ceannt, execution.

The Dublin Union was a vast institution and the present-day hospital complex covers an area of approximately fifty-seven acres, so Jim rarely mixed with anyone outside the grounds. There was a Convent run by the Sisters of Mercy which was occupied by a number of Nursing Sisters, and these were in charge of the several hospitals and a Nursing Home. Jim "hung around" with the children of the officials attached to the Union. He recalled the families who worked and resided there and their children with whom he played:

"It was like a small town; there were over a thousand inmates and a lot of officials and their families lived in the Officers' Quarters. These are just some that I remember: Mr Daly and Nurse Daly and Patrick, Carmel, Theresa, John, Joseph, George and Eleanor Daly; Mr and Mrs Patrick Smith and Andrew, Sadie, Molly, Nellie, Mona and Una Smith; Mr and Mrs Denis Purcell and Terence, Theresa, Denis and Maura Purcell; Mr and Mrs Thomas Brady and Thomas, Agnes and Vera Brady; Mrs White and Lilly and Eileen; Maureen, Ena and Paddy Conway; Mr and Mrs Gogarty and their two boys and two girls; the Master of the institution and his wife, who was also the Matron; Mr and Mrs Edward Doyle and their family; the Assistant Matron Miss Mannion and the Assistant Master Mr Hennessy with his wife and family. All the children were within a few years in age of one another and it was easy for us to keep within the boundary of the institution as there was miles of roads, a ball alley and several fields. The boys were always cycle-racing along the roads as there was little or no traffic about".

As a boy Jim was not that great a mixer, being regarded as "a bit on the quiet side". He joined the Altar Boys and served regularly at Mass in one of the churches in the complex. When he was nine years old he left Basin Lane Convent and went to James's Street Christian Brothers School. An average pupil at school, he took part in sports but did not excel in any of the disciplines. At the age of fourteen, on 6th January 1924, he said goodbye to his Superior, Brother Burke and to his schooling and went to work at the railway engineering works of the Great Southern Railway (GSR) in Inchicore, with the intention of serving his time and becoming a fitter. Two years later, however, he began to feel that he was not cut out to be a fitter but the

company wished to keep him on and following a long discussion with the Personnel Manager he stayed with the GSR until his 21st birthday, working at various jobs helping fitters, boilermakers and vise-men.

During his employment at Inchicore Jim continued to serve as an Altar Boy in the church in the Dublin Union. He had joined the Alter Boys in 1919 and served Mass for many years, up to his entering the Garda Síochána in 1931. The Dublin Union contained three churches within its grounds, two Roman Catholic and one Church of Ireland. Jim served Mass in the Catholic church adjacent to the South Circular Road end of the complex. The priests came from Whitefriar Street and Jim recalled serving at the "consumption Mass" in the church when quite often one of the celebrants, who was fairly cranky, would turn to the congregation and announce, amid much coughing and barking: 'Will you please stop that racket, the Altar Boys cannot hear me speak'. Jim found this rather amusing, considering the health status of the faithful in attendance. As an Altar Boy he was very popular in the complex and got on well with both patients and staff in the hospital.

Having no railway background in his family may have resulted in his quiet, inoffensive manner at work and Jim recalled that he was not too popular in the GSR, where nearly all his co-workers were steeped in railway tradition, having cousins, uncles, brothers, sons and fathers working alongside them. Accordingly he was quite often picked on, occasionally getting a bit of a hiding in the yards. Unbelievably Jim never retaliated and was at the time a great believer in turning the other cheek.

Outside the GSR Jim developed his interests. He joined the Saint John's Ambulance Brigade at seventeen, becoming a member of the Dublin City Division. At the tender age of eighteen he travelled to Lourdes with them - his first time to be outside the country. He remained in the Brigade until he became a Garda. He was most competent at First Aid and was a recipient of the School of Instruction Medal. He went on duty two and three nights a week at Dublin Cinemas and every Sunday at Croke Park. When he joined the Gardaí subsequently his First Aid training proved most useful and probably helped him save lives during his years in the front line against street violence. During his Garda training he was detailed to replace the First Aid instructor whenever he was absent, giving him "a great kick out of instructing the lads" who entered the force in his group. At nineteen he joined the Dublin City Harriers and ran many cross-country races with them.

While Jim was busy working away in the GSR the sporting headlines were being captured by the infant Garda Boxing Club (GBC). Following the setting-up of the Garda Síochána in 1922, the powers that be in the infant force decided to lay a great emphasis on sport and shortly afterwards, in 1924, Major General W R E Murphy established the GBC. The Club was lucky in having Tommy Maloney - described by Jim as "a great Dublin man, born in the Liberties and settling down in Bulfin Road, Inchicore, after marriage" - as trainer and within a few short years he built up a highly successful Garda boxing team which was to earn fame not only in Ireland but worldwide during the 1920's and 1930's, with the men of the GBC being looked upon as Europe's finest. There are still men around - you will find them at the National Stadium for any International, Championship or tournament fixture - who will tell you with immense depth of unshakeable conviction that the only time that ever mattered

in Irish Amateur Boxing was the era that began with the establishment of the GBC and ended with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Those really were the days as far as Garda boxing was concerned, Golden Days, when a group of outstanding young men put on their gloves and left an indelible mark on the history of Irish amateur boxing. Under the enthusiastic guidance of Major Murphy, who later became President of the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) between 1928 and 1939, the GBC dominated the sport with an overwhelming authority. Garda boxers, particularly in the heavier weights, formed a powerful, almost unbeatable, backbone for every Irish International side that fought in that memorable era and appeared with resounding success in many parts of the world.

The National Championships to a great extent were, in those years, Garda affairs and in many boxing divisions Garda often fought Garda for the right to be called Champion in their class. For over twenty years there was a steady stream of glorious champions from the club. Every member of the GBC in those halcyon years was a household name in Ireland and even until recent years, in many instances, they provided the legendary yardstick by which standards were measured. The men who led the way were heavyweights Matt Flanagan and Jack O'Driscoll, light-heavyweights Jim 'Boy' Murphy and his namesake Jim Murphy; middleweights Jack Chase and Jack Forde and welterweight Frank Cooper. All won National championships, all represented Ireland in International competition and of course the GBC had a heavy representation in Ireland's appearances at the Olympic Games at Amsterdam in 1928 and again at Los Angeles in 1932.

They were followed on the national scene by further great champions: Dick Hearn, Larry Flood, Paddy Hennelly, Gerry Mulligan, Billy Blackwell, Dom Lydon and the never-to-be-forgotten Ernie Smith. Ernie began as a featherweight champion but he stepped up to lightweight in 1932 to take the Irish title, which he held without defeat until 1938. In his time he represented Ireland against Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Norway, Poland, the United States and Wales. Everyone in Ireland, in every sport, knew of him.

Jim was nearing the end of his career in the GSR for in those days it was the policy of the company to lay off workers who reached the age of twenty-one and take on new, younger workers. With this in mind and being totally fed up with the job, he decided on the Garda Síochána as a career as, since a boy, he had long admired the Garda force and during his late teens it became his burning ambition to one day become a member. He contacted a family friend, Kit Madden, a former British Army instructor who worked with his father in the Dublin Union. Kit agreed to train the young Jim so as to build him up for entry to his chosen profession. Jim was then a tall, skinny young man and as a result it became a family joke, particularly at the Sunday lunch table, when they discovered his plans for a change in career. There was a certain amount of police tradition in Jim's family and perhaps this was why he was so keen on becoming a Garda. His uncle Tadgh was a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary in the late 1880's, subsequently retiring to travel to the Strait Settlements, joining the police force there and reaching the rank of District Inspector for Singapore. He was also used to mixing with Gardaí, as usually two officers were assigned to permanent duties at the Dublin Union, which also contained a workhouse: "I was always fond of uniforms and I had no fear of the Garda as they

were regular callers to our home. There was always an officer or two on duty at the gate of the Union. Often the Gardaí would drink tea and play twenty five with my parents".

Jim's desire to become a Garda got off the ground in 1927 when he enrolled in the Technical Schools at Parnell Square, taking lessons in shorthand, typing and accountancy. He attended there for three years, sitting classes for two and three nights a week over the period. When he got down to studying at home on his own he "swotted like mad at Irish and maths in order to have a chance when sitting the Garda entrance examination". He sent in his application before leaving the GSR on 6th January 1931, on his 21st birthday, being unemployed until June of that same year. He used this spare time efficiently and kept up his training with Kit Madden and his evening classes at Parnell Tech. The training and studying paid off and on 18th June 1931 Jim Branigan joined the Garda Síochána - Number 8005 - and thus began a career which was to put him in the limelight both nationally and Internationally and see him become a legend in his own lifetime.

While Jim was walking up Parkgate Street on 16th June 1931, he was stopped by a gentleman who asked him where the Garda Depot was located. The man turned out to be Mick Flynn, who was also attending for his medical check that same day and they headed up Infirmary Road to the Garda Depot in the Phoenix Park, together. Both joined the force on the same June day, and Mick was given the number 8002. Jim and Mick became best friends during their training and maintained their friendship all their lives. The Number One recruit from his batch was Patrick Curnane, 7999, from Cahirciveen, Co Kerry. Mick Flynn did a bit of boxing but was keener on field sports; he took up hurling and was a member of the Dublin team that won the All-Ireland Championship in 1938, scoring the goal against Waterford that won the match. He was later transferred to County Clare and after some years was assigned to Rathfarnham Garda Station. While stationed there he was called to a break-in at the well-known licensed premises the Yellow House where with Garda Thighe he interrupted some dangerous criminals. Mick was shot and carried the bullet all his life - it could not be removed by surgery. Both Mick and Garda Thighe were awarded the Scott Medal for bravery and were promoted. Jim's other close friends at this time included Robert Simpson and Paddy Curnane.

Jim's family still resided in the Union during his training and early years in the force, although his mother had died on 26th July 1930, never to see her son realise his cherished ambition of becoming a Garda. There had always been a female cook and two male servants in Jim's house, who catered for the families of the employees in the Union, and these remained after his mother's death. Having the use of servants led to an amusing incident as a trainee, for, as a result of his never having to do any chores in the home, the first morning that he awoke in the Depot to the bugle call, he got up, shaved and dressed to go out on parade in civilian attire. He was going out the door of the Squad Room when Paddy Curnane said to him "J....., man, you never polished your boots". Jim looked down and saw that his shoes were very dirty. "What will I do?", he said. "Clean them quick", said Paddy. "How?", said Jim, "I never cleaned shoes in my life". Paddy Curnane had to clean his boots and show him the correct way to do it before they went out onto the Square. He got a rough time from the other lads in the room over not being able to clean his boots and they were always slagging him over it. The Company Sergeant of No. 3 Company,

to which Jim was attached, was Sergeant Patrick Murphy and he was "one of the nicest Garda NCO's I served with, he was always ready to help a recruit. He was one of the kindest men that I ever met in the Garda Síochána".

The Company Officer was Superintendent Thomas Noonan, who on many occasions gave civilian attire passes at weekends, particularly if the lads wanted to go to Lansdowne Road. At the time Garda recruits were only allowed out of the Depot from 6.00 pm, when classes were finished, to 10.30 pm, and they had to go out in uniform, carrying a cane and gloves. On Saturdays they were allowed out from 2.00 pm to 10.30 pm and on Sundays after Church Parade at Oxmantown Road at 11.30 am they were free to go out in uniform but again had to be back in the Depot before 10.30 pm.

When Jim entered the Garda Depot in Dublin's Phoenix Park, which was the training centre for Gardaí until the establishment of the Garda College in Templemore, County Tipperary, in 1956, he had never seen a boxing glove, let alone hear about the famous GBC. In those days the young recruit had to do an hour of boxing and an hour of physical training a day under the direction of Tommy Maloney and Joe Mc Creanor respectively. Jim put on the gloves and got into the ring "to practise how to defend myself". On that first day in the gym Tommy Maloney picked out twenty of the best recruits and set them sparring against each other. Jim was placed against "a big fellow, a Galway man of my own height, six foot two inches but a half-stone heavier".

Every day for a week he was leathered and still Tommy Maloney made him get back into the ring. He remembered going home one evening with his lips twice their normal size and sporting an enlarged nose. "What happened to you? My God, they must be trying to kill you", exclaimed his father. But after seven days of getting "bruised lips, cut noses and black eyes I just shut my eyes and let go, clocking my opponent on the nose and knocking him flat on the ground". Tommy Maloney then asked him would he take up boxing but sensed Jim's reluctance. "I'll guarantee you a Dublin posting if you stick at the boxing" said the shrewd Tommy. Jim's love of his native city developed during his teens and like many a Dubliner he thought "anywhere outside the Pale is the sticks". From the moment he took the decision to join the Gardaí he dreaded the thought of a country posting and somehow felt that fate might reward him with a Dublin posting. He was an extremely optimistic and happy-go-lucky person and so felt that he would surely be stationed in his native city. The young recruit needed no more coaxing and it was in this way that Jim Branigan entered the boxing arena, subsequently dedicating his life to that sport as well as to his job.

During the six-month training course in the Garda Depot Jim considerably improved his boxing prowess. His family were quite amused when they first heard that he was taking up the sport, for it was his father's opinion that he couldn't box his way out of a paper bag. But he stuck at the sport, gaining not only the confidence of his father and other family members but trainer Tommy Maloney, who, after four months, allowed him to spar with Garda greats from the boxing world, including Dick Hearn, Jack Chase, Matt Flanagan, Jack Driscoll, Willie Blackwell, Paddy Henly and Gerry Mulligan. Gerry Mulligan had joined the Gardaí in the same year as Jim and afterwards became Irish Heavyweight Champion; he subsequently settled down in

Sligo Town. Proud to be associated with such fine men, because of his enthusiasm and ability he in turn soon earned their respect and admiration. Jim described that first day among the seniors:

"It was not only an experience but an honour to be in the same ring as the seniors. Those men were great the way they treated the other recruits and myself. Men like Jack Driscoll and Matt Flanagan, Irish Heavyweight Champions; Andy Sharkey and Martin Murphy, runner-up in the Heavyweight Championships to both Flanagan and Driscoll; William 'Boy' Murphy and Jim Murphy, both Cruiser or Light heavyweight Champions; (Jim Murphy represented Ireland in the Los Angeles 1932 Olympics, reaching the quarter finals in his class). Jack Chase, Irish Middleweight Champion (he held that title for eight consecutive years); Billy Blackwell, Leinster Middleweight Champion and a couple of times runner-up in the National Championships; Paddy Henly, also Middleweight Championship runner-up and Connaught Champion; Gerry Mulligan and Neil Mc Naught, two recruits who entered the Gardaí in April 1931, were both heavyweights and were both sparring with me on that first day. Gerry afterwards became Heavyweight Champion and represented Ireland on numerous occasions. As you can see, it was a great honour for me to be in such company. I trained quite a lot with Dick Hearns, whom I greatly admired and learned more about boxing from Dick than I did from anybody else".

Sparring with such greats he soon learned how to defend himself and in December 1931 Jim Branigan, a man who "couldn't play marbles before joining the force" qualified as a Garda and true to Tommy Maloney's word was assigned to the Defence Unit stationed in the Garda Depot, Phoenix Park, where he remained until 1935. This assignment was not altogether to his liking, however:

"Sometimes the job was interesting in that we would be assigned to escort prisoners from provincial jails to the city Courts, but the job soon became a bore. I admit it gave me my first taste of dealing with toughs and hardened criminals but it also meant that I was on call to country areas at any time to deal with such matters as agrarian troubles and land feuds. As a Dublin man I was bored by agrarian feuds and I thought I would never get home when appointed temporarily to such lonesome places like Bangor Erris and Crossmolina in Co Mayo, Quin in Co Clare and Mountrath and Cavan Town. My yen to get home from the country could not be quenched even when I was engaged on such an important mission as preserving the scene of a serious crime.

"In fact I was sent to do just that at Feenagh, Ballinamore, Co Leitrim after the murder of Paddy Reynolds TD and a detective Garda but found it weary work. At that time I used dance regularly at the Ierne and the Teachers' Hall, Parnell Square, although I was on low wages, my pay in 1931 being just £2=10s=6d [approximately €3.24]. To give an idea of the value of that pay-packet, the best suit of clothes in Dublin could be bought with it, though it was not good money. Twelve

months before I joined the force the pay was £3=0s=0d [€3.81] a week, but the Gardaí were asked to forego 10/= (64 cent) a week to help the economy. When the economy improved, we never got that back. In those days we never got overtime and when we worked on our leave day in an emergency we were seldom given a day off in lieu".

During this time Jim was taking his boxing seriously and trained every day to maintain peak fitness: "Besides training in the gym, I would get up at 5am every morning. The gate-man at the Dublin Union would wake me up and when I arrived at the gate office there was a cup of tea waiting for me before I started jogging or cycling. I did this every morning until late in 1938, when my father left the Union and the family went to reside at 1, Lorne Terrace, Kilmainham".

In a contest in Portadown, Northern Ireland in January 1932 Jim saw his first encounter in the boxing ring, against a Police Constable Fieffe of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). This was a hard-fought bout which Jim won on points to earn a comfortable victory. After this contest he said goodbye to his nerves and became one of the stalwarts of the GBC. In a Garda -v- RUC Tournament held in the open air at the Market Yard in Monaghan Town in February 1934 the best bout of the night was acknowledged as that between Jim and a PC Moore from Belfast. Jim outmanoeuvred his opponent, who put up a great fight, and won the bout comfortably on points.

One of the toughest fights in his career occurred on 25th November 1936 when he met PC Warren of Manchester Police in an International contest in Liverpool. Warren was the reigning Lancashire and Cheshire Heavyweight Champion and proved too strong and forceful for Jim. Both men hit a lot of wild punches but Warren picked his punches better, thus narrowly winning on points. In August 1937 Jim had another tough one, against Rosenfeldt, the German Cruiserweight Champion, in a Tournament between the GBC and the German Police held in Clonmel, Co Tipperary. Rosenfeldt proved too seasoned and experienced a boxer for Jim, who again put up a solid defence only to be beaten on points.

The Duggan Shield was Jim's next major contest and his opponent turned out to be his best friend, the legendary Dick Hearns, one of the finest boxers that Ireland ever produced. The bout took place on 26th November 1937, and was a closely-fought professional contest. After six rounds, Dick Hearns was declared the winner on points. Dick recalled the fight as "very close indeed and as good a contest as ever I had". A truly brilliant boxer, while in the GBC he enjoyed an illustrious boxing career. He was one of the many brilliant boxers that made up the GBC in the 1920's and 1930's. The tables of National and European Police Open Boxing Champions from the GBC listed elsewhere in this book give an indication of the Club's greatness in those heyday years of the Garda boxing story. It is ironic that Dick became one of Ireland's finest boxers ever, considering that it was quite by accident that he entered the sport in the first place.

From Ballina, County Mayo, Dick Hearns was, like Jim Branigan, unemployed for a spell before entering the Garda Síochána. During that period he joined the Ballina Physical Training and Boxing Club so that he could train and build himself up for the

Garda physical examination. The cost of the membership was "a tanner a week" [three cent] and the club had good showers and training facilities. The President of the Club, a George Heuston, was running a boxing tournament against Westport in late-1928 in aid of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. He asked Dick to take part in the tournament and the eager young sportsman obliged. Unknown to Dick, he was drawn against a Bob Hutchinson, the Ulster Champion; fortunately though, Hutchinson couldn't fight due to illness. Dick got into the ring against a Paddy Mc Nally and knocked him out. After the contest, Bob Hutchinson got into the ring, apologised to the audience for not appearing due to a heavy cold and then challenged Dick to a fight, within the month, for a side-stake of ten pounds. To Dick's horror, his own brother Frank accepted the challenge for double the side-stake, twenty pounds. The contest took place in December 1928. The raw Dick matched the Ulster Champion blow for blow in a hard-fought and closely-matched bout which Dick won on points.

Shortly afterwards, in January 1929, he joined the Gardaí. He didn't intend to take up boxing in his new career but one day while training in the gym, General Murphy saw him and said "Did you ever box before, Hearns?" "No, Sir". "If you take it up, I'll get you off the Square for two hours". Like Jim, this carrot was enough to swing it and Dick Hearns took up the sport, becoming Light Heavyweight Champion. Indeed, there is no doubt that Dick would have won Gold in the Berlin Olympics of 1936 for he had well beaten Roger Michelot, that year's Olympic Gold Medallist, in the British Open ABA Championship. But an objection was raised by Britain to the Irish team taking part in the Olympics and the Olympic committee, in a highly controversial decision, upheld the objection and in doing so undoubtedly deprived Ireland of what looked like sure Gold. Dick Hearns retired from the ring, as reigning national Champion in 1939 - the same year as Jim - but continued to train Gardaí in the sport at the Depot until his retirement in 1964. For many years he lived on Ellesmere Avenue, North Circular Road and both he and Jim kept up their friendship, being regularly in touch with each other until Jim's death.

Jim Branigan earned a name for himself during the halcyon years of the GBC, although he did not rise to the dizzy heights of some of his other colleagues. As he often said himself "I lost more fights than I won" and the extract of his career from the records of the IABA elsewhere in this book bears this out. Over his whole boxing career he won approximately half of all his contests. He was never knocked out in any of his bouts and he never knocked out any of his opponents and fought at cruiser-weight for nearly two-thirds of his career, and from August 1936 until 1939 he contested in the heavyweight and lightheavyweight classes. His first major contest in the heavyweight class was a most successful one and brought him the Leinster Heavyweight title.

Of course this was the highlight of Jim's boxing career and that capture by him of the Leinster Heavyweight Championship took place on 6th November 1936. On that occasion he met Tom Penny of Saint Andrews BC, in a highly competitive and hard-fought Leinster final, and after the three three-minute round contest Jim was declared the undisputed Champion of Leinster. It was the highest honour which he won in his boxing career and along with the medallion which he was presented with for his taking part in the 1938 German International Tournament was one of his most treasured trophies. His next major contest in the heavyweight class was indeed a

tough one for in the Leinster versus Connaught contest on 10th January 1937 he came up against Dom Lydon, the 1936 and 1937 Irish Heavyweight Champion. He had a baptism of fire in his bout with Lydon and in a hard fought contest battled his way through to the third round when the referee stopped the duel. The previous year Jim was labelled 'The Battler' because of his never give in approach.

A cartoon taken from a newspaper shortly after Jim won the Leinster Heavyweight title undoubtedly referred to the famous Lugs Branigan. His title of The Battler was well earned in the contest and indeed in one which took place exactly a year to the day later, in what was perhaps one of his greatest nights ever in the ring, a night which he will never forget, in Leipzig in pre-war Germany on 10th January 1938. On that occasion Jim did Ireland proud in a Germany versus Ireland International tournament. He was to meet a German named Pietch who had "a great reputation as a KO merchant" in a three three-minute round contest. Before the fight a German friend told Jim to steer well clear of Pietch's right hook. In the opening seconds of the fight, with the bold Jim keeping a wary eye on the famous right hook, the German put him down with a left hook. As Jim got to his feet he came to the conclusion that he had misunderstood the advice he had received and that it was the left hook that should be watched.

That was where he made his biggest mistake for as soon as Pietch saw an opening for his right, he put Jim down for nine. It was a proud boast of Jim's that nobody ever knocked him out, but if he ever came near it must certainly have been in this fight. That first right hook put the German in command and others were to follow. Altogether, Jim was put on the floor nine times during the course of that fight. Five of the counts he took were of nine. Yet he did not know the meaning of surrender and at the end of the contest was still on his feet, without a hope of victory yet without a notion of giving in. And when the bell rang the cheers were all for the loser whose exhibition of courage was still, in the mid-1950's, being talked about by German officials whenever Irish teams visited that country. The tournament took place in the Leipzig Zoo and was watched by both Field Marshal Goering of white-suit fame and that famous (or infamous) propagandist, Josef Goebbels.

An extract from a German newspaper of the time showed how much Jim's courage captured the imagination of the German Nation and his performance gave him national prominence in the German media. One of his souvenirs of that trip hung in his home all his life. It was a large poster which announced to the populace of Leipzig 'Irlander Bobbys Boxen Im Zoo' - you don't have to be a linguist or an expert on the German language to fathom that one out. Jim's performance was all the more remarkable for three days previously, on 7th January 1938 in Berlin, before a capacity audience that included Albert Speer and Rudolf Hess, he had battled against Niesen from Denmark in a gruelling three three-minute round contest, losing the bout on a technical knockout.

Dozens upon dozens of medals and trophies were won by Jim during his eight-year boxing career which saw him engage in over one hundred contests in Ireland, Great Britain and Europe. Little did he realise, though, when he retired from the ring on a summer's day in 1939, that he would go on to give a lifetime of dedicated and loyal service not only to the IABA but to Irish amateur boxing and in so doing would collect as much and more trophies and memorabilia as he did in his long and successful

boxing career. He loved and thrived on his particular sport and recalled with deep pride a particular occasion in Irish boxing history - an occasion which brought him to tears and which he always proudly related when speaking about the sport. The year was 1939 and the mounting fears of a second world war, looming across Europe, were forgotten about in our country for five nights in springtime. The reason, of course, was quite simple - the European Championships had come to Dublin, taking place in the newly-built National Stadium on the South Circular Road.

Never before had there been such an array of talent in any Irish sporting event. Every preceding International in the history of Irish amateur boxing paled before this impressive gathering of nations at the National Stadium. From all over Europe came a formidable entry of sixty seven competitors which included Olympic, European and National champions. They came from Great Britain, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, Holland, Belgium, Finland, Estonia and Latvia. The names of most of the boxers were unpronounceable but their reputations were well known and respected. There was tremendous confidence, nevertheless, among the eight who were representing Ireland.

Jim recalled the exciting lead-up to the finals, when six of our representatives were eliminated. Ireland went into the finals with two representatives, flyweight Jimmy Ingle (aged seventeen, the baby of the team) and featherweight Paddy Dowdall. The night of the finals, 22nd April 1939, was to go down in Irish boxing annals as an historic one and Jim was always filled with emotion whenever he talked about that eventful night. Amid scenes of almost indescribable excitement, Ingle won the flyweight title by mastering the powerful German, Nikki Obermauer. The St Andrews boxer simply used his skill and dazzling footwork to bewilder his opponent. Ingle lacked the experience to tangle with the stocky German at close quarters, so he kept the bout at long range as much as he could. Obermauer had a spectacular last round when he stormed forward and actually outfought Ingle, but the Dubliner's clear superiority in the first two rounds was enough to ensure him and Ireland victory. When Jimmy was announced winner he got a standing ovation and hats, programmes and newspapers were tossed into the air. His opponent went over to Ingle's corner and offered congratulations - a grand loser, a magnificent winner and a great contest.

More excitement was to follow when Dowdall became European featherweight champion by out pointing Poland's Anton Czortek against all odds. The tough Pole was a strong favourite to win the title. He had won his earlier bouts in decisive fashion and the general view was that Dowdall had been beaten in the Irish Senior Championships a few weeks earlier and had only won his place on the European team after taking part in a trial. The Dubliner put on a superb performance, his ring craft was brilliant and he was able to make the Pole miss repeatedly by fancy footwork. Additionally, he got the inside position during some fierce exchanges at close quarters, particularly in the second round. Dowdall actually carried the fight to his man at the beginning of the third round, something nobody had been able to do against the Pole all the week. "There was a tremendous cheer from the crowd. We were almost delirious with excitement and elation. Two European champions in the one night. It was almost too hard to believe. It was a great night for Ireland", recalled Jim, who was full of stories about those great boxing days of the 1930's. One such story which is particularly enjoyable concerns Corporal Paddy Connolly,

surely the greatest flyweight ever produced by this country. Jim tells the story:

"He was national champion in 1933, 1936 and 1938; Leinster Champion in 1934 and Army champion from 1932 to 1937. His International victims included Dunne (England), Cohen (USA), Hausen (Germany), Pottinger (Wales), Pat Palmer (England), Bonnet (France), Loinbillion (France), McLean (England), Willie Kaiser (Germany, Olympic title-holder) and Vicor Enekes (Hungary, European title holder).

"His victory over USA's Lenny Cohen was magnificent. Cohen was at that time Golden Gloves champion and regarded as a world beater. He later became one of the leading professionals in the US. This bout took place in Chicago in 1933 and during the trip Paddy was adopted by the native Indian population, who adored him. They made him an honorary member of the Sioux Indian Tribe, giving him the title Big Chief Little Thunder. They tell a good story about Connolly in Chicago. It is the story of how Paddy got his famous white straw hat, which he wore on his arrival back to Collins Barracks, led in triumph by a pipe band, with Paddy seated on a horse. It appears that in America, boxing fans throw their headgear into the ring when they are excited. Well, the crowd was more than excited over Connolly's defeat of Lenny Cohen and they hurled dozens of hats into the ring when Paddy was proclaimed the winner. He could not for the life of him see how the owners were going to reclaim them and it was such a pity to waste them. Amid the cheers from 10,000 spectators, Paddy began calmly trying on several of the hats. He found two particularly good ones which fitted him nicely and one of them was the white straw hat which he wore when riding in state from Kingsbridge railway terminus".

The first few years in the Garda Siochana were relatively quiet for Jim and when not on temporary assignments to the country he sometimes found himself standing on guard outside Dublin Courthouses. The photograph (above) is an early photograph of Jim in uniform and was taken outside Kilmainham Courthouse during the famous Nurse Cadden trial in the early 1930's. Nurse Cadden was charged with procuring illegal abortions and received a life sentence. The photograph shows Jim pictured with Detective Officers A O'Conner and T Cryan. Jim is not mentioned in the caption. Little did the young rookie realise but that one day he would himself command the front pages of the national media and in the process become part of the folklore of the city he so dearly loved. But for now, outside boxing circles, he was to remain an obscure "one of the boys" waiting for the carving of his niche in the Garda Siochana.

The first District appointment for Jim was in 1935 when he was posted to Irishtown, an assignment that did not agree with him and he was to remain there for only three months. He did not get on too well with a particular Sergeant there and he told a story about how on one occasion, on a Saturday morning coming up to Christmas 1935, he was on point duty at the Haddington Road/Shepards Bush junction when he stopped a car in traffic to allow some pedestrians cross the road. When he beckoned the traffic to move, the first car stopped in the middle of the junction and

the passenger asked Jim to go over to the curb side as he wanted a word with him. It was Major General Murphy and he wished to compliment Jim on his traffic handling and to query an unusual feature on his face - a black eye. "You shouldn't be on duty with such an injury", remarked Jim's boss. "It's okay, sir, it only looks a little bad. I feel fine". "Did it happen in the course of your duty, Garda?", queried the General. "No, Sir". "Then how did it happen, man?". "I was in the ring last night in a contest with an RUC Constable" remarked Jim, waiting to be ticked off for turning out for duty with a horrible-looking black eye. But to his surprise the General engaged him in conversation about his boxing exploits while from the corner of his eye he saw his Sergeant at the junction scribbling in his notebook. When the General terminated their conversation and proceeded to drive away, Jim took a note of the car registration number and entered it in his diary.

The following Monday when he reported for duty he was hauled before his Superintendent, on a charge of gossiping. Jim admitted the charge but refused to give the name of the person he was talking to until he was formally charged in writing. When he left the Superintendent's room, the Sergeant remarked that he had 'got' him. Jim said nothing. But a couple of days later when he was on parade, the Superintendent smiled at him - he had since discovered who Jim was talking to - and why Jim was insisting on being charged in writing. "I'm sorry, Garda. If there is anything you want, I'll try and get it for you" said the Superintendent. "A transfer, sir" came the reply and shortly after Christmas, in January 1936, he became Garda James C Branigan, Shoulder Nubmer 160A, Newmarket Garda Station. Jim said "goodbye and good riddance" to Irishtown to begin a long and famous career first in the Garda A District and then throughout the metropolis.

It is interesting to note that the Sergeant with whom Jim had a sort of personality clash with in Irishtown was the same officer who, on a late winter's night in 1942, was detailed to inform a Ringsend lady that her seaman husband's boat had been sunk by a German U-boat and that he was missing, presumed drowned. He got up on his bike and in the lashings of rain against a ferocious, biting cold wind, he cycled out to the lady's house with the sad news. He arrived at the given address and going up to the hall door, knocked loudly. A woman stuck her head out of a first floor window. "Yes." "Are you the Widow Maloney?". "No, I am Mrs Maloney and my husband is at sea". "Well you're the Widow Maloney now as he is at the bottom of it" said the Sergeant, who then turned and hurried back to his station. There are numerous stories about the same Sergeant and even after only three months at Irishtown Jim Branigan had his share to tell.

It was around this time that Dublin's Animal Gangs were becoming notorious for their increasing violence and apparent contempt for the forces of law and order. It was all ahead of the young Jim Branigan.

CHAPTER 3

The Wild Forties and The Battle Of Baldoyle

Situated at the back of the Coombe opposite O'Keeffe's (the Knacker's Yard), Newmarket Garda Station was a sub-station to Kevin Street Garda Station and it was here that Jim Branigan started work in January 1936. There was a pig-yard beside the station and although the environment both inside and outside was not the greatest, Jim loved every minute of it there. The Garda authorities closed down the station in the spring of 1953 and moved the operation into Kevin Street. Newmarket Garda Station was later demolished and a modern, redbrick industrial unit now occupies the site.

As a young Garda stationed there he enjoyed the work, not finding it too onerous. He recalled those early days on the beat in Dublin:

"As a young Garda the tough work was not breaking up fights but dealing with gruesome accidents. On my first day on duty in the Coombe at six o'clock in the morning I tripped over a dead man in the street. A few weeks later at the same hour of day, in Thomas Street, I had to act as midwife to a woman who was walking to the Coombe Hospital to have a baby, but found that she could wait no longer. I ordered her to sit in a shop doorway and sent her husband, who had walked her three miles from the family home, to phone for an ambulance. While he was away the good woman gave birth. She had a boy and they both lived. It took me days to recover from the shock of delivering her baby. I found accidents and suicides very morbid to deal with".

It was not until 1939, however, that Jim's exploits as a Garda were first mentioned in the media. Under the headline 'Plucky Guard - Runaway Horse Caught' the following is an account of that incident from the Dublin Evening Mail of 14th February 1939:

'The timely and courageous action of Guard James Branigan averted a dangerous situation at Harold's Cross last evening. A horse drawing a cart bolted and the reins broke, leaving the driver helpless. The horse dashed across Leonard's Corner against the traffic lights and towards the Coombe, until Guard Branigan jumped for his head and caught him. No person was injured. Guard Branigan is a popular official of the Irish Amateur Boxing Association, and has acted as guide in the city to the majority of visiting boxing teams. He is a former Leinster Champion and has taken part successfully in several International contests'.

At the time law and order in the capital was a major headache for the authorities, with Dublin's infamous and notorious Animal Gangs reigning supreme. All during the 1930's these gangs thumbed their noses up at the Garda authorities, who were unable to contain them. Although the gangs did not attack innocent civilians, a growing number of innocent bystanders were injured, some seriously, in inter-gang

rivalries. When individual gang members committed burglaries and robberies the Garda's task in initiating investigations was quite often hampered by the gangs who would have no hesitation in doing battle with Gardaí, and indeed quite often did so, in order to prevent the apprehension of their members. The Garda's task in trying to contain these thugs was not helped by the leniency of the Irish judicial system of that time.

A much tougher approach to the menace which then appeared to threaten the very fabric of Irish society was adopted in 1940 and in a short period the Gardaí, with the help of Mr Justice Martin Maguire and Garda James Branigan, smashed the gangs forever and normality again returned to the streets of Dublin. Following two battles between rival Animal gangs, one at Baldoyle and one at Tolka Park, Drumcondra, the authorities dealt severely with those convicted of taking part in the disturbances and the Animal gangs then fizzled out.

The Battle of Baldoyle

The 'Battle of Baldoyle' as it was called, took place on 14th May 1940. It received massive media coverage and a few months later, when the trial began, it displaced the Second World War in the National newspaper headlines and on the radio. Some banner headlines of the case read: 'Amazing Racecourse Scene - Story Of Battle of Baldoyle' 'Stab Right Through Man's Body' 'Fracas at Baldoyle Racecourse' 'Knife and Bayonet in Battle' 'Man Thought Dead After Baldoyle Riot' 'Battle of Baldoyle Case - Eleven Men Found Guilty'.

Jim Branigan played a crucial role in the infamous Battle and at the trial spent over four hours in the witness box, 1½ hours giving evidence and 2½ hours under cross-examination. The following, in his own words, was his account of events on that day, which was an historic event in the annals of Irish criminal history:

I knew that there was a rumble on. The streets had been quiet when I came on duty earlier on that morning of May 14th 1940 but when I saw crowds of men gathering at street corners all around my beat, at Ashe Street, Francis Street and Meath Street, I sensed we were in for a rough day. I recognised them all and they were villains, many of whom had connections with the Coombe Animal Gang, but I was determined there would be no trouble in my area. In my five years in the old Newmarket Station I had made considerable headway in cleaning the streets of gang warfare. Many a time I had sailed into battle between razor-slashing thugs and disarmed them of such horrific weapons as bicycle tubes filled with razor blades.

Don't think I considered myself brave, I was not. In fact I always had a feeling of tension in the pit of my stomach when such a situation arose but I always went in just the same. It was my job. Looking back now after years of dealing with the toughest thugs in the city I know I was gifted with some indefinable magic or psychology which commanded respect from them, because even on that May morning before my reputation as a tough guy had spread, I found I was able to approach

the Animals, search them and talk down to them without being assaulted or subjected to verbal abuse.

I saw a bunch of them apparently conspiring on the corner of Ash Street. Some of them I had previously taken in and charged for petty and trivial offences, but that morning I knew it was different - they were going to beat somebody up. One of them, Mick, was a young married man in his twenties and unemployed. You will recall that this was during the war years and unemployment and depression was common in Ireland. Mick was in gay form, sporting a heavy blackthorn stick which I suspected was not going to be used as a walking aid. I pushed in among them. 'I hope you are not going to start any trouble today, lads' I growled in my toughest tone. 'We're going to a wedding' Mick smilingly replied. 'Is it usual to take a blackthorn to a wedding? I never heard of such a thing before' I said, then took the stick from him and searched his friends.

They were all clean. Mick said 'you need not be worried - it just involves a little bit of blackmail in the country, but nothing will happen in your area'. My suspicions were already aroused as the villains all had drink taken and I knew they could not afford to pay for it. I continued on my beat and about 100 yards away, another bunch of thugs was congregated. I found it strange that this mob was so affable. Usually they hurled abuse and shouted 'Rozzer' or 'Stick them up, Branigan' when they knew they were out of reach. Now they chatted me up and dallied in conversation with me as if to prove that there was going to be no bull today - bull was the Animal jargon for trouble. I was having none of their sweet talk and gave them a shake down, but they too were clean. I walked away and met Garda Tony Fahy. He was my senior in Newmarket Station, where he was jailer.

Two well-heeled big shots, not members of the gang, were with the mob as they poured out of the pub. This pair entered a taxi by themselves and other taxis were filled by a mob, a number of whom I had already challenged and searched, including Mick whose blackthorn stick I was still carrying. An old Ash Street lady, a tip-off source of mine, was standing in the doorway of her tenement home watching the action. She looked strained and tense. Reassuring her I said 'Don't worry, ma'am. There will no trouble here today'. 'They are going to have a bull at the races and somebody is going to be killed' she remarked.

Such a chance remark from a simple old woman with no standing in the street would have been ignored by many cops but I had learned to give credence to such people who could read the signs. 'What races?' I asked. 'The races, that's all I know' she said. I tossed these pointers around in my mind for over an hour and decided that these bodies were not playing games and that something serious was about to happen. I decided to report the matter to the Station Sergeant, Joe Reidy, who could be abrupt and contrary if he thought any of his men

were guilty of exaggeration or wasting his time. He looked over the newspapers to find out the venues for the race meetings in Ireland that day. He found nothing then but as a result of a phone call eventually discovered that Baldoyle Races were on. He alerted the sergeant in Howth, Sergeant Cox, to be on the lookout for trouble at the races. The message was transmitted to Superintendent Cronin of Howth, who briefed all his men responsible for security at Baldoyle that day to keep their eyes peeled for any gang warfare.

When the first movement was seen in the crowd which led to the attempted murder of two men and serious injuries to others, the Gardaí were in position to witness the action and prevent a full scale massacre which might have involved innocent bystanders. An added stroke of luck on our side was the presence of Detective Garda Pat McGillion of Kevin Street Garda Station. He was on leave that day and decided to spend it at the races. Seeing Animals from The Coombe area he kept them under observation and his evidence was vital in the Court case because he witnessed the whole fracas and the near-fatal stabbing. A man whom I later identified as one of the big shots who travelled with his friends in the taxi was seen by Pat McGillion plunging a knife into the body of a member of a north city gang.

When I reported for duty the following morning at six a written directive detailed me to meet Detective Inspector John King, Superintendent Cronin and other Gardaí to round up the suspects and bring them in. As I had taken note of the taxi car numbers we were able to pull in the drivers for questioning. They later said in court that they had taken the gang to Baldoyle and overheard them talking about a bull at the races. Every man whom I had seen at the street corners was taken into custody. Only those who could give an alibi that they were not at the races or in the area of the stabbing were released. We were left with twelve suspects. The fact that I saw and questioned these two groups of thugs and saw them leaving in the taxis, added to the evidence of the drivers, was vital in establishing the conspiracy charge which was later brought against all twelve.

It was known to the Garda authorities both before and after the trial - though it never emerged in evidence - that the Battle of Baldoyle took place over the 'hedging' of a bet with a south city bookmaker by a colleague on the north side. This meant that the north city bookmaker had placed a substantial bet on a 'dead cert' winner without handing over the cash. The result was that when the horse won, the south city bookmaker had to pay out the winnings, in the knowledge that if the horse had lost he would not get any money at all. Corrupt bookmakers who abounded in the city at the time always brought with them a retinue of muscle men to ensure that the hedged bet was not rejected. As far as can be ascertained the south side Animal Gang vendetta at Baldoyle was an act of revenge on behalf of the south city bookmaker who was the victim of the hedging.

The most graphic description of what took place that day during the Battle of Baldoyle was given by barrister Joseph McCarthy (later a Circuit Court Judge) who

led for the prosecution when the case came for hearing before the Central Criminal Court in Green Street Courthouse, scene of many famous trials including that of the bold Robert Emmet. He said that at Baldoyle the Gardaí saw a man covered with blood being chased by another man carrying a butcher's knife. The man endeavouring to escape had associations with a north city gang. He was knocked down, the Gardaí were knocked down and there were bottles flying in every direction. The Gardaí picked up from the battlefield a huge assortment of weapons.

The south city bookmaker, like a true general, was sitting in a car behind the racecourse's Peoples Stand in a place of safety. Earlier he had recruited his army in the Coombe, mobilised them in Carroll's public house and transported them by taxi to the racecourse. The Battle of Baldoyle was short, sharp and decisive. The man who had been seen running was brought away from the field of battle with a knife which having passed through his chest emerged out his back. It had pierced the sac containing his heart and even a portion of the heart itself and had also pierced a portion of his lungs. Evidence was also given during the trial that this man's friend, a north city bookmaker, had also been seriously injured - he had been stabbed in the groin with a rusty bayonet. Jim recalled the trial:

The amazing aspect of the whole trial for me was that the most seriously injured man, who was called by the State as a witness, had to be treated as hostile because he went back on a statement which he had made to the Gardaí while in hospital. This was my first real experience of a Mafia cardinal rule of 'omertha' or silence, which in gangster lingo means that only death and trouble awaits the canary who sings. This man, who had been a hairsbreadth away from death, refused to sign his name to the statement he made to the Gardaí, telling my senior officer: 'I do not want to make any statement; I will deal with this matter in my own way and in my own time'. In fact it was fear which motivated his silence. The Animals were dangerous and I never remember any of them singing in a Garda Station. In fact it was common knowledge among Gardaí that they were lousy singers - meaning they would never, ever squeal on anybody, even a rival Animal.

A taste of the power wielded by those who inspired the fear in these gougers and thugs was experienced by me when, before the trial, attempts were made to persuade me to keep my mouth shut. Threatening letters, which I gave to my Superintendent, threatening phone calls and the offer of a blank cheque in return for my silence were made. Needless to say these were all to no avail. Even more startling was an underhand attempt to have me removed from Newmarket to Dun Laoghaire station 'for my own safety'. I intimated to my senior officer that I would not take such a step without first having an interview with the Commissioner himself. Nothing more came of this matter, but it showed that the gangs had methods of persuasion which did not stop even at the force itself.

When eleven of the twelve men were convicted of conspiracy, wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm and unlawful

wounding, Mr Justice Martin Maguire commended the Gardaí for their outstanding work in the case, but my biggest thrill was when I received an award, a monetary one, from the Garda Commissioner for the part I played in bringing these criminals to justice. Other members of the Garda force including Pat Clifford received similar awards for helping crack the case, which was an extraordinary example of how a vicious street gang from the Coombe could be manipulated by two ruthless racketeers to commit such crimes and risk long jail terms for a few drinks and a couple of shillings with which they could back on horses at Baldoyle races.

The trial was covered in detail by the media and the following is an extract from the *Irish Times* of part of the proceedings at the trial:

Mr McCarthy said that on the morning of May 14 a number of men assembled in a licensed house in the Coombe. When they came out they were under the observation of the Guards. They went in taxis to Baldoyle. Asked by a Guard "What is the gang up to today?" one of them replied: "We are going to a wedding".

"But," said Mr McCarthy, "if he had said "We contemplate a funeral" he would be nearer the truth." M. told Garda Branigan that they were going to the country "about a little bit of blackmail". Asked why he carried a heavy stick, M. said he had a sore leg which however, he was unable to show to the Guards. This party in the taxis, the prosecution submitted, constituted "Hannigan's Army," an army recruited in the Coombe, mobilised in a licensed house, transported by taxis, armed with weapons such as the fork of a bicycle (produced), primed and fortified by drink, and was a real equivalent of "the 24 fighting men and a couple of gosoons of Slattery's Mounted Foot" immortalised by Percy French. The Chief of Staff who mobilised the troops and gave them directions was W.

At Baldoyle the Guards saw one man running away covered with blood, chased by a man carrying a butcher's knife in his hand. Towell was the man endeavouring to escape. He was knocked, the guards were knocked, and bottles were flying in all directions. The Guards arrested six men after the riot and picked up from the field an assortment of weapons, including a sword and a handmade dagger (produced), knuckle-dusters, tyre levers and a brake. "H., like a true general, was sitting in a motor car behind the People's Stand in a place of safety" said Mr McCarthy.

The trial captured the attention of the whole of Dublin for its duration and the Second World War seemed of little significance to the city judging by the intense media coverage it received. The trial ended with eleven men being found guilty by a jury before Mr Justice Martin Maguire on charges of conspiracy, wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm and unlawful wounding.

The following extract from the *Dublin Evening Mail* gives an account of the final stages of the case under the headline 'Ten Years for Cold-Blooded Crimes - Judge'.

Sentences were passed by Mr Justice Martin Maguire in the Central Criminal Court today in the case in which eleven young Dublin men were convicted of charges arising out of a fracas at Baldoyle Racecourse last May in the course of which two men were seriously wounded. While the sentences ranging from three to ten years penal servitude were being passed two women collapsed and had to be assisted out of Court.

Det Officer D McHugh said that there was a gang in the district from which the prisoners came for a number of years. The Garda were pressed to the limits of their resources to contain the gang. Mr Justice Maguire, addressing the prisoners, said that the crimes for which they had been convicted had been carefully planned and organised and had been carried out with cold-blooded and malicious determination. They were fortunate that they had not been charged with murder. They had used

savage weapons and had inflicted serious wounds. In one case a knife or bayonet or some similar instrument had been driven through a man's lungs in the region of the heart. In the other case a similar instrument had been driven through a man's thigh in the region of the groin. In both cases the men were in danger of death for a considerable period. Were it not for the surgical and nursing skill which they had received, their lives might had been despaired of.

It was a matter of deep regret to him (the Judge) that up to this moment there had been no apology or expression of regret for the outrageous offences perpetrated at Baldoyle on that day. The array of weapons removed from the scene of what can only be described as a battle was of deep concern to the Court. There were so many weapons on the field of battle that Garda transport had to be arranged to remove the implements.

Roddy Kirwan, who spent his career in the Circuit Court and was a long-time Registrar in the Central Criminal Court, often relayed colourful stories of the great trials in Green Street to the author. Of the famous Battle of Baldoyle he recalled: "I will never forget the scenes on that eventful day - never in all my life did I see such emotional distress outside a Courthouse. I have never seen such consternation and hysteria in the Courts as I saw the day the Battle of Baldoyle combatants were sentenced".

The Battle of Tolka Park

The other famous (or infamous) battle in which Jim played a prominent part was the Battle of Tolka Park which took place on 22nd March 1942 during a match at the Drumcondra AFC soccer grounds at Tolka Park on the Richmond Road, off Dublin's Dorset Street. The battle was the culmination of seething animosity between the Stafford Street gang and the Ash Street gang - rival Animal gangs.

Jim Branigan noticed on the morning of 22nd March the movement from the Coombe area of the majority of the members of the Ash Street Animal gang. He made a few inquiries and after some considerable detective work notified his superiors of a possible serious confrontation at Tolka Park where a soccer match was taking place between two teams called Mountain View and St Stephen's United (at the trial later it was stressed that the teams had no sympathy with what occurred or were in any way involved in it). The authorities sent reinforcements to Tolka Park but not before one of the gangs had gained entry as a result of a turnstile man having left his stile. The other gang, it was believed, had gained access by travelling down the Tolka River, which flows parallel to the Richmond Road, heavily armed on a makeshift raft, and scaling the walls.

Ten minutes into the second half the rival gangs set into one another with knives, bayonets, flagpoles and assorted weaponry. In a fast, vicious battle which resulted in, as far as the authorities were aware, four injured persons, with one so seriously injured that a match official thought that he was dead. As was the case in a lot of these Animal gang fights, an innocent spectator at the match was stabbed. The Gardaí, as a result of Jim Branigan's alertness, were quick on the scene and brought a speedy end to the battle, which also gained prominent attention in the media. The trial of some of those involved attracted considerable attention and for its duration also relegated the Second World War to the back pages of the Irish National newspapers. The following story was given at the trial of the events of that day by some of the match officials present on the football pitch:

Arthur Smith, a linesman, said that when about ten minutes of the game had been played he saw a crowd of men chasing one another behind the Drumcondra end goal. These men carried sticks and bars. He saw one sword and heard spectators shouting Stafford Street and Ash Street. Bleeding from the head, a man was carried on to the pitch by players. He asked to be let down and then fell out of his standing. **Frederick Dunne**, another linesman, said he saw a man who had a knife get a blow of a stick or bar and was knocked down. He saw a man unconscious on the ground with blood pouring from his head. There were about two hundred spectators present in the stadium. **Michael Corcoran**, the referee, said he saw spectators running out in great confusion. He stopped the game and players brought an injured man into the dressing room. **Peter Penrose**, stile man, said he first thought the injured man was dead. While bandaging this man on a table in the pavilion another man came near them with a bayonet and had to be talked out of trying to get at the injured man with the weapon. He also prevented another man who was holding what looked like the leg of a table from coming through a window. He told the Court that 'to be straight he was frightened'.

Banner headlines such as 'Hell and Confusion at Tolka Park' 'Judge On Terror at Tolka Park' 'Gang War At Tolka Park' 'Man Thought Dead After Tolka Riot' and 'Battle At Tolka Park' publicised the trial. The following account of the end of the trial is taken from the *Dublin Evening Mail* of 22nd June 1942:

'Mr Justice Conor Maguire, in the Central Criminal Court today, imposed sentences on five young men convicted on Thursday last of conspiracy, riot and assault at Tolka Park on 22 March. The Judge stated that the jury in finding the accused guilty, could not come to any other decision. It was clear from the evidence that the accused must have gone to the football match armed with weapons of such a nature that not only were they liable to cause injury but could lead to fatal results. What the origins of the enmity were they had not been told but reading between the lines it appeared to be something deep-rooted and growing until its culmination in the plan to get their own back on those other men'.

The Battles of Baldoyle and Tolka Park heralded the demise of the notorious Animal gangs but also catapulted a young Garda, James C Branigan, to the forefront in the ongoing battle against violence and crime. He received a commendation from Mr Justice Maguire for his crucial part in the Baldoyle case and some years later he was rewarded by his own authorities when he was assigned, on plain clothes duty, to the 'Prevention and Detection of Street Nuisances' Section on 1st December 1950, an appointment which pleased him no end and which fitted in with his deep love and knowledge of his native city. There was no doubt that Jim's crucial detective work in both incidents alerted the authorities just in time so that swift, decisive action could be taken and accordingly lives were saved. It was widely acknowledged at the time that his police work, particularly in the Baldoyle case, resulted in the fact that no loss of life took place and this was a factor in the commendation given by Mr Justice Maguire.

It should be mentioned that when order had been restored at Baldoyle the Gardaí had to commission a truck to take away the assorted weaponry which lay on the field of battle, which included a fork of a bicycle pared to a sharp point, knives, bayonets, chains, knuckle-dusters, potatoes filled with Northlight razor blades, pokers, hurley sticks, pick-axe handles, hammers, tomahawks, hatchets, garden-spade handles spiked with either nails or barbed wire and open razors! A Detective Inspector John

King handled the case and his brilliant direction led to the successful conclusion of the matter by the Courts. The heavy sentences meted out to the Animal gang members, particularly the ones who engaged in the Battle of Bald Doyle, was the major contributing factor in the demise of the Animal gangs.

Of course the Battle of Bald Doyle was not Jim Branigan's biggest event in that war-torn decade; the biggest occasion was, of course, his wedding day when in April 1941 he married Elizabeth Armstrong "a good Irish Presbyterian, in the 'Leave it to Missus O'Brien' church in High Street, Dublin". And who better to perform the ceremony than one of the most famous of all Dublin characters - Father Flash Kavanagh, who was well-known in the theatre world and who was most popular for his ten-minute mass. On that June morning in 1941 little did Jim and Flash know but that one day they would both be famous and loved throughout their own native city of Dublin. Jim's best-man on that occasion was Garda John Montgomery and Elizabeth's sister Nora was bridesmaid.

Jim had met Elizabeth ten months previously when she was an employee in the office of Kelly's timber yard in Thomas Street. There had been a strike at the premises in the summer of 1940 and he was detailed to the yard in plain clothes, lest there be any trouble. Jim reported to the firm's security man, a Mr Summers. After three or four days Mr Summers introduced Jim to Elizabeth as she was passing by on her way out to lunch with the other office staff. That introduction led to romance which led to their eventual happy day courtesy Flash Kavanagh and Elizabeth Armstrong, who became Jim's beloved 'Chelsea' Branigan. The happy couple moved into a modest semi-detached house at Drimnagh Road, where they both lived until Jim's retirement in 1973. They had four children by their marriage, Alick, Helen, Declan and Denise.

During the 1940's Jim began to gain national prominence as a boxing referee. Probably his first major tournament as a referee was an Ireland versus Hungary International in 1937 in Drogheda, County Louth - the first International Amateur Boxing tournament to be held in that town. From then on Jim took a more active role in that aspect of the sport and following his retirement from the ring as a boxer he pitched all his energies into the area of refereeing and training in the sport he loved so much. After Jim Branigan, Dick Hearns and their peers retired from the ring the GBC virtually put up the shutters, going through a long lean spell. But thanks to the energies of Jim and Chief Superintendent P O'Carroll, President of the IABA, the GBC was revived and came back into their stride in late-1940 so that by the end of January 1941 they were able to defeat a strong RUC selection by four bouts to two. The RUC were always happy to meet the Gardaí in such tournaments and Jim made a considerable number of friends in Northern Ireland as a result of his involvement in the sport. The Northerners liked the competitions too and in the *Fermanagh Times* of Thursday 31st January 1946 due credit was given to Jim, who by now was getting frequent media exposure in Northern Ireland, when they mentioned that 'no amount of praise would compensate our good friend Garda Branigan, who fosters our needs by supplying talent from Eire'.

As a trainer with the GBC Jim was very strict on discipline. "He wouldn't let you burn the candle at both ends" said Tom Troy, a Garda based for many years in Store Street and who was well-known for his involvement in the famous (Gloucester)

Diamond seven-a-sides of the late 1960's and early 1970's. "While you were training he wouldn't let you go out to a dance late and would keep his eye on you to make sure you weren't drinking" recalled Tom, who was National Junior Heavyweight Champion in 1947. Jim's great natural intuition for coping on to things was nicely portrayed by Tom in the following two incidents. One of these was in 1946 when Ireland was playing England in an International at Dundalk, County Louth. The day before the tournament Tom stayed up all night playing 'Slippery Sam' - a card game he had never played before or since. Jim called for Tom on the day of the fight at 8.15 am at Pearse Street Garda Station. Tom thought Jim suspected something but didn't worry because "he couldn't prove a thing". The team made their way to Dundalk and after a light lunch were about to go for a brisk walk before some training when Jim went over to Tom and quietly said "you go to bed and I'll call you at six for your tea". Tom did so and as a result he got his vitality back. He went on to win his bout for Ireland.

The other incident was when they were travelling to Enniskillen, again in 1946, for a Garda versus RUC tournament. The train stopped in the middle of nowhere and the lads thought it had broken down. But what actually happened was that the communication cord had been pulled in the toilet next to the compartment where the Garda team were sitting. When so informed by the Railway personnel, Jim went outside with one of the GBC party and shortly afterwards the train was on its way. Jim had been able to guess who it was and admonish the culprit, as well as collecting the fine for the misdeed. But the team never found out who pulled that cord as Jim kept it a secret between himself and the miscreant.

In October 1947 Jim went to Sweden as trainer to the Irish team and overnight became the darling of the Swedish press, being featured prominently in the *Goteborgs-Tidningen* and the *Goteborgs-Posten* of the 7th and 9th October and other national dailies in Sweden. On the policing front, for the remainder of the 1940's he was involved in only one more big case, which finished up in the Central Criminal Court. The case resulted from a 'Commando Raid' on two toss schools by six young men, all members of a third toss school, because they considered them to be rivals, in the Kimmage-Crumlin area on Sunday 29th March 1946. Toss schools are as old as the city of Dublin and were introduced here by the Danes. It is commonly called 'pitch and toss' and is an illegal game that is played around the city still. Two men were stabbed in the raids which took place on toss schools at Green Lane and Captain's Road and following prosecution by the State a number of men received terms of imprisonment ranging from twelve to eighteen months.

During the war one of the scarcer of commodities, for which there was a ready demand on the black market, was cigarettes. Some funny incidents regarding cigarettes took place at that time and this was one which Jim Branigan told that took place in his own area. It involved a smart-alick named Nedser who was mad for cigarettes, preferring them to his dinner or anything else you could wish to name...

A certain undertaker was taking over a premises in my district in 1944. It was a dilapidated old shop. He was just moving in and the old lady who owned the shop had not yet moved out. Nedser waited outside the old shop until he saw the new owner leaving. He went into the shop and asked the old lady 'Can you give me the customary five

cigarettes?' She said: 'Sorry sir, no cigarettes'. 'Is the new man in?' asked Nedser. 'No, he is just gone out' she said. 'That's all right, I wanted a bit of business with him' said Nedser. As the old lady saw that there was money in it for herself if she got an order for the new owner, she said: 'Have you trouble, son?' 'There is a bit of trouble at home . . . the old lady is dead' said Nedser. 'Lord, have mercy on her' said the old woman. 'I'll come back and see the man himself when he is in', said Nedser. 'Give me your name and address and I'll send him up when he comes back. What did you want?' she asked. 'I wanted a nice bit of furniture to finish off the old lady in style', said Nedser. 'Go in here at the back, see what you want and tell me. There is a number on everything'.

Nedser selected the dearest coffin he could find and an equally expensive habit. When he came out the old lady said: 'You were looking for cigarettes and seeing your trouble, maybe I can help you'. 'That's great' said Nedser, 'give me the customary five'. 'You'll be wanting more than that' she said, 'with all the visitors coming to the house and all'. 'That's right', said Nedser, 'I will. Give me as many as you can spare'. 'Would fifty be enough?'. 'That's grand and if I want more, sure I can come back' said Nedser, putting his hand in his pocket. He paid her for the fifty and was going off. 'Come 'ere, son' said the old woman, 'you never told me where to send the boss when he comes in'. 'That's all right' said Nedser, 'He needn't come at all now, you're just after saving a life', and off he went.

After the war commodities became more available and anecdotes like the above were consigned to memory. Jim Branigan was full of such stories though and another funny yarn dating from the war years which he related concerned a painter called Joe who was painting an advertisement for Bovril on a timber hoarding in Dolphin's Barn, Rialto. While painting the 'O' in Bovril the ladder went through the plywood hoarding and the unfortunate man was killed. The painter's mates organised a collection for his burial only to discover that they had money left over. So they decided to buy a headstone and had the following inscription made:

Here lies the body of painter Joe
He died while painting the letter O
It may be for worse, it may be for better
But he went as he came, through a hole in a letter.

Alas for the mates, however, Joe's relatives would not allow the poetic headstone to be erected on the grave.

Immediately after the ending of World War Two, another war began in Dublin ... the war against begging. And when the campaign began Jim Branigan was the first to bring a case before the Courts. It was on 29th August 1945 and he had arrested a George Nicholls of no fixed abode and charged him before Judge Lennon. Jim gave evidence in Court that when he arrested Nicholls he found in his possession the sum of £20-10s-11d (€26.10) made up as follows: 34 two-shilling pieces; 6 half-crowns; 206 one-shilling pieces; 185 sixpences; 102 threepenny pieces; 46 pennies and 3

half-pennies. Jim also informed the Court that Nicholls had an account in the Provincial Bank, College Green and that he regularly went door-to-door in the South Circular Road area, begging. The Justice said he would give the people living on Jim's patch a break from the accused and sentenced him to a month in Mountjoy Prison. The money was forfeited. "Justice, you would need a wheelbarrow to take this money away" remarked Jim on leaving the Court.

With the forties coming to an end, a new decade was approaching, bringing in a new era and a new fad ... the Teddy Boy craze.

CHAPTER 4

The Teddy Boy Era

Nobody in Ireland would have believed, in the last days of the nineteen forties, that the next decade would produce the King of Rock and Roll, the film (or movie) *Rock Around the Clock* and the Teddy Boy cult, and that the new and exciting young social scene would make Jim 'Lugs' Branigan a household name throughout the country and a legend in his own lifetime.

An particular incident in the summer of 1950 Jim recalled. He was on duty at Christchurch Place at 2.00 am on Sunday 23rd July when he saw two Crumlin men across the street, one of whom had a bucket and whitewash brush in his hand. He approached them and on the wall of an ESB transformer station, which used to be situated in the middle of the road at the junction of Christchurch Place and Werburg Street, near Leo Burdock's famous fish-and-chip shop, saw the words 'Yanks Hands'. On being asked what they were doing one of the men pointed to the transformer and said "we were just doing that". "What is that?" asked Jim. "Yanks hands off Korea" said the man. "You are Communists" replied Jim, who then yanked them off to Newmarket Garda Station. They were charged and were subsequently bound to the peace. The Justice gave them back their paint and brush. "Don't go painting slogans on public property again" Jim shouted aloud to the two lads as they left the Court. "Don't worry, Mr. Branigan, we won't", they replied.

Dublin in the early 1950's was a rough city. Indeed, some people might say that it still is, and probably worse; District Judge Bob Ó hUadhaigh maintained that it "always was, is and always will be a violence-ridden city". In any event the situation in and around the Patrick Street area got so serious that the authorities were compelled to put a Sergeant and three Gardaí on duty there every weekend to deal with unruly scenes and it was not 'uncommon for riotous crowds of people to gather in disorderly fashion there'. One of the first of such incidents took place in June 1952. Jim and his colleagues went to break up a fracas in Patrick Street when a large crowd surrounded the Gardaí. Jim named out loud quite a few of the troublemakers in the crowd and these quickly retreated, leaving the Gardaí free to make their arrests. On 17th November 1952 Jim found himself doing for the first time something which he later did on countless occasions - looking for somebody's ear! On that night a young man from Bangor Road, Crumlin had been assaulted at Harcourt Road with a bottle and as a result an inch and a quarter of his ear was severed and could not be found. Quickly on the scene, Jim had the injured man taken to hospital and commenced a frantic search for the missing portion of the ear. He called for assistance but unfortunately could not locate the ear-part or the weapon used in the assault. He got his man, though, who received a six-month sentence for the assault on 18th December 1952.

With high unemployment and little or no opportunity, Dublin in the early 1950's was a very depressed city. It was in this environment that the Dublin Unemployed Association was born and there then followed numerous confrontations between members and according to Jim "and non-members and gougers" of that Association and the Gardaí during those years. One of the first of these confrontations was on 19th August 1953 when a gentleman stood up on a box in Ross Road saying loudly

"As a member of the Unemployed Association I want every unemployed man to stand by me, no matter what I do". The Gardaí were quickly on the scene whereupon the attitude of the speaker and the crowds became belligerent. Then the big, heavy 'Lugs' Branigan appeared. When he arrived there was a crowd of five to six hundred people spread right across the road in a solid mass, preventing any movement of traffic. Jim waded in and to the surprise of his colleagues he arrested the speaker. While taking him into custody Jim named numerous individuals in the crowd, saying "if there's any trouble I'll hold you responsible". To his colleagues' amazement Jim effected the arrest and dispersed the crowd without violence. A couple of days later another member of the Unemployed Association hopped up on a makeshift podium in Meath Street, calling on people to demand both a job and their Constitutional rights. Within minutes a crowd of two to three hundred people had gathered. Jim came on the scene, pushed in through the crowd and looking up at the speaker shouted loudly "Sure your grandfather had a conviction for stealing hay in the twenties". Straight away the orator lost his credibility and the crowd quietly and quickly dispersed, leaving just Jim and the speaker. Like the Ross Road speaker, this one was charged and convicted for breach of the peace and fined twelve shillings and sixpence (80 cent).

In those days any rabble-rouser or any fracas would attract crowds in their hundreds in the Coombe, Patrick Street, Meath Street and Rialto areas of the city. On 5th September 1954 while on duty in a patrol car Jim was called to go to a row in the Longford Street area. With Gardaí Peter Lee and Ciaran MacCready he dispersed the crowd there and while returning through Golden Lane was informed by radio that there was another row in Patrick Street. When they got there they found that a noisy, hostile crowd of about five hundred people had gathered. It was on this occasion that Jim got his first challenge to a duel in his Garda career. He waded in and got to the main protagonists in the crowd and while dispersing these troublesome elements saw a man jostling around with others. "Come on, Joe, it's time you went home" said Jim. "Come on and fight me for the championship I won; you're afraid" replied the bold Joe. When Jim tried to put this man into the patrol car another man jumped on him. With some force and effort he got this other man into the patrol car and arrested and charged him. During the Court case, when this man's solicitor put it to Jim that he was too rough on his 'little' client and that he, Jim, was a powerful man, he replied from the witness stand "Yes, I am and your client is one of the most powerful boys I ever saw. He would win any championship for power. If I had not been as rough as I was he would have broken all the windows in the car and kicked the driver". Jim won his case and suspended sentences were imposed on those involved in the disturbances - only after Jim had asked the Justice not to send them to prison as, if properly directed, they could become model citizens.

Around this time Jim was a very busy referee and the following extract from the Times Pictorial for the week ending 14th March 1953 gives a summary of this side of his life:

'One of the most popular and cheerful of Irish boxing referees is six-footer Garda Jim Branigan, stationed at Newmarket, Dublin. Jim is one of the most prolific referees and in this capacity he has travelled around Ireland and across water. A referee since 1934, Jim, since September 19 last year, has refereed 304 contests, which must be a record in any country. He reached this total on Friday when his 'bag' was three in the Ireland -v- Austria encounter at the National Stadium'.

In 1954 Jim went on the trail of an unknown person who was breaking shop windows, resulting in him apprehending and successfully prosecuting the guilty culprit. The banner headline in the *Evening Herald* of 12th August 1954 aptly summed up the case: 'Man who Loves to hear the Crash of Glass'. After Jim had presented his finely prepared case to the Court, the man, of no business and no fixed address, pleaded guilty and told the Court that he 'just loved the crash of glass, one could hit a man and there would be no sound but there was a lovely noise when one broke glass'. The Justice imposed a custodial sentence and the case of the broken windows was solved, bringing a smashing career to an ignominious end.

In September 1954 Jim was involved in an unusual incident which was described by the newspapers as 'Commando tactics by Guards'. The case arose out of an assault on a publican at his premises in Patrick Street. When the Gardaí, headed by Jim, arrived after a tip-off they found the premises locked. Jim kicked and pounded at the front door but could not gain entry. So, commando style, he sent Garda Grehan up the drainpipe. After a few minutes, the front door still hadn't been opened from inside, and he sent Gardaí Shannon and Cregan up the pipe and into the premises. The reinforcements having being pressed into service, the front door was then opened, and Jim went in and order was restored. A man who by his own admission 'could drink thirty pints a day no problem' was arrested and sentenced to four months imprisonment for assault. "I think he survived his problems of thirst while in Mountjoy before, Justice" remarked Jim in Court.

Peter Lee was a Garda who came to Kevin Street in 1954 and during his time there was involved in innumerable incidents with Jim such as the Patrick Street/Longford Street one just mentioned. The author met Peter, along with Ciaran MacCready when both men were stationed in the Garda Depot, Phoenix Park, to get some stories about Jim. At the end of the interview both men were full of laughter and they really enjoyed reminiscing about the "good ould times with the Bran". Peter Lee recalled that Jim identified with the younger members especially those engaged in sport and would have his tea with them in the station. Ciaran MacCready, a great Garda boxer in his early days, confirmed this. Ciaran benefited from the training and Jim's guidance for he was runner-up in the European Police Championships in 1954 and 1955 and fought in nine Internationals, winning four, drawing one and losing four. He knocked out Walter Denninger, the German State Champion, in one such International. Peter and Ciaran, along with a Johnny Fields, spent a lot of time working with Jim during the 1950's. Peter recalled going to a row outside the Bleeding Horse public house at the top of Camden Street, in which a man died. Jim waded in and grabbed the busiest of the street-fighters. Jim stuck out his chest and said to the thug "bump up against that and die happy." The gentleman ran off but Peter nabbed him and arrested him.

A feature of city-centre police life at that time, recalled Ciaran, was the appearance from nowhere of massive crowds who would be hostile to the Gardaí. One minute it would be all quiet and in an instant fifty, one hundred, two, three, four and five hundred and more of a mob could turn up. This phenomenon was probably the result of the heavy concentration of public houses in the area - for example there were six in Patrick Street alone and over two dozen in the Coombe, Meath Street and Francis Street area, and this contributed greatly to the rowdyism. Ciaran recalled one of the demonstrations of the aforementioned Dublin Unemployed

Association: "we were at the top of Fishamble Street, in battle lines, facing about six hundred people who were chanting 'We want work' with a fair proportion, some of whom were well known to us, chanting 'we won't work'. A confrontation was inevitable by the time reinforcements, including the Bran, arrived. The Bran stuck in, naming the main agitators and warning them to leave the scene. After a few minutes and to my great surprise and relief the crowd had dispersed". Ciaran regarded Jim as "a brilliant name-namer, he could put a name on a man, his family and grandparents. This tremendous knowledge of people was an important part in Jim's ability to break up rows".

Having travelled quite a lot around with Jim on the boxing scene, Peter recalled: "He was terrific at organising exhibitions, tournaments and events. He used to take me to the house shows at Trinity College and he ran them without a hitch. I enjoyed officiating, ringing the bell and the general crack. After the first few exhibitions at Trinity I never missed a town". Both Peter and Ciaran highlighted Jim's commitment and contribution to the sport. At Internationals in the National Stadium one would see all the personalities of the boxing world but at a schoolboy, Vocational School or country tournament they wouldn't be seen - except for Jim: "he had an inexhaustible energy. He was always invited and never refused an invitation to the smaller provincial towns. There he attracted great crowds because of his reputation. He did wonders for the sport throughout the country".

Peter and Ciaran described Jim in much the same words as many ordinary Dubs, former criminals, Gardaí and boxing personalities: "Branno had a great humanity and feeling about him. He was very kind to victims of violence. If he saw any good in a person he would speak up for them in Court and help them. He walked the streets trying to fix young lads up in jobs and set up quite a few tearaways. He was a great, big, kind, soft man". Ciaran told a story about when, in the early 1960's he was a Sergeant based in Kilmainham. On seeing a suspicious man in the old CIE harbour he approached him. The man fled with Ciaran in hot pursuit. The man ran into Rafter's Dairy Yard at the back of the Lyric Cinema and disappeared. Just at that moment a squad car arrived - it was Jim. Ciaran gave him a brief description of the suspect. Jim then went to a particular spot in the yard and roared "Come on out here Whitie, I know you're there". The suspect appeared and gave himself up.

The deep knowledge of the criminal and unruly elements in the city was the result of Jim's genuine interest in the people he was dealing with. All his former colleagues testified that if he felt there was even an ounce of goodness in a person - even if that person had a criminal record - he would tap that goodness in an effort to get the person to go straight. So in order to ascertain whether a young lad was worth a break Jim would visit the home and acquaint himself with the family background. Nine times out of ten he would end up walking the streets to fix the lad up with work and by the time the case came up for hearing before the Courts the lad would be fixed up in a steady job. He spoke up for the lad in the witness box and the Courts nearly always backed his judgement.

The efforts of 'the Bran' on behalf of those with whom he came into contact on the streets were deeply appreciated by Dublin's working class and his interest and good work was not lost for he never remembered a young lad who got a chance letting him down. This humanity brought him into many a Dublin home and he must have

had more cups of tea in more households of Dublin. Indeed, one mother of a family, all of whose members were at one time or another engaged in petty crime said that "Mr Branigan always got a cup of tea in this house before he lagged any of me boys". He often said that whenever he called to a house to execute a warrant, even if it was at 2.00 am or 5.00 am in the morning, a mother or father would say "come on in and have a cup of tea while I go up stairs to tell Johnny to get ready". Ciaran and Peter recalled that whenever Jim went to make such an arrest nobody ever tried to escape while he was having that cup of tea and chat with the parents, for they knew that Jim would speak up for their offspring in Court. At the end of the interview, Ciaran and Peter gave a particular mention to the apple tarts which Jim brought in without fail every single night - home cooked by his wife Elizabeth.

Battle of Dolphin's Barn

This battle was not as big as those at Baldoyle Racecourse and Tolka Park but nevertheless it was serious and but for the intervention of Jim Branigan there could have been casualties among the Gardaí involved in the incident. The Battle of Dolphin's Barn took place on Saturday 4th June 1955 and was described by the 6th June 1955 edition of the *Evening Herald* as follows: 'There was a short but decisive engagement between Gardaí and youths at Dolphin's Barn on Saturday night'. The battle followed an incident where a plate glass window had been smashed. Two Gardaí, J Duffy and P Casey heard the crash and immediately afterwards a number of youths came rushing towards them and they grabbed two of them, who were Teddy Boys. A struggle ensued between the two Gardaí and the two youths, with the youths calling for assistance. A crowd of about three hundred gathered, many of them hostile. One of the youths said to the crowd 'Come to our assistance now. In two years the Russians will be here and we will deal with these fellows'. Some of the crowd became very aggressive and stones and bricks were thrown but Garda reinforcements under Jim Branigan arrived on the scene and dispersed the crowd within three minutes. The two youths refused to get into the meat-waggon and were calling on the brave men of the Barn, now in full flight, to help them. Jim Branigan managed to get them into the vehicle and away from the scene, though the Gardaí had to use some force for Jim admitted to the District Justice in the subsequent Court proceedings that one of the youths was "tapped with a baton and had to be treated in hospital".

The beginning of the 'Teddy Boy' era arrived in 1955 and the Battle of Dolphin's Barn was one of the first cases involving Teddy Boys to come before the Courts. Jim had countless Court cases involving Teddy Boys from then on and he referred to such types in Court as being "of the Teddy Boys class". In October of that same year he charged a number of men with creating a disturbance outside the Palm Court ballroom. They stated in Court that they were venting their anger at being refused admission to the dance hall because they had soapy soled shoes and tight trousers. In Court Jim referred to them as being Teddy Boys. The case got prominent media exposure that resulted in Jim being hauled before the Garda Commissioner when he was informed, to his utter astonishment, that officially there were no Teddy Boys in Ireland. This was a directive from the political arena and he was not to use the name Teddy Boy again in Court as there was no such undesirable youth cult at all in Ireland. A couple of days after this he had another group of Teddy Boys charged

with assault and when the District Justice inquired "I suppose you would call these Teddy Boys, Garda?" Jim cleverly replied "I couldn't, but you could".

Around this time Jim was involved in a couple of incidents while off duty. One was at Inchicore where he was running a carnival with Felix Cooper in Saint Patrick's Athletic Football Ground at Richmond Park. Some tough eggs arrived from Ballyfermot looking for trouble and were confronted by Jim and Felix while disturbing the peace and were "given a couple of clips". The following day the boys' fathers arrived down at the carnival to lodge a complaint but ended by giving a donation for the IABA to Harry McKeon, Secretary of the Association. Another incident arose during an open-air tournament in Dunshaughlin, County Meath. Jim was refereeing a bout between a well-known jockey and another Meath man when midway through the first round they started to clinch. After numerous warnings they continued to clinch and in the second round Jim warned them "look boys, it's the last time I'm going to warn you. If you don't box like men I will disqualify you both". In the third round they clinched and Jim said "break" and split them. One of the lads shouted "you f..... bastard". Jim replied "You're disqualified, go to your corner". The boy promptly obeyed, whereupon the Parish Priest had a quiet word with him on the use of foul language. "You shouldn't have lost your temper" said the PP. "Ah, look, Father" remarked the boy, pointing out teeth-marks on his breast to Jim, "he bit me on me bleedin' tit". This was probably one of the only occasions that Jim had made a mistake in the ring.

Jim often ran carnivals for the IABA and on many occasions would cycle home after a busy day with the cash receipts in his possession, sometimes carrying as much as seven or eight hundred pounds - the notes in his pockets and the coins, silver and copper, in a plastic bag fastened to the back carrier of his bicycle. One record that he was particularly proud of was that of his long tenure as Treasurer of the County Dublin Board of the IABA, a position which he held from his first election to the office in 1937 right up to 1984, when he retired completely from the boxing scene at seventy-four years of age.

He first became a member of the County Dublin Board when, on the instructions of GBC Club Secretary Tim Healy he represented the Gardaí on that Board. By his retirement from the boxing scene in 1984 he had spent fifty-three years on the Board. Harry McKeon, Secretary of the IABA at the time of Jim's retirement from the boxing stage, put on record "the famous Garda's unique commitment to Irish amateur boxing". Jim was also a member of the Leinster Council, IABA, having been elected to it in 1934/5. After a couple of years he was elected Treasurer of the Leinster Council and held that position for twenty-seven years until he was "beaten in a hard-fought and fair election". Such devotion to the sport has been described by the both the Irish and International media as totally unparalleled in the long history of Irish Amateur boxing and Jim has been given due credit and recognition by the boxing world for his dedication and commitment.

Jim developed a new habit at the end of this year when he bagged the first charge sheet of the new-year on 1st January 1956. Having refereed an Irish boxing tour of Romania over the Christmas period, he arrived back just in time to take up duty on 31st December 1954. Shortly before midnight a number of youths were refused admission to the Olympic Ballroom in Pleasant Street and when the bells began to

ring-in the new-year at midnight the youths flung a load of bangers into the entrance of the ballroom where patrons were queuing, causing some consternation. He arrived on the scene and arrested two of the culprits, in the process gaining the honour of having the first charge sheet for Kevin Street Garda Station for 1955. From then on he had the first charge sheet of the new-year. Later, on the formation of the Riot Squad in 1964, he bagged the first criminal charge sheet in Store Street, Pearse Street, the Bridewell, Mountjoy, Fitzgibbon Street and Cabra Garda stations for every new-year.

It was common knowledge in the force that Jim would often go to some lengths to have the first charge sheet of the new-year. For example, if a New Year's Eve was quiet and he had arrested a lawbreaker at say ten o'clock at night, he would drive around the city with his client for a couple of hours, charging the always willing passenger at a minute past midnight. According to a former colleague this unusual practice was a yearly event and the criminal gladly acquiesced in Jim's ambitions. As one criminal said: "after all, there was something in it for us too, for we knew that a certain amount of newspaper publicity went with being the first lawbreakers of a new year. If you were lagged by Lugs you were guaranteed good exposure". This interesting pastime was successfully kept up by Jim until his retirement from the force. George Rhatigan, based in Kevin Street, recalled that in the station "you had to hold the Number 1 charge sheet for Jim, you just had to".

Officially there may have been no Teddy Boys in Ireland and this was certainly the line taken by the powers-that-be, but in reality it was a different picture and practically every night from 1955 until the early 1960's the newspapers and radio featured news of violence, assaults and aggravation that was part of the Teddy Boy cult. Jim was very fair in his dealings with Teddy Boys and in one particular incident in October 1955 he was in charge of a case where a young man was accused of assaulting an attendant at the Four Provinces Ballroom, later the Television (TV) Club in Harcourt Street. In evidence Jim referred to the accused being decked out in Edwardian costume. The Circuit Court Judge in the case, Judge McCarthy, remarked that "Edwardian costume was perhaps a more mellifluous way of saying that the person so described was a Teddy Boy". Jim replied "my lips are sealed, Judge, as I have been given a direction that there are no Teddy Boys in this country". When finishing his evidence, however, he said that the accused had never been in trouble before, was a hard worker and a member of a very respectable family. He also added that the ballroom bouncer had referred to the accused as 'a hardchaw' but from his knowledge of the defendant this was just not true: "I am satisfied that the defendant is one who blindly follows fashion but does not follow trouble". Judge McCarthy convicted the accused of assault but stated that because of Jim's remarks a custodial sentence would not be imposed.

Besides taming the Teddy Boys Jim played another part during their heyday - acting as interpreter in the Courts to explain Teddy Boy slang. One such occasion was in January 1955 when five youths appeared before the Children's Court charged with assaulting a sixth youth. As the defendants gave evidence, describing how the fight took place with a belt and a chain as well as fists, Jim did the needful, interpreting the local slang for District Justice McCarthy. He explained to the Justice that "someone has claimed you" meant that someone had decided to fight you, "someone is slagging you" meant that someone was talking bad of, or jeering you, "a

"loaf" meant to assault someone by butting them with the head, "a sham" meant a person and a "slag" was a rough-type of person who went around abusing people. When Jim finished explaining the slang expressions the Justice remarked that "the trouble is that I do not hear Jimmy O'Dea often enough".

There was a lucky escape for Jim in April 1956 when, having arrested two brothers for creating a disturbance on a bus at Dolphin's Barn and was taking them to Kevin Street Garda Station in a patrol car, one of them saw an arm which he thought was Branigan's and sank his teeth into it. He held the arm in his teeth until the patrol car arrived at the station when he then discovered that it was his brother's arm he had his teeth in. As they were getting out of the patrol car, Jim remarked to the biter that he "always knew you were a gobshite". On the subject of teeth, a few days after this incident Jim arrested a forty-year-old general dealer who was involved in a disturbance at Merchant's Quay. Jim told the man three times to go home, but he replied by asking Jim for one of his gloves and he "would give him all he wanted". He then took him to Kevin Street in the patrol car. When they arrived inside the Garda Station, the man took out his false teeth and asked Jim to "have a go" with him. Jim said "OK, come on then", and the man promptly put in his teeth and asked where the cells were.

In the Summer of that same year he had a unique honour bestowed on him - he was made a boy scout. He had helped the 35th Dublin unit of the CBSI, Donore Avenue (founded by Canon Valentine Burke, 'The Toucher Burke', first Parish Priest in the new parish of Cabra West, incorporated in 1946) for so many years and in so many ways that they decided to do something about it. On Saturday 25th August 1956 Scoutmasters Kevin Byrne, Paddy Byrne and the rest of the boys gave him a special membership certificate on vellum. The year 1957 came around and Jim again had the first charge of the year in Kevin Street, arresting two youths leaving the scene of a break-in at a grocery and provision shop at 29 Charlemont Street. However, there was a sad start to the year for him as on 26th January his father John Alick Branigan died suddenly in Jim's house at 135, Drimnagh Road, aged 81 years. He was buried in Saint James's Cemetery, James's Street. He had given a lifetime of service to the Dublin Union, having spent fifty-one years in employment there.

Around this time Jim became famous within the Garda Síochána for on his own and unaccompanied by a Sergeant he 'did' Kavanaghs public house, on the Long Lane/New Street corner. He went into the pub after closing time and took ninety-seven names of *found-ons*, as those imbibing alcohol on licensed premises after closing time are called. He was a Garda at the time and such a course of action would be seen by senior officers as a grave insult, as well as a risky one. It was never heard of and had never happened before, an ordinary Garda on his own taking names of found-ons.

People often came to Jim at Kevin Street with their problems and the Gardaí there say that most nights there would be someone - and some nights there would actually be a queue of people - waiting to discuss a problem with him. The following is just one of those problems, brought to Jim by a distraught mother. In January 1957 the said mother came to Jim with her daughter, whom she feared was pregnant. She wanted Jim to get the father of the child to wed her daughter. Jim told the mother that her daughter was not pregnant. "But I was in with the Jesuits and they think she

is pregnant, Mr Branigan" exclaimed the mother. Jim knew the family and knew that there was a history of TB in it. He also knew the boyfriend in question as being a very respectable lad. He made an appointment with a doctor friend for mother and daughter the very next day. The following evening a box of cigars arrived in the station it came from the mother, accompanied by a 'thank you' note.

A few months later a young colleague of Jim's, Garda Joseph Kirwan, was hassled by a youth at Dolphin's Barn. He told the youth to go home but he would not, saying that none of the Gardaí were any use on their own, including Lugs Branigan. Garda Kirwan subsequently charged the youth for disorderly behaviour and during the court case Jim, who happened to be in the Court on other cases, heard his name being mentioned and challenged the youth in the witness box, saying "Why did you introduce my name into it? Have you not seen me in Dolphin's Barn often enough to say it to my face? Say it now, if you want to". The youth remained silent and was fined forty shillings (€2.45) and bound to the peace. This type of questioning by Jim was nothing new, for he was very outspoken in Court.

On 15th May 1957 District Justice Reddin commended the Bran for excellent detective work when convicting the father of a criminal family, one that is a household name today, for the unlawful possession of a cine-camera. Jim gave evidence of going to a public house in Dolphin's Barn where he saw the defendant sitting at a table with a white paper parcel in front of him. He asked the defendant what was in the parcel and he replied a camera. He arrested him and in Court the defendant stated that he was alone in a public house when a man came in and asked him to buy the camera; the man showed him how to work it and then he bought it for £3=0=0 (€3.81). Jim stood up in Court and asked the defendant "Did he wear a beard, a long red cloak and call himself Santa Claus?" Defendant: "No". Justice: "three months in Mountjoy".

After the accused had been taken away, Jim approached the Justice and informed him that he couldn't give a three month sentence as the maximum for the offence was two months. (A mature Court Clerk would have cautioned Jim not to say what he said and instead to put it to the Judge politely that "I may be wrong, Judge, in fact I think I am, but the maximum under that Section could be just two months"). "I will give him twelve months if I like. Don't tell me what I can or cannot do" barked the Justice. However, a little while afterwards he sent for Jim and asked him to bring back the defendant for he had had second thoughts. When Jim was bringing the defendant back to Court the convicted man remarked "Ah, I know. He found out he couldn't give me a stretch for that offence". Jim brought the defendant before the Court where Justice Reddin told the man "I've been thinking this case over and I think I was a little harsh. I'm reducing the sentence to two months".

When the film *Rock Around the Clock*, commenced showing in Dublin cinemas, it hit the headlines and remained there during much of 1957.... not the film itself, but the antics of the Teddy Boys, who flocked, en masse and often, to see their very own movie. The Teddy Boys would riot in the cinemas, ripping up seats with flick knives, throwing bottles and other missiles from the balconies and engaging in fist and sometimes chain fights, causing great consternation. When an Irish soldier was charged with taking part in such an incident in the Tivoli Cinema (The Tiv), Francis Street, Jim had charge of the case which was extensively featured in every National

daily and Sunday newspaper and also received great prominence in all the British Sunday newspapers. The reason for this was that, when giving evidence, he stated in Court that he had seen the film over sixty times. Because of the violence and rioting at the showings of the film the authorities decided to crack down with what they considered their best weapon - Jim Branigan, whose presence constantly had a sobering effect on the audiences. The following is the story on the topic run by the London-based *The People* in its edition of 1st September under the headline 'Jim's no Cat':

'Dublin policeman Jim Branigan hates rock'n'roll more than anybody I know. This he confessed recently in the District Court. And Jim should be a fairly sound critic, for he's seen the film 'Rock Around the Clock' over sixty times. He had to. When the show first hit Dublin it inspired waves of Teddy Boy terrorism. Usually it erupted in the cinemas and flowed out into the streets. In an effort to quell the riots, police brass looked for their toughest men. And with bottles, stones and chains flying, they had to be really tough. Jim Branigan was a first choice. In his day he rocked and rolled every pugilist of his weight that Ireland or Europe could produce. And he walked off with all the silverware. If Bill Haley comes back to Dublin again with his Comets, Jim Branigan is one cat who won't rip it up - even for free. But I dare say he'll rip up any scraps that start'.

When the Rock'n'Roll craze reached its final stages Jim had seen the film over one hundred and twenty five times that he had personally recorded in his diary and countless other times that he hadn't managed to note. It is no wonder that as far as Rock'n'Roll was concerned, Jim had a bellyful, and it is a fair comment to say that he was not an avid Bill Haley fan. The older generations were disgusted at the antics of the rebellious Teddy Boys and generally, whenever there was a showing, even with Jim's presence, there was trouble. The following is one of the many hundred reports of incidents involving the screening of the film and is taken from the *Cork Examiner* of Friday 23rd August 1957. Under the headline 'Guard Wasn't Sent' it relates to an incident in the former Lyric Cinema, James's Street (the building is still there, occupied by George G Crampton and Company):

'Fair haired cheerful former well known amateur boxer Guard James C Branigan gets some difficult assignments in tough quarters but as one could imagine, he is quite capable of looking after himself and the safety of others as well. Watching many of the city's crop of Teddy Boys is one of his jobs and since the film Rock Around the Clock began to go the rounds of the suburban cinemas, his night duties have taken him often off the beat and into a cinema seat. Somehow or other the music of this film's soundtrack, with its wild and persistent beat, puts adolescents in a mood for devilment of all kinds. In the Metropolitan Children's Court today during a case in which two youths were charged with disorderly conduct at a showing of the film in a cinema in James' Street, the manager of the cinema said that a group of young men in the front rows were very noisy during the film. They stood up for the National Anthem but refused to leave the house afterwards. An attendant said that one of the group brandished an umbrella and there were blows on all sides and but for the presence of Mr Branigan there would have been blue murder. Guard Branigan said that it took a half-hour to disperse the crowd outside the cinema and £2 worth of glass was smashed. The youths were fined £5 each and ordered to pay compensation for the glass'.

Jim was his active self on the boxing scene during this 'rip it up' time and by August 1957 he was being dubbed Mr Amateur Boxing by both the *Evening Herald* and *The Sunday Dispatch* - ironically the same time as he was celebrating his 25th year as honorary treasurer of the County Dublin Board IABA. One of the finest fights that Jim refereed around this time was the final of the Irish Senior Championship between Harry Perry of Dublin and Fred Teidt, Ireland's Olympic boxer. There was little in the contest as it swayed back and forth but it proved an outstanding fight, one of the cleanest and classiest that he had ever handled. Jim commenced taking

notes of his refereeing in 1949 and by August 1957 he had refereed 3,627 amateur bouts with a record 610 for the year 1952-53 alone. He never turned down a request to referee and during the last of the eliminating contests for the Dublin City Vocational Schools Novice Boxing Championships at the National Stadium on 29th January 1958 he refereed all thirty five bouts decided. This was a good start to what turned out to be a great year for him, for in the summer of 1958 he was promoted to the rank of Detective Garda - recognition by the authorities of the difficult task he had performed in containing the more notorious elements of the Teddy Boy phenomenon.

Just before his promotion Jim was badly assaulted by a middle-aged man outside the Leinster Cinema, receiving a hard kick on his shin which was badly lacerated. Jim had to attend hospital daily as a result of the assault. The assailant was duly charged and sentenced by *The Colonel* - District Justice Fitzpatrick. In passing sentence the Colonel remarked that the accused was lucky Garda Branigan was so restrained "as he could have wiped the street" with him. The Colonel incidentally was known to the bloods - as the Gardaí called those who were such frequent visitors to the Courts on charges of drunkenness, rowdyism, assault and petty terrorism - as The Killer.

All the Justices and Judges in the Dublin Law Courts knew Jim well and on one occasion when two young men appeared before District Justice Cathal O'Flynn (who became President of the District Court and was called 'The Pope' by the bloods, Court Clerks and Gardaí alike) charged with "boxing the fox" - Dublinese for robbing orchards - one of the gardens which was entered was that of Jim Branigan. The Justice let it be known that he was taking a serious view of such offences as he found that in Dublin the boyhood pursuit of taking fruit from orchards or gardens very often led to further incursions on the rights of property-owners and that it was a small step from breaking into a garden to breaking into a house, with one being sometimes as easy as the other. Indeed, he further stated that boxing the fox was undertaken in some instances as a cover for an intended house burglary. He sentenced the two young men to fourteen days detention, saying "consider yourselves lucky - Detective Branigan could have been in when you entered his garden and he would have destroyed you".

In November 1958 Jim had a very unusual case, bringing four Teddy Boys from the Coombe area before the Court on a charge of unlawfully fighting and taking part in an affray to the terror of citizens. The incidence of such a case appearing before the Courts is very rare indeed and there was no evidence from any person that he or she was put in terror - Jim ran up against a wall of silence with witnesses to the affray. The men were returned for trial on the charges. It is interesting to note that authorities and statutes in relation to charges similar to this type of offence go back as far as 1361.

As far as publicity in the newspapers was concerned 1959 turned out to be a good year for Jim and from then until his retirement his exploits as a Garda and a boxing celebrity were featured almost daily in the Irish newspapers. 1959 was the year Jim began calling the vicious thugs that he had before the Courts "goggers". The expression caught on with headlines like 'Right Pair of Goggers get 14 Days for Assault' and 'Goggers get 18 Months for Knife Attack' describing certain Court cases

involving well-known thugs. Popular folklore in the Courts had it that Jim had a certain thing going with a particular Justice that when he, Jim, described a defendant as a gowger (also spelled gouger) it meant that the accused had previous convictions; if he was described by Jim as being "from a respectable family" it meant he had no criminal record. Folklore it might be, but running a check of about fifty cases which Jim had before the said District Justice that were reported in the papers the author discovered that in all cases where Jim had called the defendant a gowger a custodial sentence was imposed and that those sentenced also had previous convictions. Of course this is probably pure coincidence - nobody will ever know.

The other side of the coin of course was where Jim spoke up for people he had charged. He did this often and the following is just one of the many cases where his intervention saved an unfortunate man from prison. It concerned Billy, who unfortunately succumbed to temptation and committed probably one of the meanest crimes imaginable. An unfortunate drunk was lying in the gutter at Winetavern Street in such a bad condition that an ambulance had to be sent for. Billy went to render 'assistance' and before the man was taken away managed to secure a wallet and belt and make off in a hurry. He may have thought himself smart in his meanness but he reckoned without Jim Branigan who had him under observation all the time. Billy's efforts to 'help' had not been above suspicion and he had not gone far before the heavy hand fell on his shoulder. He was searched on the spot and both wallet and belt were recovered, whereupon he owned up to what he had done. Justice Reddin very properly described the miscreant as a corpse robber and although he had no previous convictions it looked as if he was due for a visit to Mountjoy Prison. But there are two sides to every story and having heard Billy's as told by Jim, the Justice held his hand and imposed a monetary fine. "Billy is married and has four children. His wife left him and has gone to England, leaving Billy to care for two children aged two and three years old. That was ten weeks ago and Billy had to throw up his job in order to look after the children. They live with his mother and sister and without work, he finds it hard to provide for all. Things are not good for him for some time. Perhaps that is the reason for the theft, Justice".

Shortly after Billy's case Jim again came to the rescue, this time to save two young men from the 'alarming' prospect of serving a prison sentence. It concerned Larry and Jim, both aged 18, who appeared before the Court in March 1959 and who were lucky to have Jim in their corner when they confronted Justice Farrell, otherwise they would have gone to jail. The Colonel backed Jim's judgement that if given a chance they would never appear in Court again. One of the lads was a messenger boy and was sent to post a number of parcels. He brought his pal with him and when they had done their business one of them sneaked a parcel from the counter and put it in the bag used to carry the firm's parcels. When they opened the stolen packet they found it to contain an alarm clock. They were then afraid to return it and decided to pawn it. Justice Farrell was not impressed by the attitude of the pair in the dock. They did not appear to realise, he said, that it was in the lap of the gods, unhappily represented by him, as to whether they would go to jail or not. Nevertheless he took Detective Garda Branigan's word for it that they were not a bad pair and gave them the benefit of the Probation Act.

Around this time Jim had a number of unusual cases, although there is nothing unusual in that for him, and the following are just two of them. The first concerned a

case of drunk driving - with a horse and cart. Jim noticed a horse and cart outside a public house at Leonard's Corner. He kept it under observation and at 10.15 pm a number of men staggered out of the pub, onto the cart and away. Jim ran after them to stop them, but they gathered speed by whipping the unfortunate horse. Jim called the assistance of a patrol car and with his reinforcements was able to arrest the owner for being drunk in charge of a horse and cart. He was fined £1. The second case concerned a young lady called Anne, who put the key in the lock of her door to find it would not open. She was locked out of her own house and could not account for it. Then she noticed that one of the bay windows had been broken and decided to send for the Gardaí. Jim answered the call and found the door immovable. He went through the broken window. Inside everything seemed all right except that a few small ornaments had been knocked down and broken, but to make assurance doubly sure he decided to have a look around upstairs. Talk about the story of the three bears. Upstairs he found Pete, aged 24, asleep in bed, wearing his shirt and his trousers. Pete, a bricklayer home from England for Christmas, did not know how he got there. He had been full of drink and was even drunk when his slumbers were rudely interrupted by Jim. His surprise was almost as great as that of Anne when she had found her door locked against herself. Jim had a good word to say for Pete. "He has only one previous conviction and that's for stealing a bottle of milk. His parents are respectable and he himself is a hard worker". So Pete got the benefit of the Probation Act.

1959 was also the year when Jim was constantly challenged by a particular gentleman from Crumlin, called Larry. Every Saturday night, when Larry switched from stout to something more potent, he got very angry and went looking for a fight with Jim Branigan. "He's a regular caller at Kevin Street every Saturday night for the past few months, looking for me to fight him", Jim informed Justice McCourt when Larry appeared before him on 29th June 1959. "You could let him off this time, Justice" said Jim and Larry was fined forty shillings. Was Larry thankful? No! Every Saturday until mid-1960 Larry was outside Kevin Street as usual, "locked out of his tree and screaming for Jim Branigan to come outside and have him out". But then, one Saturday night in May 1960 after Larry had made his way like a homing pigeon to Kevin Street, there to throw off his coat and throw out the customary challenge to Jim Branigan, he went too far. At the height of his alcoholic jubilation, after announcing his intention of sweeping the heavyweight crown off the brow of the champion, he stormed into the station itself shouting "I want Lugs Branigan". He had Jim a few times before and wound up in a cell, to be let out the next morning without charge.

However, Larry had finally become too much of a nuisance and on this occasion Jim asked for a one-week remand in custody in Mountjoy, for a medical examination. The examination proved he was mentally sound and he was returned to the Court to be dealt with. Jim told the Justice that Larry was not a bad sort until he got drunk but that he then "seems to lose all control of himself and gives vent to his grudges against poor me". He felt that Larry could be given one last chance and the Justice imposed a fine of one pound. Larry's vendetta against Jim Branigan and Kevin Street lasted over two years, was publicised in all the National papers including the lofty *Irish Times* and was featured regularly in the popular 'Court Cameos' column in the *Evening Herald*. It also enabled Larry to collect twenty-three convictions for drunk and disorderly behaviour and using abusive threats towards Jim Branigan.

Whenever a new District Justice or Circuit Judge was appointed to the Bench in the Dublin area he was quickly put in the picture with regard to the situation on the ground in the Capital city by none other than, you've guessed, Jim Branigan. In April 1960 it was Justice O'Hagan's turn. New to Dublin, he did not know what the state of affairs was in the Dolphin's Barn district. He was quickly put in the picture by Jim when Joe, Dick, Tim, Mick and Red were charged with conduct likely to lead to a breach of the peace and as a result each of them was ordered to pay a fine of £2.

According to Jim the five had given him a busy time. First they caused an obstruction outside a cinema and when told to move on would only go a short distance. They kept moving over to another cinema where some of them started to kick football on the street. It was too much for Jim who summoned help and brought them all to the station. They denied that anything of the kind had happened. Jim said he knew the five, all of whom had been in Court before. Tim was the ringleader of a group who caused obstruction by black-marketing cinema tickets and special Gardaí had to be put on duty at the Barn to keep them on the move on Sunday nights. Justice O'Hagan admitted that he had been taken in by the appearance of the five who, he said, had looked like responsible citizens. Now that he had been put wise it was obvious to him that they had been taking a delight in baiting the Gardaí, particularly the younger ones, and he was not going to stand for that. Tim the ringleader had deceived him by his demeanour in the witness box but now that he knew his men he was only sorry that he could do no more than impose a fine of £2. There were bad looks at Jim Branigan from the five as they left the dock.

Dubbed the 'saviour of marriage' by the inhabitants of Dublin's Liberties, Jim Branigan went where many a Garda would be reluctant to enter - into the area of family squabbles and rows. In the process he saved many a marriage as husbands in the area covered by Kevin Street would be afraid to assault their wives lest Jim Branigan arrived on the scene. Many an ordinary person in the Liberties and beyond have relayed stories confirming that he "saved more marriages than any priest or marriage counsellor". Even the clergy are inclined to agree and the well-known Moville, County Donegal priest, Fr Frank Duggan, who for many years was based in the parish of Saint Laurence O'Toole's in Sheriff Street, said that from his own experience Jim was a "one man marriage-mending operation".

As a Court Clerk in the Dublin Circuit Court in the early 1970's the author recalls a case where a certain Crumlin gentleman constantly appeared before the Court on appeal from the District Court. Each time the result was the same - the wife, through fear, refused to give evidence and the case was struck out. One night the said wife received a serious beating from her violent, drunken husband. Crumlin Gardaí were called but as they felt that 'wolf' had been cried too many times they requisitioned the assistance of Jim Branigan. When Jim arrived at the troubled household he confronted the husband, who, on seeing Jim, ran for the back door, scaled his back garden wall and fled into the darkness. Jim gave chase and later arrested and charged the violent husband, who then made his last appearance before the Court, as he was never seen around the precincts of the Courts again and rumour had it that he was never seen in Crumlin again. During his career Jim was consistent in firmly dealing with men who assaulted the fairer sex. "There was one thing I just couldn't stand for, and that was a man beating a woman".

The following case of a family squabble involving a man called Myles emphasised this aspect of Jim's personality. Myles was, to say the least, a nasty piece of work, but he was really up against it when Jim got into the witness box to give evidence against him in July, 1960. Jim had got a phone call between 1.00 am and 2.00 am from Kathleen, wife of Myles. When he got to the home he found her and her young boy outside the door. Kathleen told him that Myles had come home, knocked her around the house, pushed her and the little boy out and left them outside. Kathleen, in evidence, confirmed the story. She was having a peaceful cup of tea at the kitchen table when her husband came in and started an argument. He may have got the worst of that but then he resorted to brute force and poor Kathleen could not stand up to him. She was pushed around the kitchen, pushed around the hall and finally pushed out the door with the little boy. Myles then turned the key in the lock and refused to allow her or the boy back. She was a quiet, well-spoken woman and the little boy was a credit to her.

Myles, in the dock, was not half the man he had been the previous night and he told a story that did not earn him the sympathy of Justice O'Hagan. The little boy had made his first Holy Communion that morning, he said, and Kathleen had kept him out all day while she was drinking. When she came home at 9pm she was drunk, he concluded. Justice O'Hagan told him that he had never heard a more unworthy story from any man. He was desperately tempted to give Myles six months. Jim helped him make up his mind, saying that when he arrived on the scene Kathleen had no sign of drink on her. It was not his first visit to that house either. On Easter Monday he was called in because Myles had beaten Kathleen so badly that she had to stay in hospital from that Monday until the following Friday and then had to go to a convalescent home. It had been a long road for Myles but now he had come to the end of it. Kathleen said they had been married for eleven years and that Myles had been conducting himself in this fashion for ten of those eleven years. The only good word she had to say for him was that he gave her £6-10s a week out of his earnings of £8-10s. In sentencing Myles to three months in prison, Justice O'Hagan expressed the hope that his absence would not injure Kathleen and the family.

In October 1960 the Gardaí were called to a reported break-in at a shop in Francis Street called The Catholic Repository. Jim Branigan entered a cellar under the shop, his torch picking out six men huddled against the walls. They had heard Jim's voice, recognised it, and were trembling when he arrested them. Two months later, in December, the previously mentioned Larry again appeared on the scene in what was to be his finale. But it took a black and badly bruised eye to bring Larry to his senses. He had received it during what was to be the last of his periodic Saturday night assaults on the police fortress. Jim told the Court that he had seen Larry being ejected from Kevin Street Garda Station. The sight of the ginger-headed officer was like a rag to a bull to Larry and his language became vile and he put up his fists. There was nothing for it but to arrest him and to this Larry objected strenuously with the result that he "had to be given a few clips" before he was got inside. This, apart from giving him the black eye, did nothing to quieten him and he began to make threats against Jim's family. Jim naturally took a poor view of that. He was quite prepared to account for his own actions but a threat to his family was a more serious matter. So Larry was in real trouble and for the first time since he opened his vendetta against Jim Branigan he showed real signs of repentance. He expressed his sorrow for the threats he made, adding that he did not mean a single word. The

few clips may have had their own salutary effect because Larry said that as a result of what had happened to him, he did not want to get into any more trouble and was prepared to forego his vendetta. Justice Reddin gave him a chance to do so, imposing a one month suspended sentence with Jim's concurrence, although Larry had already been in Court twenty-two times on charges of drunkenness and disorderly conduct. "All this happened since his father and his brother, both of whom he was very fond, had died, so perhaps the fact that he is facing a month's imprisonment will help him to turn over a new leaf" said Jim at the end of the case.

At the end of 1960 Jim was still battling against the Teddy Boys and on December 9th he charged a youth with damaging a seat in the Tivoli Cinema. Cinema manager Patrick Monaghan informed the Court that since the cinema had new seats installed three months previously over one hundred of them had been damaged. "You should employ an usher like Jim Branigan" quipped Justice O'Riain. In November 1960 he was involved in one of the biggest dance hall rows in Dublin for many years which resulted in two people being hospitalised and ten arrests. The row occurred in the Swiss Chalet dance hall in Merrion Row and continued outside. Broken bottles littered the street where the combatants, all Teddy Boys, were engaged in bitter conflict. They had surged out onto the roadway after a fight had broken out in the hall during a Rock'n'Roll session. Six Garda patrol-cars arrived on the scene and the Gardaí, Jim among them, engaged in hand-to-hand tussles with the Teddy Boys before drawing batons and dispersing the crowd. Jim recognised some of the more eager combatants in the mill and as a result of this they were subsequently arrested and charged.

All during the Teddy Boy era Jim was in the forefront of the battle to maintain law and order on the streets of Dublin and he personally charged and had successful convictions against more Teddy Boys than any single, entire Garda Station in the city. By the early 1960's the Teddy Boy menace was no more and it was generally accepted by both the Garda authorities and the legal profession at the time that it was Jim Branigan alone that tamed the Teddy Boys. Dance hall rows as the one described in the Swiss Chalet were common during the height of the Teddy Boy era but by the early-1960's, thanks to Jim's efforts, thuggery, violence and fear were eliminated from most - though not all - city dance halls. Jim had triumphed over the Teddy Boys and had war-wounds to show for it, including a scar on his chest "inflicted by a knife-wielding youth in Edwardian clothing". But with the Teddy Boy menace suppressed it was not long before another menace appeared on the horizon in the form of a new breed of gouger which roamed the city, north and south, looking for fights with rival gangs or pouncing on unsuspecting innocent civilians and baiting young inexperienced Gardaí.

This new wave of terror and violence culminated in the formation of the Riot Squad. There was only one leader for such a Squad and that was of course Jim Branigan and for many years it was regarded by many as a one-man Riot Squad. This new phase in Jim Branigan's career turned what was then becoming a legend into part and parcel of the folklore and tradition of Ireland's capital city.

CHAPTER 5

The Riot Squad

With the Teddy Boy violence curtailed life did not get any easier for Jim Branigan and he was still out there in the thick of it. In 1961 he charged a young man for assaulting him and with resisting arrest outside the Olympic Ballroom, Pleasant Street. In evidence the war-wounded Garda put his left leg up on the witness box in Court No 4, Chancery Street and showed Justice Reddin the injury he received when he was violently kicked by the accused man. "He also bit me, Justice, while in the patrol car. I placed him in the car with a certain degree of force but he was lying on the back seat and attempted to kick out the windows. I got into the car and tried to hold his legs and was in that position when he gripped me with his teeth and refused to let go. It was very painful and I required medical treatment as a result of that assault".

"Can you show the Court where he bit you?" asked the Justice. "I cannot" replied Jim, "because it was in that part of my anatomy which I cannot produce in Court, for I am sitting on it". The whole Court broke out in extended laughter. When order was finally restored Justice Reddin remarked "savage" and Jim replied "he was one of the worst blackguards I have ever met in a long, long time. I had to count to ten or I would have destroyed him. He was worse than a Baluba - at least they cook you first". The Justice sentenced the young man to imprisonment and remarked to Jim "you seem to be kept busy up there where the Olympic Ballroom is. Dublin Corporation should rename Pleasant Street and call it Unpleasant Street".

This particular case was splashed on the front-page of all newspapers not only in Ireland but in the UK and Continental Europe as well, and was also reported on the inside pages of some US newspapers. This had unfortunate repercussions for poor Jim and the huge media coverage resulted in him being 'carpeted' by the authorities for at that time there was social unrest in the Belgium Congo and Ireland had troops stationed there as part of a United Nations peacekeeping initiative. The Department of External Affairs were more than sensitive to the 'Baluba' reference. Jim thought that he would be in more serious trouble than he was, but all he received was an extra-mild caution from the Garda Commissioner, who hoped that Jim would be more careful of his utterances in Court in future. The advice was taken, though shortly afterwards in a case in which he had arrested and charged a number of youths who were involved in a gang fight which resulted in a very serious assault on a Garda Sergeant, the State Prosecutor of the day, Mr S Breathnach, referred to the gang as "behaving like Balubas".

Shortly after the 'Baluba' affair Jim went back to his old terminology, describing thugs as gowgers. By this time the spelling of that word had been refined to read 'gouger' by the media and had even been extended to cover the unruly female element in society when in February 1962 Jim referred to such ladies in Court as being 'gougeressess'. Violence in Dublin began to slowly escalate around this time and the following is how Jim described conditions in the South Circular Road area to Justice Reddin: "It's dreadful there, every Saturday night a shower of gougers is let loose from dance halls, breaking milk-bottles and windows, attacking girls and

breaking into shops. These gangs have no respect for anything or anybody. It's quickly getting like a jungle". He himself broke-up the gangs whenever he came across them on the streets and wouldn't let them congregate, particularly around dance halls. He always felt that such crowds meant trouble, especially around dance halls where it meant trouble with a capital 'T'.

The following is typical of such cases where the Gardaí were involved in the breaking-up of a crowd and this incident resulted in two Toms, aged twenty and twenty-two years respectively, appearing in the dock before Justice Lanigan O Keeffe, charged with resisting arrest and assaulting Gardaí. It nearly but not quite led them to a hotel on the North Circular Road (Mountjoy Prison). The two Toms were part of a crowd of about thirty men gathered outside a ballroom when Gardaí Michael Duffy and John Goldrick were sent to disperse them. The crowd broke up and moved off easily enough but the two Toms started to throw shapes. The older of the two saw no reason why he should stir from where he was and was forcibly sent down the street. But back he had to come and although given a second chance he stood his ground and refused to budge.

The patrol car was then summoned and who should be in it but Lugs Branigan. That soon put an end to the row which had developed prior to the arrival of the patrol car, a scrap in which Gardaí Duffy and Goldrick were no more than holding their own. Duffy had already taken a blow which had stopped his watch, though only for a day. The two Toms were bundled into the patrol car by Jim "willy nilly" and brought to the Garda Station. When they were charged the younger Tom stated that he was not guilty and the older one said that 'it was not my fault. I got a bang on the head from a policeman'. At that time such talk did not go down well in Court and the Justice stated that if the Toms had just gone home when they were asked there would be no sore heads around this morning. Neither would they have got the shock that they undoubtedly did when Justice Lanigan O Keeffe sentenced each of them to three months imprisonment. At this stage in the proceedings Jim, who deeply felt that the two Toms were worth a chance returned to the witness box and pleaded with the Justice, softening him up. The sentences were suspended and they were also fined £10 each with one month to pay the fine. As stated before and as seen from this case of the two Toms, Jim time and again saved many a person from certain imprisonment.

In one particular case, covered in the Evening Herald of Friday May 11th 1962 under the headline 'Man Gets Another Chance' a man who had been sentenced to six months imprisonment for malicious wounding appeared before Judge Charlie Conroy on appeal in the Dublin Circuit Court. Jim told Charlie that the accused had never been in trouble before and was definitely worth another chance. 'Okay' mumbled Charlie as he suspended the sentence. A few days after this Court appearance Jim was on duty in Meath Street when he was approached by an Inspector and ordered to book a particular dealer named Mary. "But they were all booked this morning by two Gardaí sir and they are hardworking people". The Inspector insisted. "But she has already been booked, Sir. It just would not be fair". The Inspector stood his ground, though by this time a small crowd had gathered. "She is a bad woman, 160A, now summons her", growled the Inspector. With that Mary turned to the Inspector and shouted at him: "I am not a bad woman, sure I've been married thirty years and my husband is the only man to ever throw his leg over

me". The Inspector quickly left the scene and Jim never booked the hardworking Mary.

In the Dublin Courts of the 1950's and 1960's one of Jim's main opponent was the famed solicitor Trant Mc Carthy, who defended a fair proportion of those charged by him and there are many stories told about the exchanges between that great personality of the legal profession and the tough Garda. During the hearing of District Court Appeals in Circuit Court No 7, Chancery Place, Jim had left the Court following the ending of his particular case. As soon as the next case was called, Dublin Corporation workmen commenced drilling work on the street outside and the drone could be heard inside the Court. "What's that racket outside", inquired Judge Bertie Wellwood. Trant was quickly on his feet and informed Bertie that it was "only Detective Branigan taking a voluntary statement from a defendant".

The year 1962 was seen out by Jim with a very unusual case - that of an assault by a husband-to-be on a wife-to-be. This was a rare case and research of newspapers over a thirty-year period threw up only one other such incident, though of course the husband-beat-wife type of case was a frequent one in the District Courts and the wife-beat-husband also made a regular appearance at a Court near you. The following is one of that rare species and it was Jim's curiosity that led him to prosecute it - curiosity and the habit of being out day and night on police duty. Jim was out in a patrol car travelling along the South Circular Road, scanning the sidewalks, when he spotted Mick, aged 24, with a young woman whom he seemed to be aiming blows at. That was enough for Jim who told the driver to pass by and then to come back. On return there was Mick pulling and shoving the young woman. She tried to grip the iron railings along the footpath but Mick pulled her away using what force he considered necessary, if not a little more. Jim got out of the patrol car and asked Mick what was it all about, only to be informed "it's all right, I'm engaged to her".

Whatever the bold Mick had thought about his rights the girl had apparently had enough of him, or perhaps she preferred Jim's company to his. In any case she tried to get into the patrol car while Jim gave Mick the usual good advice: "Go home as fast as you can before you get yourself into trouble". Mick would have none of that and tried to get into the car with the girl. Again, he was advised to go home but repetition of the good word only made Mick worse. He became disorderly, using bad language and when the inevitable hand was put on his shoulder and he was asked to come along he resisted arrest violently. He would only get into the patrol car when he was sure that the girl was going to remain in it. In the District Court Justice Maloney held that Mick did not have the rights he claimed and fined him £5. In order to ensure that if the couple ever got married there would be peace for some time he also ordered Mick to find an independent surety of £20 that he would keep the peace and be of good behaviour for three years.

Another interesting case concerned a twenty year old lad named Sean who could be compared with a flying trapeze artist for when Jim saw this young gent he was just plain-jet propelled. Jim had been called to a licensed premises to quell a row in which fifteen or sixteen men were having a go. He was doing his best to break it up when he saw Sean take off. Jim said "When I saw him first he was actually flying through the air with both hands stretched out." Sean must have crash-landed for

the next Jim saw of him he was having his face washed of the blood that was pouring from him. His girl friend was acting as a nurse and was none too pleased when Jim told them it was time to go. She said she would have none of this and that Branigan was not going to take her hero. However, he had had enough bother for one evening and told Sean that it was come or else, drawing his baton at the same time to lend moral if not physical force, to his persuasion. Then the heroine played her greatest part. She held up her chin and told Branigan that he was quite at liberty to use his baton on it. It may have been bad judgement on his part but the officer did not accept her challenge and let the pair go, knowing that he would meet Sean again. So he did and when Justice Reddin asked him if Sean was drunk on the occasion he couched his reply very succinctly, saying "he was drunk in the sense that he had more drink than was good for him but he was not drunk in the sense that he was incapable". Obviously he was not but one of the modern descriptions for being merry in drink is 'floating'. His activities on that occasion cost Sean twenty shillings.

For Jim, 1962 stood out in his memory in that it was the year that a close friend and former companion of his died. A brilliant boxer, Ernie Smith was regarded as the prince of Irish boxing champions and died on January 30th 1962. He held eight senior Irish Championship titles and boxed Internationally in Los Angeles (1932 Olympics), Poland, Germany, Paris, Chicago and all over the UK. Jim regarded him as the greatest lightweight boxer Ireland has ever produced and on hearing of Ernie's sad passing said that his death was a shock to everyone and he was a great character as well as being a world class boxer. Ernie Smith's passing featured prominently in all the National dailies and the following is a tribute to him from Sergeant Dick Hearn which was published in the Irish Independent: 'He was one of the cleverest boxers I have seen in action. He could give an opponent a boxing lesson without messing him up. He did great service to his country in the International sporting field. He will never be forgotten in Irish boxing circles'.

During the summer of 1962 Jim was again looking for part of a man's ear. Charlie Sheridan, based in Kevin Street, recalled a row in a Francis street pub. A fight had broken out in a toilet and when the Gardaí arrived at the scene they found a man with head injuries. Jim examined the man, discovered that his earlobe had been bitten off and detailed Charlie to look for it. Charlie couldn't find it and told him: "My God, the gouger must have eaten it". Jim instructed the Gardaí on the scene to search the premises and went looking for the attacker, whom he arrested in a lane way nearby. They never recovered the unfortunate man's earlobe. Charlie recollects Jim Branigan's great sense of timing which countless people have highlighted: "He was always in the right place at the right time. One night I saw some gougers assault a deaf mute. I challenged them and they ran away. I chased them down a lane way in Wood Street, off Bride Street. The lane way was a dead-end and they turned and cornered me. I was in a sweat when suddenly Branno arrived in Car Five. I couldn't believe it for he came from nowhere. Never in my life did I see men scale a high wall so fast".

The ugly spectre of gang warfare again raised its head on the streets of Dublin towards the end of 1962 and Jim Branigan once more found himself in the front line against this new menace as some of the more ruthless gangs and criminals were in his area. In September he charged five men with assault on a Crumlin man who had

been stabbed from his hair to the opening of his lips and when District Justice Walter Maloney asked the Sergeant was there gang warfare breaking out in Dublin Jim stated that there was and it had already begun. In 1963 the violence on the streets continued to escalate and almost every night the newspapers reported cases of people being charged with possession of knives and other offensive weapons. Jim had a considerable number of charges for these type of offences during this time - in a five-week period in early 1963 he had charged no less than sixty thugs with possession of lethal weapons.

Early in 1963 Frank Burke, originally from Rutland Avenue and now living in Dundrum, was, as a young twenty-year-old, the victim of a serious gang assault on O'Connell Bridge while he was in the company of his girlfriend (who later became his wife). During the assault his watch, which was engraved and given to him the previous Christmas by his parents as an early 21st birthday present, was stolen from his wrist. Lugs was on the scene moments after the attack, and he drove Frank and his girlfriend around Dublin for over an hour to see whether they could identify the thugs, but the search was fruitless. In 2009 he recalled the kindness and consideration of Lugs on that night, and how he eventually got his watch back: "A week later I put an ad in the paper describing the watch and offering a reward of five pounds. Some time after that I got a telephone call to go to a certain street, and I stood on the corner. A little boy, no older than about eight years of age, came up to me and asked was I there for the watch. I said yes and he asked me for the fiver. I gave it to him and five minutes later he returned with my watch, which I still have!"

In May 1963 Branigan hit the headlines - but not Jim. His brother Frank, who served in the Irish Army until 1947, when he went to work in Guinness, rescued a drowning man from the Liffey. Frank was a night watchman on board the Guinness boat 'Lady Gwendolan' and was looking over the side of the vessel when he saw a man fall into the water. Frank tried the kiss of life (artificial respiration) in an effort to save the man's life but he unfortunately died in hospital. Incidentally, Frank Branigan was also a boxer and while in the Army he was Western Command Champion at Welterweight for the duration of the Emergency and boxed all over Ireland, especially in Enniskillen. One of Frank's more notable fights was in 1946, against Eddie Chandler in a charity tournament at Richmond Park, Inchicore (the home ground of League of Ireland club St Patrick's Athletic) for Tom Hickey, a well-known boxer in the 1920's and 1930's, who had died a short time previous. Tom Hickey was in Jim Branigan's class at school in James's Street, a coincidence in that the two of them became well-known boxers. Frank knocked Chandler out cold and it was some time before he came to.

A case that was a change from the usual violent one occurred in August 1963. Jim was in a patrol car with Garda Riordan when they stopped at traffic lights. A man came over and asked them politely for a lift home as he had unsuccessfully tried to hail a taxi. "Go home" said Jim while his colleague escorted the man back onto the footpath. However the man again approached the patrol car and informed Jim that as a Garda he was a public servant and he then demanded a lift home. "Go home or else" said Jim. With that the man flung himself onto the bonnet of the patrol and in the process earned himself an appearance in Court, courtesy of Jim, before Justice O Grady. During the Court proceedings the accused man remarked from the dock that "when a person is brought into the Court he should not be the subject of

laughter". "Who is laughing?" remarked the Justice with a grin. "There was a titter all around the Court, I heard it", replied the accused. When Jim informed the Justice that the accused's wife was in bad health he applied the Probation Act and discharged the man. The same morning in Court Jim had two gang members charged with assault and gave the following description of a south side area to Justice O Grady: "St Theresa's Gardens is a trouble spot and Gardaí are constantly being assaulted and every night gangs of youths are fighting and throwing bottles". The area in question was indeed a trouble spot and at that time the trouble was to spread like cancer to other areas of the city, like Keogh Square, Dolphin's Barn, Corporation Street and Summerhill to name but a few.

During the hearing of an appeal by two young Crumlin men against a one month sentence for riotous behaviour and assault in the Star Cinema, Crumlin in May 1963, the barrister for the defendants, in mitigation, told the Circuit Court that the film being shown was on communist brainwashing and was so dry that it could not hold the attention and imagination of the youthful audience and consequently a disturbance ensued. In evidence, James Kelly, manager of the cinema, said that there were 1,400 people on the premises and that the entire house was in a state of chaos. "People were standing up and howling and carrying on something atrocious. The place was a seething mass". Justice: "Was there anything in the film to provoke this behaviour?". Manager: "No, the film was an excellent one and could hold the attention of any audience". But Jim Branigan disagreed with the manager, telling the Court that the film "was a little dry for the youthful audience and was brutal, your Honour". The Judge suspended the sentence. The name of the film in question was '*The Manchurian Candidate*', a classic conspiracy thriller which was set in the period after the Korean War (1950-53) and starred Frank Sinatra. The film was a clever political satire about a US soldier who is brainwashed to kill Americans.

Jim Branigan was not a rough Garda and never used his baton during his career. He did use his gloves - those famous black ones - on occasion and also used his hand to give some trouble-shooter a few clips. On a few occasions he had to use his fists when faced by violent gangs of thugs in a scrap. As stated before, Jim always spoke up for someone whom he thought had even the slightest flicker of good in him. But in the case of a seasoned thug Jim did not mince his words. He would describe a thug to the Justice as "a right blackguard, one of the most truculent lads around, a troublemaker or a right gouger". When giving evidence in the case of two youths charged with assaulting Garda Joseph Peake in April 1963 Jim told the Justice that "young Guards are fair game for this type of scoundrel at night-time". When Jim had to use a modicum of force to effect an arrest he would never hide that fact from the Court. He would come out with it in his direct evidence and under cross examination his famous and often-spoken statement was "I used as much force as necessary, Justice". A case of this honesty was in April 1963 when he charged a twenty-two-year-old man from Rutland Avenue with assault. Jim told Justice O Riain that the accused had refused to leave a fish-and-chip shop when asked and became violent. "I had to give him a few taps to quieten him".

Promotion again came Jim's way and in the beginning of December 1963 he was made Sergeant. It was a hectic week for him for after officiating at a boxing tournament in Wolverhampton, England, he came home to his much publicised promotion and the following week he was off again with the Irish Boxing team to

Glasgow. It was a very popular promotion and for weeks afterwards many letters of congratulations appeared in Irish and UK newspapers. In every Court that he appeared in during December he was heartily congratulated by the Judge, Justice, Court Registrars, Barristers, Solicitors, Gardaí and Journalists. His promotion, everyone said, was overdue and well deserved. Some gentleman wrote a song in honour of the occasion, to the air of '*Bat Masterson*', then a cowboy serial on television. It was published in the Irish Independent and was written by a J F Higgins and went as follows:

"Soon after the Civic Guards began
There joined a man named Branigan
He was a boxer, sound and grim
They called him Jim, Jim Branigan
But he still put them on the mat
He kept the peace both clean and trim
And he was Jim, Jim Branigan.
And now he is promoted up
To cause concern to many a pup
May more success come to him
Whom they call Jim, Jim Branigan".

A British soldier, home on leave in February 1964, was jeering a young Garda, Joseph Neville, singing "here's a copper, but a copper won't pay our gas". When the Garda told the man to stay quiet, he became violent. It was about 1.30am and there was nobody about. The man thought the young Garda was fair game and grabbed him by the neck. Jim came on the scene out of nowhere and arrested the man. Jim told the Court that in the patrol car the man said: "I sang in Germany, I sang in Cyprus and if you cannot sing here it is not freedom, it is communism". Jim told the Justice that the soldier was due to go back to Britain shortly, was drunk at the time of the incident and deserved a chance. The Justice obliged him, imposing a £1 fine and then asking the soldier: "what right have you to be singing at that hour of the night when people are in their beds trying to sleep?".

On arrival at the scene of a break-in at the Old Pine Tree, Inchicore on February 4th 1964 Jim saw three plate glass doors broken and blood in the premises. A trail of blood lead from the public house, which he followed for twenty yards, where it stopped. He got a torch and picked up the trail again, following it for a mile and a half. The trail led to two men who were hiding in a vacant house. Immediately Jim had them taken to Dr Steeven's Hospital. In the subsequent Court proceedings District Justice Maloney said that "the excellent work of Sgt Branigan, who was taking no credit for the detective work he had done, undoubtedly saved the lives of these two men who had lost a great amount of blood".

By July 1964, the District Courts were daily dealing with stabbings and serious assaults. The violence was not solely inter-gang warfare, for many innocent civilians were being attacked at random by roaming bands of youths. In one case a cinema usher had been attacked and injured by a gang and Jim prosecuted one of the culprits who was charged before Justice Maloney on June 26th. He described the culprit to the Justice as follows: "this man is one of a gang. They are all there at the back of the Court. They are in here every day. They don't work but just hang around

causing trouble, trouble, trouble all the time". This case highlighted the frustration of the Gardaí in dealing with the escalating violence. The Courts were also concerned with the situation and on July 22nd 1964 Justice Farrell remarked from the bench: "I will not stand for flick knives - no knives in any circumstances and no gangs". It was accepted by the authorities that an alarming proportion of young males always carried a knife in their possession and the number of such charges before the Courts at the time bears out this theory.

Eventually the authorities reacted to the growing demand to curb the violence and in August 1964, on the advice of Chief Superintendent Doherty, the Riot Squad was set up to deal with violence in Dublin. The squad was to be spearheaded by Jim Branigan, a vote of confidence by the authorities in his ability to enforce law and order on the streets of the capital. The following is an extract from the *Evening Herald* of Monday August 3rd 1964:

'To combat the increasing incidence of gang warfare in Dublin a new Riot Squad has been formed. In charge of the new detail is Garda James C Branigan of Kevin Street Station, a former Garda heavyweight boxing champion. At the moment he has been assigned four permanent helpers but he can call on Gardaí from any of the stations in Dublin if he considers it necessary. It will be a mobile patrol with two way radio and all other necessary means of communication. Sergeant Branigan, who is a Dublin man, is one of the fairest and also one of the toughest men in the force. He has been responsible for the arrest and conviction of thousands of people who committed crimes of violence'.

The setting up of the Squad received nation-wide coverage, with Jim it's leader being featured even in regional papers like the *Connaught Tribune*. The move received widespread approval to judge by the Letters to the Editor columns in all the newspapers and was much publicised nationally. Jim Branigan's new role spearheaded him to the forefront of the war against Dublin's violent crime as never before. It was also to cement the legendary Jim Branigan into the folklore and tradition of his native city. The new Riot Squad had a great launching - on it's first night in operation it quelled disturbances in Great Denmark Street, Bridge Street, Donore Avenue and Phibsborough. One of Jim's first cases before the Courts in his new role was when he broke up a row in Harolds Cross, charging two local lads with assault on a third, occasioning actual bodily harm. "These people turn a nice people and a nice city into the savage jungle one reads about" remarked Justice Maloney. It was a serious assault and certain prison faced the two defendants but Jim told the Justice that they had not been in trouble before, came from respectable families and were both employed, so suspended sentences were imposed and the two were given a chance.

Jim soon earned a reputation as head of the Riot Squad and a colleague of his on that first team told how, at the end of August 1964, they were called to a Saturday night street battle. The battle was at it's height when they arrived on the scene. They heard a roar that "Lugs is here" and to their amazement saw hardened criminals running into the darkness, leaving the fighting to another night. Only the youngest of the thugs remained, who perhaps hadn't heard of big Jim's reputation. They were quickly sent on their way. That same weekend the Squad arrested a number of men engaged in gang warfare. During the subsequent Court hearing the Justice exclaimed that "there are wolves roaming the city at night and that is what we have come to".

Undoubtedly 1964 was a milestone in Jim Branigan's life, being made leader of one of the premier, active Garda units in the country at the, for a Garda, ripe age of fifty-four. That year was also a milestone in the life of a young, seven year old boy from Kevin Street for it was the year he first met Jim Branigan. Michael Edmonds (Mickey) strolled into the courtyard in Kevin Street Garda Station in August 1964. Michael lived across the street from the station and couldn't speak. Jim befriended the young lad and showed him around the station. He gave him a cup of tea and brought him back home. The following day Michael was back in the station and again Jim toured the complex with him. Michael finished his day by having dinner with the lads in the station canteen. It was the same every day and Jim gave his time and attention to the young Michael. After about four months Michael surprised his mother by speaking for the first time in his life, although he did not learn his first words from Jim, for he told his mother to f... off. With Jim's care and guidance - coupled with the fact that Michael idolised the gentle Garda - the young lad progressed greatly and by the age of twelve could communicate effectively with people. Jim gave a delighted Michael a key to his own locker in the station.

Jim introduced the little boy to all the other Gardaí in Kevin Street and one of them, Bosco Muldoon, later stationed in Finglas, became a great friend of Michael's. Bosco took Michael out to his wife and family every single Sunday for dinner. Through Jim's acquaintance all the Gardaí got to know Michael, who long after Jim's retirement and death was a most popular figure with the Kevin Street contingent. Whenever there was a do or reception from the station Michael got his customary invitation and there was always someone to collect and leave him home. "Only for Jim Branigan my son would not be talking today" exclaimed Mr Edmonds. And Mrs Edmonds agreed, saying that Jim devoted so much of his time to Michael that she could never repay him: "Michael is a fine chap today thanks to Jim Branigan. Nobody has a heart as he has. We owe him a great deal". Michael kept in touch until Jim's death and always spoke very highly of him, regarding him as a father figure. Michael still lives close to Kevin Street at Cathedral View Walk. It is a great tribute to Jim that Michael is today still a most welcome figure in Kevin Street and is regularly in the company of the Gardaí when they are off duty, whether it be a visit to a football match, a Garda rowing event or tea in one of their homes.

The Riot Squad proved an effective measure of curbing the excesses of Dublin's gangs and in September 1964 the *Evening Press* had the following to report on the effect of the Squad under the headline 'Riot Men Check Gangs':

'The Garda Riot Squad which came into existence at the beginning of last month has had a wonderfully deterrent effect on gangs of youths. Since its inception there has not been one serious case of teenage gang warfare and a Garda officer said today "It seems to be having the desired effect". The Squad, which operates from Kevin Street Garda Station, is under the charge of Sergeant James C Branigan and it is a tribute to the respect in which he is held by the tougher elements in Dublin that the Squad's work has been light so far'.

The City was indeed quiet for a few months after the inception of the Riot Squad but the old adage "familiarity breeds contempt" must be indeed correct for by 1965 violence in the city was making a comeback, but nothing on the scale of pre-August 1964. In January 1965 Jim charged a man with assaulting a girl at the Crystal Ballroom. Justice Farrell, who was dealing with the case along with a number of others brought by the Riot Squad remarked that "this is the number one fault in this

city at the moment - assault, violence, threats. Unless it is stamped on it will grow and grow until it will take machine guns, not Sergeant Branigan, to stop it". Shortly after this case the Riot Squad was summoned to Jervis Street hospital. On arrival at the casualty room Jim saw a man lying on a stretcher with two porters, a doctor and a nurse trying to pin him down. Nearby was a doctor bleeding from the nose and a nurse bleeding from the lips. Asked what the trouble was one of the doctors said that the man being held down went berserk when they refused to let him into the ward with his mate. "I'll f..... do you in as well if you come near me" the man yelled out at Jim, who knelt down beside him and, trying to calm him, said: "take it easy, you'll be all right". Jim asked the porters to release the man and as they did so he let swing at the burly Sergeant. Jim saw the blow coming and in a split-second reaction connected with a right, knocking the man unconscious. One of the doctors in this incident told me that the subdued patient was taken to St Brendan's Hospital and that he was "still asleep when given the jab". He also said that St. Brendan's had no problems afterwards with the patient. Sometime after that incident Jim saw the young doctor who had been cut on the nose, who asked him "Show us again how you put him to sleep, Sergeant?". Jim replied "Doctor, I have my way of putting people to sleep and you have your way".

George Rhatigan, stationed in Kevin Street, was with Jim in the early years of the Riot Squad: "one night, we were driving past the Crystal Ballroom. Jim saw a few lads jostling in the queue and I stopped the van. Jim got out and spoke to the lads, returning shortly afterwards. I tried to start up the van but without success. The lads got out to push the car and although there were about three hundred in the queue there wasn't a mummer out of them. It was really funny. Normally when that happened you couldn't hear yourself with the hissing and slagging but with Jim there no one dared to crack a wise remark".

George recalled an incident in the late-1960's when Jim got a terrible kick from a lady wearing sandals. His leg was cut in the assault and dirt got into it. He spent five weeks in hospital as a result of this incident and at one time doctors feared they might have to amputate the leg. George called into the hospital to see him the night he had been informed of the bad news. Jim was propped up on the bed, his portable typewriter on his knees, typing charges and reports, and was in great spirits. George couldn't get over it. George recalled that Jim was great to the recruits coming to Kevin Street and indeed any recruit he met while in the Courts. He would show them how to prepare a case and give evidence and would remain with them until the completion of the proceedings.

The new role as head of the Riot Squad did not interfere with Jim's activities on the boxing scene - for instance in 1965/66 he refereed and judged 608 contests and in 1966/67 he refereed and judged 650 contests. A usual occurrence during Jim's police career was the reporting to him of crimes committed in the vicinity of the Stadium, even though he was off-duty. An assault on a bus, a handbag snatch or a shop robbery, if it happened within a mile of the Stadium, that's where the victim or a witness would go for they knew that there was a chance Jim Branigan would be in the boxing headquarters. "Many a time Jim would ask me, in the middle of a fight, to substitute while he went off to investigate a crime just reported at the ringside" said Charlie Higgins of the IABA "and sometimes he would even borrow my bike to go in pursuit of the wrongdoer".

The closing months of 1965 were busy ones for Jim and the boys and on Sunday October 17th he played a leading role in a battle at Malahide in which about a hundred youths from Swords (some with swords) and Donnycarney took part. When the Gardaí were called to the Spanish Arch Hall the fight was in progress between the rival gangs. Swords, steel combs, iron bars and bottles were commissioned by the youths and the Gardaí sent for reinforcements. As the Riot Squad appeared on the scene "backed by three allers from the Dog Unit", the battle spread to the road outside the Hall. Even with Jim Branigan on the scene it took half an hour to quell the riots. Two young men received head injuries and so serious was the disturbance that a special report was sent to the Minister for Justice on the matter. Three weeks later, on November 7th 1965 Jim played a major role in quelling disturbances at the Mayfair ballroom in Clondalkin. The following extract from the *Sunday Press* of November 7th under the headline 'Riot Squad Rushed To Clondalkin Battle' gives an account of the incident:

'Dublin's riot squad rushed to the Mayfair ballroom in Clondalkin shortly after midnight when violence erupted after a dance. Bus crews refused to work without police protection and so heavy was the fighting at times that a dog unit was rushed to the scene. At the height of the brawl upward of fifty screaming youths and teenagers were locked in combat. Three squad cars of Gardaí joined Det Sergt James C Branigan and his team at the scene and a number of arrests were made. One young man, who was stated to be seriously injured was rushed to Doctor Steeven's Hospital. But for the arrival of the Riot Squad under Sergt Branigan there would have undoubtedly been serious injury or even loss of life , judging from the array of small weapons, including darts, steel combs, flick knives, tomahawks and open razors found at the scene of the battle'.

Jim began 1966 as usual - with the first charge of the year, a common law assault charge. A couple of weeks later Jim had a young man charged with possession of an offensive weapon, namely a steel comb, the handle of which was sharpened like a blade. The accused had challenged Jim when approached and the following extract from the *Evening Press* of January 17th 1966 gives an indication of the public reaction to such a gauntlet being thrown down to the ex-boxer:

'Sgt. James C. Branigan said that between 1am and 2am today defendant used bad language to him. When Sgt Branigan, a former international boxer, said that Heneghan twice challenged him to take off his coat and fight him there was a ripple of laughter in the court'.

One of Jim's toughest nights in his Garda career was the night of April 15th/16th 1967. That night roaming knife-wielding gangs stabbed seven teenagers in unprovoked vicious assaults and the front page of the April 16th 1967 issue of the *Sunday Press* indicated the cruel nature of the attacks:

'It was a night of terror in Dublin City streets when a gang of youths went on a two hour rampage, stabbing and slashing seven young men between Camden Street and Dolphin's Barn on Friday night and early yesterday morning. Five of the victims were left unconscious and the gangs used flick-knives, steel combs and James Bond-type umbrellas with the end sharpened to a point in the vicious attacks'.

The Riot Squad were called to the different scenes of attack but each time the roaming gangs had moved on. On the Monday, Jim Branigan had his enquiries completed and in a dawn swoop he arrested the culprits and successfully prosecuted the thugs.

In the summer of 1967 Jim charged a young blonde lady with assaulting him when she gave him a dig on his mouth with her fist but did not damage him. Justice Maloney remarked that "it would take more than a blonde to mark Sergeant Branigan" and fined her five pounds. Jim's knack of knowing faces is nicely explained by James (Jimmy) Egan, who recalls an incident from that summer. "Lugs knew my father Tim well. I was at a disco in the Moulin Rouge club, Georges Street, one Sunday afternoon. At that time Dublin was being flooded by Spanish students and we felt that they were stealing the motts on us, so there was a bit of aggro between us. Outside the club the aggro was beginning to increase in tempo when Lugs arrived on the scene. Out of a crowd of over two hundred, he shouted at me 'Egan, go home' and gave me a clip on the ear. I don't know how he recognised me or picked me out of the crowd. I left straight away and was immediately followed by all my mates".

The Riot Squad only ever consisted of three men, Jim, a driver and an observer. Jim was the only regular member of the squad. Garda stations around the city nominated a man for each week. But by the late-1960's Jim was working closely with people like Sonny Heaney and Martin Long and he developed a close friendship with Sonny during his last years and hoped that he would take over the Squad when he retired. But that wasn't to be and a week after his retirement the Riot Squad was disbanded.

In May 1967 Dublin bus crews were becoming regular targets for the city's thugs and the *Irish Times* made the same suggestion for stamping out the scourge that other newspapers did. It's edition of May 26th 1967 stated:

'In the past ten days two CIE bus conductors have been quite seriously injured by these types, one of them having been stabbed by a young gangster who got away out in Terenure on Thursday night. Conductors are peculiarly vulnerable and their protection against this sort of cowardly criminal offers many problems to an already overworked police force. Some sort of radiotelephone alarm to make quick contact with the police would be advisable but what might be better again would be if busmen were given a course in self protection by somebody of the calibre of Detective Sergeant Jim Branigan, who is outstandingly the best man in Dublin when it comes to dealing with young hoodlums'.

Whenever a problem arose as a result of hooliganism and vandalism there was broad agreement in the media as to the ideal remedy: Jim Branigan. A short time later there was a problem with vandalism and thuggery on western provincial trains during the summer weekends and the *Connaught Tribune* suggested the only remedy to defeat the problem...Jim, as he had successfully tamed the Teddy Boys. Jim and the Riot Squad were assigned to travel on the provincial train services and in no time the problem was firmly tackled and the *Western People* was able to proclaim a short time after their intervention that 'thanks to the famous Big Jim Branigan all is quiet on the Western trains'.

Bray, Co Wicklow, became a little hot in the summer of 1967 and the situation became so bad that the Riot Squad were ordered to the Wicklow town to bolster the attempts of the local Gardaí to keep the peace. When the Riot Squad's seaside tour of duty was completed Bray was free from unruly, violent and drunken behaviour for many years, so much so that Jim Branigan was dubbed 'the man who tamed Bray'. In one famous Court case, reported in the *Wicklow People* of August 26th 1967, Jim had three youths charged before Bray District Court. Following a lengthy cross-

examination by Mr P Creagh, solicitor for the defendants, Jim Branigan had said that "he came out to tame Bray". When concluding his case, Mr Creagh argued that the impression of frequent disorder as put forward to the Court by Garda Superintendent Carey and the approach of Sergeant Branigan to a few quiet boys was wrong and unjustified. Then turning towards Jim, in a sharp voice said "Don't *glare* at me, Sergeant".

At this time Jim's black gloves became as famous as himself. He never went anywhere without his black gloves. When the Garda van drew up to a crowd of youths at a street corner, he would open the passenger window, belt the gloves off the door and the crowd would quickly and quietly disperse. He didn't only use his gloves to belt off the van, though, and in August 1967 he was in Bray Court, having charged three men in two separate incidents. In the first case Jim admitted that one of the defendants got very aggressive with him and he slapped him with his gloves. Jim told the Justice that the defendant "then sparred up to me and said don't touch me now or he would fix me". In the second case, a man Jim was escorting to the Garda station said he was liable to take fits and in one such fit no man could hold him. At the Garda Station Jim informed the Justice "he developed one of those quasi-fits and threw himself on the ground kicking. I knew the defendant was not an epileptic so I put my gloves on and asked for a bucket of water to throw on him and the fit stopped". Incidentally one of Jim's trademarks in the Courts from the inception of the Riot Squad was the laying of the famous black gloves neatly in front of him on the witness stand, just prior to giving evidence.

In early 1968 Jim again found himself in hospital, having been savagely assaulted, while walking past a man he had earlier arrested, in Pearse Street Garda Station. After treatment he was back on the streets of Dublin doing the job he loved so much that he was on permanent night duty at his own request. Such was the dedication of Jim Branigan that he voluntarily chose to be on permanent night duty at a time when there was no extra payment for such service. P G O' Brien, who spent his later career attached to Green Street Courthouse, drove Jim around at this time. P G recalled one aspect of the job then - Saturday night dancing at the Olympic: "it was a great place for a good mill. I used to enjoy seeing the toughs scarpering when Jim came on the scene. That's where he got his bum bite, you know". P G, like all Jim's old colleagues, said that he was "a great man to work with and he was so gentle and went out of his way to help youngsters. We couldn't believe he could be so kind and helpful to some of the young lads that we brought in, particularly when we knew his reputation before I joined the Squad. He was also a great man in a family row - he could fix up things no problem".

Vincent Duff, who also served with Jim during this time, said that the sight of "Big Jim, arriving on the scene in the trench coat and black gloves, had an amazing effect. The opposition didn't run, they just disappeared". He recalled going to London in the summer of 1968 on a boxing tour: "On our second day we were going to a London/Irish night club for entertainment. When we approached the entrance there was a crowd hanging around outside the club jostling and creating a disturbance. One of the people causing the disturbance looked in our direction and said in a loud country accent 'here's f..... Lugs Branigan' and they all ran. We just couldn't believe it, the place was deserted in two minutes flat. Our whole party, including Jim, burst into laughter".

Val Behan came to Kevin Street as a young recruit in that same year. He found Jim most helpful and kind during his early days there. "He was great to us all and there was no such thing as a generation gap with him. He was always young at heart and great crack to be with. If morale was low he would soon boost us all up". Val was out with Jim on patrol a few times but things were quiet "although we went to a few family rows but Jim handled them so well that the parties sorted out their differences on the spot." Val confirmed what a lot of other Gardaí have stated - if you were on nights with Jim, he would handle the case in Court the next day, remanding the case to when his companions were on day duty. "The job was his life, no-one today would do it".

One day in March 1969 the Branno 5 van broke down and the Riot Squad had to commission a patrol car from a Garda Detective Unit. That night the Squad had dealt with a couple of ugly incidents in the city and had to rush an injured man to hospital in a patrol car. The next day the two detectives refused to take out the patrol car because there was blood all over it and the sight of it sickened them. When Jim heard this he went out to the detectives and told them to go and wash the blood away as there was only a bit of it there in any event. "What are you that you are afraid of the sight of a little blood, you are Gardaí you know, not two schoolgirls". The detectives changed their minds and took out the car.

In April 1969 Jim was out with Garda James Fitzgerald when they saw a fight in progress in Thomas Street. He waded in but was attacked by one of the men involved in the row. The attacker did not have much success, for as Jim told Justice Maloney "as he rushed me I hit him and he subsided. Another man threw a kick at me but I saw the boot coming and went with it, sustaining only a bruise on the stomach. I gave this second attacker a few clips and both men were arrested and charged". Justice Maloney told both of Jim's attackers that "the Sergeant is a quiet man but I would much prefer to be somewhere else if he is roused. He could lift you up on the roof". A few months later Jim had another attacker - a four legged one! On Saturday August 16th a young Ballyfermot man set his German Shepard on him during a fracas on Ballyfermot Road but the terror of the Teddy Boys became the terror of the German Shepard, for Jim attacked the unfortunate dog and set it to flight. The following extract from the *Evening Press* of Tuesday August 19th takes up the story:

'Serg Branigan said that he saw M standing at the gate with a German Shepard dog. He told him to move away several times. M moved short distances each time. Eventually, after being told to move again, M moved down a side road and set the dog on witness a number of times. "I took the bull by the horns and attacked the dog. The dog ran away and I ran after the defendant". Justice: Did the dog do you any injury? Sergeant: Oh no. I got there first. The defendant was duly convicted and sentenced by Justice Herman Good.'

In the old pre-Riot Squad days Jim was driven around in car 52 but now he was in a patrol van called after himself - Branno 5. Officially it was called Bravo 5 but from the late-1960's until his retirement it was called Branno Five by the Garda Radio Control Centre. Even police commissioners didn't get Garda cars named after them.

At the end of 1969 Jim got mention from an unlikely quarter - Dáil Éireann. During the Dáil debates in November of that year P J Burke TD complimented the Minister

for Justice on reducing violent crime in the city, stating that "a great debt of gratitude was due to Sergeant James Branigan who is in charge of the section dealing with unruly elements in Dublin". He complimented the Sergeant on the excellent job he was doing cleaning up the city. The Chair was distinctly worried and hustled in quickly to say that a TD should not mention names individually but Paddy got his admiration on record.

In January 1970, Jim saw red and the offending incident was reported in all the newspapers. The following is the report from the *Irish Independent*:

'It is not surprising that Det Sgt James Branigan of the Riot Squad turned crimson yesterday when he went to look for his flannels. They were found beside the safe in the National Stadium which had been rifled by burglars after the All-Ireland amateur boxing championship on Friday night. The raiders, who got away with £40 worth of cash and cheques, used Sgt Branigan's flannels to deaden the noise as they jemmied open the safe'.

Around this time Dublin bus crews were again being attacked by unruly elements, particularly on the Ballyfermot bus route. A meeting between the Garda Commissioner, CIE Unions and management resulted in the Riot Squad riding shotgun on the late-night Ballyfermot buses. The incidence of violent attacks on the bus crews ceased immediately as the following article from the *Sunday Independent* of March 1st 1970 confirms:

'All was quiet on the Ballyfermot bus war front last night. Apart from a singsong on the last bus from the city by about a half dozen youths, who gave a melodious rendering of "I wanna go home on a 78 bus" all was bliss on this route which has led to bus crews deciding not to man the vehicles unless protected after 10 o' clock at night. The protection was there last night. Apart from Gardaí on patrol at the Aston Quay terminus, Garda escorts were provided for the buses en route to Ballyfermot. The last bus was shadowed to the terminus by Gardaí under Garda Sgt James C Branigan. The young conductor of the final bus told the Sunday Independent that things had never been as quiet on a Saturday night before. He felt a bit tense during the trip because he didn't know what to expect at the end'.

Like a flash, Jim Branigan's intervention restored law and order without him having to lift a finger - his presence was enough to keep the peace. During 1970 the birth of Dublin's skinhead cult occurred and one of the first incidents involving the new movement was a pitched battle in Lower Abbey Street, outside the Club-a Go-Go, between skinheads and greasers, in early April. Jim arrived on the scene and after five minutes, ten arrests and one hundred combatants fleeing in all directions as fast as their legs could carry them, law and order was restored. All during 1970 Jim and the Riot Squad were busy containing the skinhead menace and it was through their efforts and success in tackling the problem that the excesses committed by the skinhead cult in England were not carbon-copied here.

In February 1971, Jim had a Rathfarnham man charged with assault. The Squad were called to the Parochial Hall in Rathmines, where he found spasmodic fighting in progress between different groups outside the hall. He cut through the fighting youths but got the boot from the man in the dock. In Court the defendant, from the witness box, swore that he did not know at the time that Jim was a Garda. Jim went over to the defendant, looked him straight in the eye, and asked him "what did you think I was, a boy scout?"

As said so many times, behind Jim Branigan's tough exterior was a kind, gentle man. Willie Cooper, son of Felix Cooper of the heyday years of the GBC, recalled how kind Jim was to him on his first International against Scotland in Meadowbank in 1971. "I was really nervous and Jim took the time to talk to me and to assure me before I got into the ring. My nerves disappeared". Like all the other boxers Willie, based in the Garda Depot, remembered Jim for the large selection of sweets which he always had on him and which he generously shared with all and sundry. Willie, incidentally, was Senior Heavyweight Champion in 1974 with Crumlin BC and started boxing in 1967. He recalled an incident during the 1968/69 season when he was messing in a contest with Seamus Mellet in the National Stadium during the Garda Championships. Both lads were putting their hands on the ropes and jumping up and down. At one stage Willie stopped in the middle of the ring and said to Mellet "hit me here", pointing to his jaw. With that Jim jumped between them and roared "if you both don't start boxing seriously I'll fling you out of the ring fast". They got on with the contest. Another occasion, in 1971, Willie was boxing in a tournament in Arbour Hill in which Jim was refereeing. A member of the public (the same man charged with unlawful possession of a camera in the Santa Claus incident mentioned earlier) became abusive and was shouting "f...Lugs" and "f... the lot of you". Jim left the ring, lifted the particular member of the public up in the air by the coat lapels and carried him out.

An underworld figure, Henchico, collapsed and died of natural causes in the vicinity of Benburb Street during the small hours of morning in the early 1970's. Jim Branigan discovered the body and had it taken to Jervis Street. He reported the matter to the appropriate Garda authorities and before leaving the hospital removed all possessions including £700 in cash from the dead man and gave them to the night nurse, telling her to give them to nobody and put them in safe keeping for the investigating Gardaí. The next day Jim called into Jervis Street and the nurse told him that after he left the dead man's wife called and asked for the money, as her husband had forgotten to leave any money in the house and she had to put food on the table. "Did you give her any money?" asked Jim. "No, Sergeant, I did just as you told me". "Good, for he has no wife, he never married".

A doctor in the Mater Hospital recalled an incident at the end of 1971 when, after a serious fight in Parnell Street between gangs from Sheriff Street and Whitehall, ten to twelve youths were ferried to the Mater Hospital and another dozen or so to the Bridewell as a result of the timely intervention of the Riot Squad. After the uninjured combatants were safely lodged in the Bridewell Jim went up to the Mater to arrest certain identified troublemakers for assault and possession of weapons. On arrival at the Casualty Unit he saw doctors busily stitching the injured from the riot and looking around the room, in a loud voice bellowed at one of the surgeons "Gosh, doctor, it's a Singer sewing machine you would need here, not a needle and thread". The same doctor recalled that whenever Jim brought an "out and out troublemaker to the hospital for treatment he would often say to the doctor on duty: make sure that's a blunt needle". Jokingly, of course.

Just before Christmas 1971 Jim was called to a cafe row in Charlemont Street where a door and windows had been broken. On arrival he saw the culprits running from the scene towards the Grand Canal and ran after them. As he caught up on one of them the culprit put his arm around a lamppost and swung around at Jim with his

foot. Feeling that "it was either him or me, so I let him have it" he then took the man (whose brother was also arrested in the incident) into custody, whereupon the man complained in the Garda station of being injured in the scrap with Branigan, who by this time had left the Station to answer an urgent call. The next morning Jim was in Court for the case when one of the brothers charged in connection with it approached him and said "Where's my brother?" "I don't know" replied Jim. The case was called and the Court was informed that one of the defendants was in hospital but would be down later. "You put him there Branigan" shouted the other man.

Just before twelve o'clock the injured man arrived in Court on crutches and both brothers were arraigned on the charges. "What happened your leg?" inquired Justice Garavan of the injured man. Pointing to Jim the man replied "he done it". Jim told the Justice that he would never deliberately break a man's leg and that it must have happened in the fight. "He threatened me two weeks ago" replied the injured man". "Did you threaten him, Sergeant?" inquired the Justice. "No, but I recall two weeks ago telling him if I saw him in Charlemont Street what I wouldn't do to him". "He threatened me" said the accused again. "What did you say to him" asked the Justice and Jim repeated his statement. "Don't be hedging, Sergeant, tell me exactly what you said to him". "Well, Justice, two weeks ago he was involved in an incident in Charlemont Street and I told him that I wouldn't charge him but that if I ever saw him in the vicinity again I would shove a size twelve so far up his posterior that his front teeth would jump out". "That's all right, Sergeant, I just wanted to know what you said" replied the Justice and he proceeded to impose a custodial sentence on both men.

It is common knowledge that Jim Branigan did not like being called the name Lugs. He may not have minded it but for the fact that he was christened same by a dangerous member of a criminal family of Italian brood. But because of the character and evil streak in the man who first called him it, Jim disliked (to put it mildly) being called Lugs. Many a person had told me of seeing someone being clipped by Jim just for calling him Lugs and Sean Fulton, based in the Garda Depot, recalled an incident where they had two prisoners in Raheny, when he was stationed there, that were to be brought to the Courts. "The car was out and we were informed that Branno Five was in the district. We radioed it and they came to bring the prisoners to Court. When the Bran arrived in the station one of the prisoners said 'hello Mr. Branigan' as he walked by Jim. The other one said 'hello Lugs' and with that he got a clip on the ear". Jim Quinn, a publican in Patrick Street since 1949, recalled a lad shouting Lugs from across the street. "Jim ran after him and gave him a clip. I also remember him stretching out eleven gougers, with the assistance of a local dairyman. Even though he was tough, he was a kind and gentle person, though". There are countless stories like this, some from Gardai, some from former troublemakers, and whether fact or fiction there is a tendency by many to blow-up this aspect of Jim's character. Sonny Heeney recalled that occasionally when out in Branno Five the van would pull up beside a gang on a corner. One of the Squad, who shall remain nameless, would roll down the window and say "hello, lads". "Hello". "We had a complaint, would you break up". "Okay, good night". The van would pull away and the certain Garda would say "Did you hear that, Sergeant, they called you f.....Lugs". Of course no such thing happened. "Stop the van" Jim would bellow and chase after the innocent youths who would be wondering what they did to

deserve this treatment. "The lads in Branno Five got a great kick out of this" said Sonny.

In February, 1972 Jim was called a name he was never called before, "a f----- Orange bastard", by a Monaghan man he arrested and charged with violent behaviour. In Court Justice Robert (Bob) O hUadhaigh said "that's a new one for you Sergeant but I'm not going to let this thing of being bellicose and patriotic while drunk continue". He imposed a sentence of seven days imprisonment on the defendant.

While in the course of sporting duty in March 1972 Jim received another injury and the *Evening Press* of March 13th 1972 took up the story under the headline 'He's Dublin's Most Belted Detective':

'Belted, bruised and battered, that in a nutshell is the story of Det Sergeant James C Branigan. A former heavyweight boxer from 1931 to 1940 and one time Leinster heavyweight champion, the Sergeant says that he has suffered more injuries outside the ring in street brawls than he did in his entire boxing career. 'Sergeant Branigan just cannot stay away from injuries. One would think that he would be safe while in Copenhagen, away from the tough characters he meets regularly on Dublin's streets at night. But not so. Today he turned up in Dublin District Court sporting an inch and a quarter gash just over his temple which he received in Copenhagen while performing the neutral job of refereeing in the Danish-Irish international boxing competition. While messing about sparring with the Irish boys he struck his head against a rack protruding from the wall. He returned to his Dublin home at 7 o'clock yesterday evening and went on duty two hours later. One hour later he was assaulted in the city and it was in connection with that business that he was in the District Court today. Sgt Branigan had now lost count of the number of times he has been assaulted. "It must be dozens of times" he says'.

Ger Clancy was in Kevin Street during the heyday of the Riot Squad, working in the old prefab building in the station yard: "there was always lots of action at the weekends and great excitement when the posse arrived - Jim and the arrested folk. When Jim left, this place was like a morgue". Ger recalled a story where a young lady called into the station and reported that she was having trouble with her boyfriend. She was going to meet him outside Bewley's in Westmoreland Street. She feared he would beat her up, but she would have to meet him nonetheless. Ger informed Jim who promptly went to Bewley's, armed with the boyfriend's description. Jim went up to the boyfriend, who asked where his girlfriend was and threatened to kill her. "I'll burst you if you lay a finger on her", Jim informed the cowardly escort, who threatened to kill himself by jumping into the Liffey. "Go ahead" said Jim "but if you do don't expect me to jump in after you 'cos I can't swim". The man, needless to say, jumped nowhere.

In March 1972 Jim arrested a young lady outside the TV Club and put her into the patrol car. The lady's brother approached the car and insisted on travelling with his sister. He became threatening and Jim informed the Justice, who was hearing a case of abusive behaviour against both, that he "clipped the brother two or three times" because he was pushing and then arrested him.

The early 1970's were "great times for a good oul row in the Top Hat Ballroom in Dunlaoghaire and the Arcadia in Bray" recalled Sonny Heeney, the closest of Jim's Riot Squad colleagues. Sonny described an incident on New Year's Eve 1971 when they rushed to the Top Hat around midnight to find a crowd of five to six hundred

men and women pressing against Dun Laoghaire and Dalkey Garda units in an effort to get into an already overcrowded dance hall. When the Riot Squad approached the pushing crowd, Jim went around the perimeter, gloves in one hand, warning people to go home and celebrate the New Year there as the dance hall was full. It took just ten minutes to clear the scene but not before one of the last of the would-be gatecrashers had assaulted Jim. In the subsequent Court proceedings Dubliners were warned by Justice O hUadhaigh that their city was one of rapidly growing violence: "it is obvious to anyone who sits in this Court as often as I do that violence is now considered a way of life in this city of ours". In his typical blustery, gruff voice he warned that he was going to give maximum penalties for violent crime when imposing a six-month prison sentence on Jim's attacker.

In September 1972 Jim was giving evidence in a case against a 21 year-old Ballyfermot man charged with attempting to steal a car and assaulting a Garda. He told the Court that following a call for assistance from the Garda he got out of Branno Five and clipped the accused, who subsided. "That finished it" said Jim. The banner headline on this case in the *Evening Herald* of September 7th 1972 read 'Knew No More After Detective Clipped Him' - they don't make headlines like that anymore!

As head of the Riot Squad Jim Branigan was big news wherever he went. In 1971 and 1972 he went to the United States with the International Police Association (IPA) accompanied by his wife and while there he figured prominently in the media, being photographed in the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Long Island Press*, the *Philadelphia Daily News* and numerous other American papers. Jim toured America extensively with the IPA and even got in on a bit of action. When he was in Cleveland, Ohio, he got permission from the Chief of Police to go out on patrol one night with two local patrolmen. They were called to a row in a black ghetto area in the early hours of the morning and when the two patrolmen were trying to effect an arrest, a man intervened and tried to assault them. In stepped Jim who 'clocked the man and knocked him flat'. During another incident in which Jim clocked another man in a tussle with the police, a shotgun was aimed at the patrolman and a bullet hit off the roof of the squad-car. While in Washington he asked to visit the City Morgue which was promptly arranged. "There were about twenty four bodies in the Morgue that day, some of which had hideous injuries inflicted on them".

During their stay in Washington there was a demonstration outside the White House "about something or other" and that Jim went up to the demonstrators saying "if you were in my country you would all be locked up, and rightly so". Words were exchanged and Jim then left the scene telling the demonstrators that they were lucky that "he wasn't the cop dealing with them". Some of Jim's colleagues on those IPA holidays said that because Jim was there they were the best trips ever. Even in the USA he got in on the action, recalled Bernard Morgan, stationed in the Bridewell, and besides Cleveland he went out with police patrols in other American cities - with the authorities' approval, of course. "He was thinking of going over there to live because there was so much action going on. He was offered a job as Chief Security Officer in a large Long Island utility and I am sure he would have taken up the job if myself and the boys had not talked him out of it. It would have been too hot for him over there considering he was near retirement". But Bernard was wrong in thinking that he and the lads had talked Jim out of his plans as his wife Elizabeth recoiled at the idea and settled Jim's mind for him.

To say the least Jim's style of policing was unique and had no parallel in the force. He did his own thing but was greatly influenced by Superintendent F Moran whom he greatly admired and regarded as "one of the best policemen from the rank of Garda up. The Moran Squad were noted at one time for clearing up all serious crime in the city". Jim also had a great regard for Ned Garvey, former Garda Commissioner: "he was a hardworking yet friendly man. His promotion all along was due to his hard work and his was one of the most popular promotions ever in the force". He and Mr Garvey were long-time friends.

Two months after Jim's second tour with the IPA in America, in July 1972, when giving evidence in the Circuit Court against a young ruffian who had been sentenced in the District Court for assault during a gang fight between youths from Keogh Square and Sean McDermott Street, Jim stated that when he arrived on the scene he spotted the defendant, who was the main protagonist in a riot taking place between the two gangs on Bachelors Walk. He immediately headed for the accused whom he subsequently arrested in Jervis Street Hospital and charged with assault and riotous behaviour. "Did you say that you arrested him in Jervis Street Hospital, Sergeant?" asked Judge McGivern. "Yes, your Honour, I clipped him and knocked him out cold". "I see" replied the Judge.

Tim Twomey from Kevin Street Garda Station was involved in an incident that occurred around this time. He was walking with Jim past a house in the Coombe around 8pm when they heard a row inside. The lady of the house shouted: "if you put your hands on me, you know what will happen" and the man of the house replied: "ah, go on and get your fancy man Lugs Branigan." The next thing they saw the man leaving the house, banging the door behind him. "Good night" said Jim to the gentleman. "Oh, good night Mr Branigan, I'm just going out to Devotions".

When the twilight of his career in the Garda Síochána arrived at the end of 1972, Jim Branigan was a legend and part of Dublin mythology. The stories about his exploits were legion. It was said that he often took off his coat and offered a hardchaw an option - to fight him or be taken into custody. Jim himself told me that on a few occasions as a Garda he "folded up his tunic and duelled with the odd hardman" and a few ex-thugs have admitted engaging in combat with him. It appears that at one stage it was the mark of a man to say "I claimed Lugs Branigan" and almost anyone who had even the slightest brush with the forces of law and order said that they got a clip or two from Lugs in their younger days. On this particular point a visit was made to a well known restaurant in the city which Jim had entered on the occasion of a celebrated mill or battle. The owner recalled the incident and stated that when the Riot Squad arrived Jim was shown four characters who were causing trouble and using obscene language. Jim asked them to leave and when one of the thugs became aggressive, he asked that the doors to the room be closed and he be left alone with them. Fifteen minutes later he came out and the other members of the Riot Squad were told to go in and take out the boyos. Of course, it may never have happened but it was told with sincere conviction, as indeed were many other similar incidents which were placed on record by other restaurant managers and publicans.

That precious gift, time, was running out for Jim Branigan as far as his career in the Garda Síochána was concerned for he was now approaching retirement age. Before

the end of 1972 he applied for a two-year extension to take him up to his 65th birthday but this was refused by Garda Commissioner Wymes and Jim began to serve out his last days in the force.

Not many policemen serve in the front line of duty right up to the day of their retirement and Jim was always proud of the fact that he was out there in the fight against violence and thuggery right up to the last hours of his career: "I was on duty in Branno Five right up to my retirement. I was the only man of my age on active duty. Men up to ten years younger than me had long been taken off the streets and given a cushy number behind a desk. I enjoyed every minute I spent in the Garda and the Riot Squad period was without doubt the most exciting and eventful time in my whole life".

CHAPTER 6

Jim Branigan and the Stars

World famous actress Elizabeth Taylor was one of the most beautiful women Jim Branigan ever saw and although she was extremely nice and very well made when he met her she was not his idea of a sex symbol: "I must say that if I saw her passing by on the street and did not know who she was I would certainly ask after her". Jim was her personal bodyguard when her husband, Richard Burton, was engaged on the set of '*The Spy Who Came In From The Cold*', which was being made in Dublin and in which he had a leading part. The film was being shot in Malpas Street, not far from the Coombe and in Smithfield, where a replica of the East-West border crossing in Berlin, called Checkpoint Charlie, was erected, including replica streetlights. The Burton's shared a caravan beside the film-set during their stay in Dublin and Jim's job was to prevent autograph hunters pestering Elizabeth, who had no part in the film. She would frequently say: "Come for a walk, Jimmy" and they would then go to the spot where Richard was acting on the set with actress Claire Bloom. On the way the conversation would touch on various topics, particularly her family, of whom obviously she was very fond. Her four children were with her. They were very well behaved and as Jim sat in the Gresham Hotel he noticed how good Elizabeth was with them.

When Liz left she gave him a memento which he treasured, an autograph saying 'Jimmy, you are the greatest'. The Burton's really enjoyed their genial bodyguard's company, so much so that he had tea with them several times in the Gresham and in their caravan but he never took any presents from them for "a Garda always keeps his distance and presents put him under a compliment". He became really fond of the Burtons: "Elizabeth was amazed that the Irish people were so obedient before the law because when I told people not to annoy her they would go away. Some of them would press me and I would ask Elizabeth Taylor to sign ten or twelve autographs. She would say: 'Certainly, Jimmy'. Richard Burton, who I found to be a very nice man, invited me to have a drink in the Gresham after they had finished shooting the film. I went with him even though I only took a mineral. Richard thanked me for looking after his wife and making life so happy for both of them and we then chatted about everything. Richard had a brother who was a police Inspector in Wales and so he was interested in my work. I was very surprised when I met the Burtons. They were different from what I had heard and read about for they were very ordinary and their children exceptionally well mannered". According to Jim, one of the big nuisances for the Burtons were notes and letters from spongers asking for money. From his police work he knew all the regulars at this game and was able to advise Liz accordingly. (Actually, the Burtons were very generous and just before the shooting of '*The Spy Who Came In From The Cold*' donated £100,000 for a deserving charitable cause).

Jim had always been interested in the Burtons and had followed with interest their films: "Now, don't jump to the conclusion that I angled for the job as their bodyguard, the fact is that I was detailed by my Inspector to look after them and see that nobody caused them any trouble". Other VIP visitors to Ireland, to whom Jim acted as bodyguard, included Cliff Richard, George Best and Englebert Humperdinck. They

just happened to come to his own police area and he was the best man available for the job.

He really could not believe his luck when asked to guard George Best who made an appearance at the Arcadia Ballroom, Bray in 1973. Among his many and varied interests, Jim was also an avid - and many of his colleagues say a partisan and dedicated - Manchester United fan and he went two or three times a year to see his favourite team play. Georgie, in his estimation, was a beautiful footballer - a wizard. Jim regretted that Georgie let himself down to the extent he did and at that time advised him to go back to football again as he was a great loss to the game. The Evening Herald quoted him on the subject: 'I would like to see him back with Manchester United, as they need him most at the moment. He should try to pull them out of the mud. After all, they made him and it is up to him to try to save them and put them back on top again. In his case, one of the difficulties is that as a boy from Belfast with so little he climbed from obscurity to fame too quickly'. He found George most interesting. Over a cup of tea after the show they talked about Manchester United who were doing well at that time. He agreed that they were going well but added that they needed the bolstering of a few new players. Georgie thanked Jim very much for the good job he did of looking after him and, like the Burtons, said the crowd was very well behaved. He was delighted to be able to autograph for Jim's young daughter, Denise, her own favourite pinup photograph of the famous footballer.

It was different when Jim was minding glamour boy singer Englebert Humperdinck. Girls were swooning over him and one girl was in a semi-coma outside the Arcadia Ballroom after she was knocked to the ground in the crush to see him. When Jim offered to have her removed to hospital she said: "If I could just see him I would be all right". So Jim took her inside with the help of a colleague and introduced her to her pop idol, who gave her a peck on the cheek and signed an autograph. Jim summed up this happy occasion: "She walked out of that dressing room, her face radiant, and completely better. She could not thank me enough for getting her that introduction. In my mind Englebert will always be remembered not as a singer but as a miracle worker".

The star who appreciated his protection most according to Jim was Cliff Richard. When he visited the National Stadium in the 1950's he had just been subjected to a series of mobbings in England and other countries by fanatical, screaming teenagers. Cliff was a very timid and nervous young man at that time and when the Gardaí were escorting him to the Gresham Hotel he was scared that a mob would appear from nowhere and overturn his car as had been done a week earlier in Britain. Jim's most difficult task was escorting Cliff to and from his dressing room. He did so without incident and Cliff was amazed at Branigan's control over the crowd. Jim was in Cliff's room all the time in the Gresham with two other Gardaí, Garda McCarney and Sgt Mulderrig. What impressed Jim most was the fact that after ordering tea for them in his room Cliff immediately phoned his mother to say he was all right and that he had experienced no trouble, adding that "the police in this place are tops". He afterwards told Jim that he phoned his mother every night after a show.

Although usually glad to be called in on any kind of work that related to the world of the stars, there was one occasion when he got a bellyful and that was during the 'Rock around the Clock' craze already mentioned. He thought that Bill Haley was a good performer but after hearing him ninety times or more on the screen he got cheesed off. In the annals of International crime prevention this will sound unique but Jim never carried a gun when guarding famous people, although he trained in the use of firearms. In fact, he never even carried a baton as he was afraid of hurting somebody. All he had was his fists if trouble broke out - and fists were enough for him. He regarded minding famous stars like protecting his own home - if anybody came to his home to interfere with his family he would have destroyed them.

It would be unfair to deal with his association with the stars without mentioning one of our own, Sean Dunphy of the Hoedowners Showband. It was not Jim's work as a Garda that brought him into contact with Dunphy. They were introduced because of an incident involving Jim's youngest daughter Denise. She was a great fan of Sean's and had a collection of all his records. He and the band members met in Drimnagh regularly, the meeting place being near to Jim's home there. In 1971 Jim's wife spotted Sean while out walking with Denise, who was then ten years old. Mrs Branigan, or Chelsea as Jim fondly called her, said: "There is your great friend Sean Dunphy. Go over and ask him to sing a song for you". Over went Denise and chatted to Sean. He was friendly to her and Chelsea said: "I will give you a clue as to who she is, her name is Branigan". Sean replied: "Is that the policeman's daughter?" and sang for her, then brought her to the shop to get her sweets. After that she became great friends with all the band members and Jim heard stories from her about Sean every week.

At that time Jim used regularly drop into the TV Club to hear the bands playing. On one such occasion he was introduced to Sean. He was told Jim was a Garda and then Jim said: "I believe you have been seeing my daughter a lot lately". Jokingly he said it in an accusing tone of voice and Sean was taken aback until he realised Jim was speaking about little Denise and they had a good laugh. Sean later came with the band and played in the Branigan household for a delighted Denise.

Jim Branigan himself was known by all the Irish stars and indeed could have been considered as being a star himself judging by the massive publicity which he received during and after his career as a Garda, a boxer and referee. Everyone in Dublin knew him and whenever he got on a bus - which was quite often as he did not and with one exception shortly after his retirement, never, drove a car - people could be seen nudging each other and whispering. This used to get Jim down a little now and again, as he wished he could go about like most people without being recognised.

Even in retirement, when he often went into the city to visit old friends both in his old Kevin Street district and in other parts of his fair city, he was instantly recognised by people, who approached him to wish him well. A photograph of him, taken while in the course of writing the first book on his life in 1985, is an indication of how popular a character he really was. Photographer Larry Maher was taking a photograph of Jim posing at the assembly point for the Battle of Baldoyle in Ash Street, when Martha Farrell looked out her window. "Ah, Mr Branigan, howareya". Jim went to

her and they immediately engaged in conversation. After a minute Annie Walsh joined in and within five minutes there was a crowd of about twenty assembled around this genial giant. "Ah, luv" said Martha when Jim explained the purpose of this particular visit, "it's a pity Mr Branigan is not twenty-one again. My Arthur was a bit of a handful as a boy but from the day Mr Branigan gave him a good clip, I had no more problems with him".

Annie Walsh, who once won two ton of coal on Gay Byrne's *Late Late Show*, said "We could do with a dozen Jim Branigans here". Another lady, who didn't wish to be named, said "He saved a lot of marriages around here, son. More than any priest or those so-called social workers saved. He saved my marriage. My husband hasn't laid a finger on me since Mr Branigan gave him a last warning in 1959". Martha Farrell agreed, saying that but for Jim many marriages in the Liberties would have broken up. The overall consensus was that he put erring husbands in their place. Even young teenagers who had gathered, unaware that they were beside the spot where a strange band of 'warriors' had assembled over forty years before, to travel to the field of battle in far-off Baldoyle, agreed that Dublin needed a few more like him.

All through researching and photographing for the book, the story was the same - vast numbers of old friends, former colleagues, shopkeepers and most of all the plain old ordinary Dubliner, would stop and chat to this great man. Even the International stars knew Jim. On July 8th 1974 the famous actor John Wayne (The Duke) visited Dublin, hoping to pay a surprise visit on his friend Lord Killanin who was unfortunately in Munich. At that time The Duke was in London filming a detective story called Branigan with Judy Geeson, about an American cop who comes to London to pick up a criminal awaiting extradition, only to find that the criminal had been kidnapped. When told that we had a famous cop here called Lugs Branigan the Duke remarked that he had heard about that in London: "If I had known in time I would have called myself Lugs in the film", cracked the Duke, "I heard all about him in London and here. He is so famous, maybe they will write the script to a movie on his life story and I'll be given the part of Lugs".

Considering Jim's relationship with the stars it was no surprise that he spent so much of his retirement "ten-and-a-half years", in the world of entertainment, as chief of security for the Zhivago night club. Jim had many many offers of employment before he retired, but when he went to take up the offers, none materialised. Staring idleness in the face frightened him. When he contacted people who had made offers to him while he was a serving member of the Garda Síochána, he decided not to hang around when the excuses were being poured out. However, Pat Gibbons asked him to join the team at the Zhivago and Jim jumped at the kind offer. "I am grateful for the break he gave me" recalled Jim, "he was a very kind person and was so good to work for. I'll always remember his kindness and generosity towards me".

CHAPTER 7

Last Days in the Garda Síochána

With the new year being rung in on January 1st 1973, Jim Branigan began his last days as a member of the Garda Síochána. The week of his retirement was covered extensively by the media and every night from Friday December 29th 1972 until January 7th 1973 the papers were covered with articles on his career in boxing and in the Garda Síochána. The newspapers also speculated on his retirement with the Irish Independent saying that he had applied for an extension which may have been turned down at the time of publication. The papers extensively covered his retirement plans during this period with many photographs of Jim on the beat, beside the typewriter, in the ring as a referee and relaxing and finally, on January 5th 1973, sadly leaving the District Courts for the last time. The *Evening Press* under a banner headline 'It is Jim Branigan's Last Week' covered his life in depth in an article written by Dan Coen. The retirement of what the *Washington Daily Post* called 'Dublin's Most Famous Cop' was not only covered by the Irish newspapers but by the British, German, Swedish and American papers also. The following is an extract from one of the many articles that appeared in the lofty *Irish Times* during Jim's last week and is taken from '*An Irishman's Diary*' in the December 29th 1972 issue:

'Talented Beat: Jim Branigan, the Kevin Street detective who has policed the streets of Dublin by night for over 40 years, is to retire early in January. Detective Sergeant Branigan is certainly Dublin's best-known policeman. Sergeant Branigan - "Lugs" to most Dubliners, as a result of a boxing career - has served since 1935 in Kevin Street, but his beat has been the entire Metropolitan area. Wherever there was trouble, the standard Garda response was to send for Branigan. But some weeks ago a senior police officer said of Detective Sergeant Branigan: 'People have tended to regard Jim as a man who sorts out rows. His real talent as a policeman is simply being in the right place at the right time to prevent trouble. Nobody is happier than Jim Branigan to come in and say he has nothing to report'.

'Helping Hand: There is another side to Jim Branigan. Many a young man, convicted in the District Court on his evidence, has found himself taken aside quietly by the burly detective with an offer of a job, or a place to stay or sometimes both. For a man in his position, Jim Branigan has made remarkably few enemies and quite a few friends. The Gardaí themselves have their own little memorial to Jim Branigan. His car has always been call-signed Branno-Five on the Garda radio instead of Bravo-Five as it should properly be.'

But the publicity was not confined to the newspapers and when RTE got wind of the much-publicised retirement, Jim was approached by the current affairs *Seven Days* team who wished to make a programme on his career. A camera crew and an interviewer spent three days with him shooting film sequences, going on the beat with the Riot Squad on his second last night. The programme was due to be shown on Friday January 12th 1973. However, two days previously the *Tangents* team asked Jim to appear on their programme. As Jim believed that *Seven Days* were told of his proposed appearance on *Tangents*, he agreed to go on. That's when the dirt hit the fan, for when Jim arrived at Montrose to carry out the *Tangents* interview, he was spotted by the vigilant *Seven Days* men and they immediately swung into action. They had not heard of *Tangents* intention to use Jim, and Jim himself had believed that they had - although the two programme staffs occupied adjoining offices - so they tried a last ditch stand on the studio floor to stop his appearance. Alas their action failed for the resourceful *Tangents* men locked Jim away safely from the invaders so the programme interview went ahead as scheduled despite harsh

words from the *Seven Days* men. Producer Seamus Smith was disgusted that those ex-*Seven Days* men in *Tangents* had stolen his talent and ruined his programme. The *Seven Days* programme was never screened, being left to gather dust in the Montrose studios. This 'KO' from Seven Days was probably Jim's only knock-out in his life.

Jim Bradley, who now lives in Kilcoole in County Wicklow, was a raw recruit when he first encountered Jim Branigan around this time: "I was based in Blackrock at the time. A mini-riot had erupted in the *Top Hat* in Dunlaoghaire. Shortly after word of the disorder had been received, the Station door opened and Lugs appeared, with the main protagonist subdued and under arrest and with order having been promptly restored in the ballroom".

Just before his retirement Jim was giving evidence in a case against three men charged with assaulting himself and Garda Thomas 'Sonny' Heeney in Hatch Street. One of the men threw a right at Jim's jaw. "I saw the blow coming and I went with it so it did not hurt me". "It's amazing what Sergeant Branigan can take" remarked District Justice Herman Good. In a subsequent case Jim told Justice Good that a man he had charged with possession of an offensive weapon (darts) carried three darts, as he was a darts player. He also told him that though the accused man was charged with assault on a doorman of a ballroom, he was quite drunk at the time and the blow didn't connect. Remarking that Jim was "very honest in his evidence" Justice Good dismissed the charges.

On the day of his retirement Jim was paid glowing tributes in all the Courts. In Court Number 6, Chancery Street, District Justice Dinny Ua Donnchadha said he wished to be associated with his colleagues on the Bench in paying a tribute to Sergeant Branigan, who was one of the best witnesses to have appeared before him. He was clear in his diction from the witness box, competent, and fair to everyone. "Dublin citizens will miss your work in the detection and prevention of crime", he said. Ted McCarthy, Court Registrar, G. Ward, solicitor, Don Rooney, Evening Herald and Maurice Liston, Evening Press, joined in the glowing tributes. Earlier Justice Bob O hUadhaigh (there always was great repartee in Court between Jim and this legendary Justice) had paid him a great tribute, saying to a Court packed with Senior and Junior Counsel, Solicitors, Court Clerks and Journalists that Jim had been of great assistance to him personally and to the Courts all down the years of his Garda service. "I want it to be known that I consider you to be one of the pillars of the law who saw that justice was done. You will be missed by the Courts and myself and my colleagues wish you good health and every happiness in your well earned retirement".

In the Circuit Court a few days later the author had the honour of joining with Judge Charlie Conroy, to whom he acted as Court Clerk in Court No 7, in paying a tribute to Jim on behalf of the Circuit Court staff. Charlie Conroy paid Jim a tremendous tribute and had earlier arranged for a massive attendance of the press and the legal profession. To a packed Court he said that "not only he but all of Dublin will sadly miss what was part and parcel of this city of ours - Jim Branigan". The tributes flowed from every quarter - a special ceremony in honour of Jim was held in the Dalkey Sports Centre when he was made a life member of that Centre. Garda

Commissioner Edmund Garvey paid tribute at a special Garda function held in his honour.

Of all the tributes and presentations that were made to Jim the one which touched his heart and which he treasured most was that paid by those he called "Pavement Hostesses" - Dublin's prostitutes. They clubbed together and on Jim's last night presented him with a beautiful canteen of cutlery (which he always proudly displayed in his home) and a good luck card signed by them all. Jim recalled the unique presentation, which occurred when he was patrolling the city with Sonny and the Riot Squad boys in Branno 5 on the eve of his retirement from the force:

"Everything was fairly quiet. Just after midnight we got a call from patrol to go to the Pepper Canister Church, Upper Mount Street, where 'there is something wrong'. A 999 call had been received but I did not understand why it had not been dealt with by Donnybrook station. When we got to the church there was not a soul around, but being thorough in my methods, I prowled around the area. I thought a girl might be in trouble or lying in an alleyway after an assault. We drove around and circled back to the church. Then I saw seven girls, whom I knew to be Street girls, standing in a bunch. This was highly illegal and if they were caught congregating in twos or threes the girls knew they were liable to be taken in.

"The girls were in good spirits and one said: 'Mr Branigan, you would not arrest us on your last day, would you?'. It being the duty of every Garda to keep the streets clean, I said: 'Come on now girls, move along, there are complaints about this place'. Then I was amazed when one of them said she had made a bogus 999 call so they could wish me God Speed in my retirement. I was moved. It was a nice thought but I was amazed and surprised when one of the girls then said: 'And we have a little something for you to remember us by'. Then they gave me this very nice and expensive present. Most of the regular girls on the beat must have contributed towards it. I thanked them, took the present and drove off telling them to disperse, for I still had to keep up a brittle, tough exterior. On my way home that night I tossed in my mind why I should have been the recipient of such an unorthodox present. I must be the only Irish policeman to have received such a gift."

At the end of that month James Cantwell and Jim Farrelly of the *Evening Herald* wrote Jim Branigan's story which ran for a week in the paper. In the January 25th 1973 edition of the *Herald* a spokeswoman for the Street girls who made the presentation told why he deserved his special thank you:

'Let us get one thing clear from the start - policemen and girls of the street are enemies. I for one would certainly never, under any circumstances, give a present to a policeman and if one came around to chat me up I would wonder what he had on his mind or what information he was fishing for. But Mr Branigan was something special. Though he is only a few weeks retired we all, there are over fifty of us, miss him very much. On an average five nights out of seven he and his crew would pull up the police van beside the pavement and inquire after our welfare. If we were depressed or browned off he would cheer us up or give us a pep talk. He was always in good humour. To be frank when I

came from England four years ago and started soliciting in Dublin I thought Mr Branigan was a fruit and nut case. I mean it is highly unusual for a policeman to stop a prostitute and ask her how she is. I know he was not part of the street girls detective unit but even in England I had never seen anything like him. Other Dublin cops would land us in Donnybrook or Harcourt Terrace if they caught us soliciting. My suspicions of him vanished after four weeks. I realised he was genuine and not fishing for information.

'My respect for him began to grow as I heard more and more stories of his acts of kindness. We spent long hours discussing whether or not we should give him a present. Would it be embarrassing for him because of his position? It was unheard of before for street girls to band together to say thank you to a policeman. Eventually we decided at the risk of being arrested, to meet at Upper Mount Street Church and make the presentation. We phoned for him. When we handed over the present and card signed by us all, Dolores said: "Here is something to remember us by. There is nobody to take your place and you will be missed very much." I could see that he was moved. And we were all very glad that we had decided to say thank you in this way.'

Jim Branigan never arrested a Pavement Hostess during his long Garda career: "No, I never arrested any of them for soliciting. There was a good reason for this as I was not detailed for this work, my job being to keep the streets free of violence and fight". His kindness towards the unfortunate girls knew no bounds. Justice Bob Ó hUadhaigh recalled a case where a girl appeared before him on a prostitution charge. The prosecuting Garda gave evidence that he saw the girls talking to a gentleman for two minutes, then to another gentleman for fifteen minutes, after which the gentleman left. He then arrested the accused. "I was talking to Sergeant Branigan" said the girl. "What", said Justice O'hUadhaigh, "can you prove that?". "Just ask him". The Garda informed the Justice that he thought Jim was in Court No 6 and a message went out for him to go to Court No 4. He quickly came on the scene: "Yes, Justice, I was having a chat with Dolores last night. I hadn't seen her for a while".

On January 6th 1975 Jim Branigan left the Garda Siochana, Kevin Street, Branno Five, Sonny Heeney, Martin Long and John Byrne, the Riot Squad and all the boys to begin a new life in retirement. He had moved house to Summerhill, Co Meath - in the process putting the little village on the map - and had plans to settle in peace and tranquillity in rural Ireland, rearing canaries, coaching young boxers and tending to his one-acre garden. But would such a quiet life appease an active man like Jim?

CHAPTER 8

Jim Branigan in Retirement

When most people reach retirement they look for ways to leisurely spend those quiet years in peace and harmony, relaxing on a park bench, having a drink in a pub, playing a bit of golf or dabbling in gardening. But not Jim Branigan. He started his retirement by entering a new job as Superintendent of security at Dublin's Zhivago night club, Baggot Street. He remained there for over ten years, until the summer of 1983. Jim was a popular figure in the Zhivago with both patrons and staff alike and up until his death he regularly called in for a cup of coffee and a chat with the people working there. During his ten years in the Club he did not have much work to do inside the premises. Maybe it was because of his towering presence but there was never any trouble and though it was one of the busiest it was also one of the quietest night clubs in the city. But for awhile outside the club it was a different story, with drunks and troublemakers who had been turned away proving a scourge, breaking windows of parked cars, stealing car aerials and damaging property. Jim, liaising with the Gardaí, tackled this menace and after a year such incidents ceased and the vicinity became as quiet as any outer suburban residential area. Even as a retired policeman Jim still made the headlines, and the following article taken from the *Irish Press* fourteen months after his retirement is proof of this. Under the headline 'Jim Branigan Still In Action' it read:

'Det. Sergeant Jim Branigan (64), who retired from the Garda force last year has not quit the job of crime fighting. Last night, at the Zhivago Club where he acts as a security man, he disrupted a gang of car thieves as they rifled cars outside the club. He contacted Control who passed the message to Gardaí covering the area. Descriptions of some of the car thieves were furnished by the genial ex-cop.'

In October 1973 Jim's official retirement celebration party took place in the Garda Club in Harrington Street. All the ex-Branno Five brigade, minus uniforms, were there including Sonny Heeney and Murt Long. Jim was minus his famous sports jacket and black gloves. The event was attended by Eamonn Doherty and Edmund Garvey and was well supported by Gardaí throughout the city and Jim was presented with a beautiful array of Waterford Glass. The function was also well supported by newspaper journalists and was featured in all the national daily and provincial papers.

For five or six months after his retirement Jim was a frequent - though no more a daily - visitor to the Dublin Courts dealing with the residue of cases left since his retirement. In his very last Court case he once again acted as interpreter in an assault case before Judge Bertie Wellwood in Circuit Court Number 9. A twenty-year-old hardchaw was charged with assault on a young apprentice butcher. When the hardchaw was explaining his case to Bertie he said "I was with me mott and that geeser came over and gave me a clatter. So I gave him the head and banged in and lobbed him". "Sergeant, what is this all about?" inquired Bertie, somewhat confused. So Jim explained the meaning: "mott" meant a girl; "geeser" meant a boy; "gave him the head" meant an assault using the head and "banged in and lobbed him" meant that he hit him with force. "Goodness" replied Bertie, "my Latin and Greek is useless on these District Court appeals".

On the boxing scene Jim was as busy as ever in his retirement, refereeing and judging boxing contests all over Ireland. Indeed, during the ten-year period after his retirement he refereed 2,696 contests and judged 924. The tables which appear elsewhere in the book are testimony to his dedication, service and commitment to Irish amateur boxing. With regard to the table on contests judged and refereed, that only dates from 1949. Jim kept no record of the contests he officiated at prior to that so his bag must be in excess of twenty thousand, considering he began refereeing in the mid-1930's. With regard to the table on the venues, he officiated in the Irish towns listed on numerous occasions, for example he was in Newbridge, Co Kildare eighty-five times during the period from 1958 until 1983. Jim also maintained his links with the GBC which was reformed in 1970 under Eamonn J Doherty, Deputy Commissioner of An Garda Síochána and President of the Garda Boxing Association.

Jim was delighted that during the 1970's the GBC could boast many team boxers like Paul Connolly, Willie Drohan, P J Lawlor, Willie Cooper (son of former Garda Felix Cooper, first Junior Irish Heavyweight Champion in 1934), Larry Morrison, Eddie McDonnell and Brian Byrne, the record six-times winner of the Light Middleweight European Police Open Boxing Championship. It is interesting to note that at present the GBC have a large number of provincial teams with many young boxers nearing senior level. The Club then branched out in a number of ways, mainly in the area of coaching and many of the members have successfully completed courses and are now involved on a voluntary basis in boxing clubs throughout the country. Deputy Commissioner Doherty's commitment to the GBC was total and resulted in honours once again coming their way and the table of European Police Garda Champions listed elsewhere bears this out. Through boxing the Gardaí reach the ordinary, working class youths of our cities and towns and those Gardaí that belong to the Club were be up-to-date on the latest youth scene and had a genuinely enlightened approach to our youth. "The only way for a Garda to understand the people he is dealing with is to mix with them and the best way of doing that is through sport" was a typical comment of GBC members.

Jim Branigan was not only committed to boxing but to other sports as well. He played a bit of hurling as a young man and from the early-1930's right up to his death he rarely missed a match in Croke Park. Ned Slattery, based in the stores in Kevin Street recollects that whenever he or any of his colleagues were on their own on a Sunday they would go down to Croke Park as they were always sure of seeing Jim there "at the Cusack Stand, just opposite the half-way line." Jim had a deep-rooted love for hurling and in the early 1960's he presented the Jim Branigan Perpetual Cup for an Inter-District Dublin hurling competition he set up. The competition proved very popular in the early years but by the mid-1970's it died out. A Garda source in Kevin Street was of the opinion that the competition faded out not through lack of support but because Donnybrook Garda Station were winning the trophy every year. A Store Street Garda agreed with this theory but took it a little further: "The Superintendent for 'E' District, which includes Donnybrook, went down to Templemore just before passing out time and picked out all the county hurlers from the batch. Sure the rest of us hadn't a chance".

Jim was also active on the fund-raising side of amateur boxing during his retirement.

For a number of years until the late-1970's he ran Bingo sessions with Charlie Higgins every fortnight at the Apollo, Sundrive Road, to raise money for the IABA for building and equipping gyms throughout the country. He also ran Bingo sessions there for the Polio Association.

In retirement Jim kept up the training that he carried on all during his boxing career and no doubt this is a factor in him being the fit and healthy man that he was during his life. He always paid particular attention to his fitness, regularly weightlifting and practising on the punch bag in the National Stadium. No doubt it was this attention to fitness that contributed to his success in the war on violence and thuggery and even in 1985, at seventy-five years of age, his arms and muscles were "as tough as a crocodile's hide, if I land a punch even now, a knockout is likely".

Gardaí, Barristers, Solicitors, Judges, Court Clerks, Doctors, Nurses, Boxers, Publicans, Shopkeepers, Priests or plain old ordinary Dubliners, they all had a good word and a story, when speaking about Jim. Seamus Sorohan, the well-known Senior Council, said he was a kind, gentle person: "Even though we were adversaries of a sort, if he had a good word to say about a client, he would speak up on his behalf. He was an institution in this city. I remember one night in my student days, queuing outside the Olympic Ballroom when a fight broke out among rioting gangs. Like true Roman gladiators, they engaged in combat with chains. A Garda car arrived on the scene. I looked over at the car and saw Jim Branigan jumping out. I looked over to where the fight had been in progress and there was no-one there. They had fled at the sight of the famous 'Lugs', leaving their weapons on the field of battle". Ronnie Ringrose, the prominent solicitor and a specialist in criminal litigation, had many a 'tussle' with Jim in the 'ring' of the Dublin Courts and regards him as "the fairest man I ever met. He was friendly and honest. Even though he spoke his mind in Court, if he could do anything to set a young man on the right track, he would".

James Bo Bo Martin thought Jim "very fair and reasonable. There will never be another one like him again in the Garda Síochána". Joe Casey, former Garda and later an ESB employee recalled his kindness and assistance during his boxing career (Joe was Senior Heavyweight Champion in 1960 and 1961, boxing with Arbour Hill BC and represented Ireland in the 1960 Rome Olympics): "During the Vocational School Leagues when there would be only a handful of parents and young boys present, Jim would be in the middle of it. He put everything into it and wore the same rig-out at these schoolboy venues as he would in an International contest. He was also very fond of children". Harry Perry, one of the all-time greats of Irish boxing and winner of nine Irish Senior Championship titles had the same thing to say: "when I was a young lad fighting down in British Railways in a tournament we always knew we were fighting in a real contest when Jim Branigan refereed, for he appeared in the same costume that referees wore for internationals". Willie Doherty, owner of the Pet Shop in Patrick Street regarded Jim as a very kind gentleman: "As a teenager I remember that when he came in to the dance in John's Lane the drunk lads steadied up. He is also most friendly and comes into the pet shop regularly for a chat".

Frank Mullen, the popular former Dunlaoghaire-based Garda, a Vice-President of the Garda Representative Association and avid Manchester United FC fan noted for his commitment and involvement in youth work and football in south Dublin had great

praise for the "wonderful, humane approach Jim had to everybody irrespective of what they had done. On the street he dealt with the lawbreakers strictly and strongly but in Court it was a different matter and often I saw him speaking up for accused persons in the Courts. He was very helpful to me when I started as a raw recruit and I will never forget his kindness". Joe McDonald, a publican in Meath Street said that "he was a most popular character all around this district and was a genuine, honest and kind man".

Finally, Deputy Commissioner Doherty, who "hadn't the pleasure of seeing Jim box in the ring" regarded Jim's commitment to boxing and to the Garda Síochána as being without parallel. "His commitment to boxing was unbounded and he always carried the Garda banner high in sport, particularly in boxing. He contributed greatly on the administration side of both the IABA and the GBC. I knew Jim very well through travelling abroad with boxing teams and he was always great fun. As a policeman and a referee he gave total commitment yet remained a great family man. He was one of the all-time greats of Irish sport".

The list of tributes that people paid to Jim were endless but it is an indication of the esteem with which our people hold him when - in June, 1985 - twelve years after his retirement - he was featured on RTE's '*Trom agus Eadrom*' when Liam O Murchú paid him a fitting tribute on the programme, surprising the ex-Garda by inviting along some of Ireland's boxing greats, including Dick Hearns, Spike McCormack, Harry Perry, John Ingle, Pat McCormack and many, many more. Earlier on in that year Jim also featured on the nation's television when two hundred and fifty Irish boxers, their wives and girlfriends gathered in the Limetree House in Dunboyne to pay him tribute. Liam Nolan of RTE was present and covered the event in a '*This Is Your Life*' style programme on the station.

Jim had four children, Alick, Helen, Declan and Denise. Declan developed an interest in the GAA from an early age, winning three Senior County and one Leinster Club Hurling Championship with Crumlin. He also won an under-21 football and hurling Championship medal with Dublin. None of Jim's children chose a career with the Garda Síochána although a nephew, Peter Kilpatrick, is a Constable in the Cornwall and Devon Police. Jim was very proud of Peter who made a successful career across the water. As Deputy Commissioner Doherty stated, Jim was a great family man. Even though he was dedicated to the Garda and boxing, he never neglected his family and also committed himself totally to the task of raising his children. The family were all very proud of him and regarded him not only as a great father but a terrific friend.

In the Summer of 1983 Jim retired from the boxing scene and took things easy out in Summerhill, Co Meath, although one could then sense that he was itching to be living back in the heart of his beloved Dublin again. He tended to his garden and the year before he died had planted potatoes, strawberries, lettuce, onions and parsnips. As a hobby he also reared canaries in his aviary and kept some hens. He read a fair bit, westerns being his favourite books. He had a particular interest in the Red Indians and his pride and joy was a beautiful leather-bound set of '*The Old West*' collection by Time-Life Books. He always loved that period in American history and as a boy he went to every western film shown in the Lyric Cinema in James's Street.

The ordinary Dubliner and day-to-day Dublin city life were great loves of Jim Branigan. He was more at home in a café like Fusciardi's in Capel Street or the Ritz Café in Abbey Street than he would be in a restaurant in the Hilton Hotel. He loved the ordinary people, he loved "the grassroots of Dublin". When researching this book he often met the author over a meal or a cup of coffee in the Ritz café on Abbey Street. Jim just loved the place, talking to customers and staff alike as if he were in his own home. "You just can't beat it here", he beamed. Despite the new pace and lifestyle in Dublin today, with its upmarket eateries and Temple Bar, places like the Ritz Café continue to grace our city streets where people can sample the ordinary Dublin life that Jim Branigan so loved when he was with us.

An aspect of Jim's character which few knew was his thoughtfulness. In the mid-1970's, when Paddy Dowdall died, Jim got in touch with all the newspapers telling them that he was European Champion in 1939 and arranged obituaries to be published. On the morning of the funeral Jim organised an impressive Garda motorcade, including a dozen motorcycle Gardaí, to escort the remains to the cemetery from Dolphin House, Rialto, where Paddy had lived.

Jim was presented with numerous trophies and mementoes for his commitment to Irish boxing. Two awards which he received and of which he was most proud were the Bedford Loyalty Award, presented in April 1981, and a beautifully-carved wooden hand, suitably inscribed, presented to him in March 1985 in recognition of 'a dedication unique in the history of City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee Boxing'. These were only two of the many awards presented to Jim Branigan, former Garda, boxer, referee and judge, who gave a lifetime of service to the people of Dublin and to the cause of Irish boxing.

Chapter 9

His Legacy

Did Lugs Branagan leave a legacy? It is easy to answer this one. Walk around Sheriff Street or the Liberties today and mention the name “Lugs Branigan”, and take in the response, over twenty years after his death! Or enquire about him in the National Stadium on Dublin’s South Circular Road. That is where you will find his legacy.

You can ask any person in the street to name the current Garda Commissioner, or even a past one, and you might draw a blank. Ask them who Lugs Branigan was and you will get a quick answer.

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