

Articles regarding the murder of George Thomas Bell Booth, a magistrate of County Cavan, Ireland on Sunday, 22 Jun 1845

Copied as transcribed:

The Times
London, Middlesex, England
June 25, 1845

IRELAND

(From our own correspondent)

Dublin, June 23

HORRIBLE MURDER OF A MAGISTRATE

The following versions of a most atrocious murder yesterday of a magistrate of Cavan reached town this morning and are published in the Evening Mail. It is only a week since the high sheriff and magistrates of the county memorialised the Irish Executive upon the frightful state of the district, and praying for the adoption of some stringent measure to check the progress of anarchy and bloodshed. Perhaps this last sad tragedy may open the eyes of our rulers to the imperative necessity of promptly complying with the prayer of the memorial. It is to be observed that, in consequence of inheriting property, to which the family name attached, the unfortunate gentleman, the victim of the conspiracy which now rages in the north, was indifferently named BOOTH or BELL, or sometimes called both. This is necessary to account for the difference of names in the several accounts: "Cavan, Sunday, June 22, 7 o'clock, pm:"

"Although you will likely hear it through other sources, yet, lest you should not, I do not wish to allow the post to go out without informing you of a barbarous murder that was committed this day, about half-past 2 o'clock, and within four miles of this town. Mr. BOOTH BELL, a magistrate of this county, was the victim; he was returning from church in his gig, with two of his children beside him, when the ruffian fired at him, and then made his escape. All here are in a sad state of excitement. Where it will end it is hard to say, no one is safe.

"N.B. Mr. BELL was shot dead on the spot."

"Cavan, June 22: A very horrible outrage occurred this day. Mr. George BOOTH, on his return from Kilmore Church, with his two young sons, in his gig, was shot. This was done in a very public place, at Mr. BELL'S gate – I mean a back gate that is a few perches above the front gate, and on the same side, near to Bingfield. He got the shot

through the head, and died in a very few minutes. One of the boys fell out of the gig, by which his thigh was broken.

"You see what a state of things this country is brought to, and all by the 'Molly Maguires!' This is the most daring occurrence that has taken place in this county, or any other – done in such a public place, and at such an hour – about 2 o'clock. It appears there was only one concerned in the affair. He got off in the direction of Hermitage, and on by Castlecosby.

"The police force are out. I fear there is no chance of catching the villain. I cannot conceive the cause of Mr. BOOTH being shot, except that he may have done some act as a magistrate against some of the 'Molly men' (as they are called).

"P.S. This affair has caused the greatest alarm in this town. I am just told that Mr. BOOTH'S child is not likely to survive."

The following is from a gentleman who arrived at the spot shortly after the fatal occurrence:

"Cavan, June 22: I have just returned from the village of Crossdoney, in the vicinity of which a most barbarous murder was committed this day. At a quarter past 2 o'clock, Mr. George F. BELL BOOTH, of Drumcarbin, was returning from Kilmore church, in his gig, with two of his children, one five, and the other six years old, his eldest son, a boy of about 11, rode behind him on a pony. When he arrived at 'the Rooks,' the residence of the sub-sheriff, William BELL, Esq., he was met by a man, who walked coolly and deliberately along the road, smoking a long pipe. The villain walked up to Mr. BOOTH, presenting a horse pistol. It is thought Mr. BOOTH stooped his head, and that, on his doing so, the murderer fired. The ball entered the upper part of the forehead, and lodged within the skull; he fell instantly from his gig - he was dead. The horse, frightened by the report of the shot, ran away, throwing the two children on the road - one of them had his arm broken in the fall, or by the wheel of the gig passing over it. The body of the murdered gentleman lies in the house of the sub-sheriff, where it will remain until an inquest is held upon it. Mrs. BELL, of 'the Rooks,' whose carriage had just broken down, passed the murderer on foot a few seconds before he fired. On hearing the report, she turned around, and saw the body fall from the gig.

"What the motive is which instigated this assassination we cannot form the most distant idea, for a more kind, tender-hearted, upright gentleman did not exist; but he was a Protestant and a magistrate.

"There is as yet no trace of the murderer, who crossed into the fields and escaped. The country about is thickly planted with hedges and hedge-rows, a circumstance favourable to the concealment of the assassin."

June 27, 1845

IRELAND

(From our own correspondent)

Dublin, June 24

ALARMING STATE OF CAVAN

By the accounts from the immediate neighbourhood of the recent assassination of Mr. Bell BOOTH, and which are published in the Mail of this evening, it will be seen that, unless the Executive, or perhaps the Legislature itself, promptly decide upon the adoption of some stringent measure of coercion, a hostile collision between the enraged Protestant and Roman Catholic population cannot be long deferred. Matters have nearly reached a crisis, - when, on the one hand, the remains of a murdered gentleman are carried to their last resting place, under an escort of nearly 8,000 Protestants armed in self defence : and, on the other, when a Roman Catholic priest - a popular and respected man - is compelled to fly to the shelter of a police barrack, to escape the vengeance of those Protestants who have come to the fearful resolution of making the clergyman pay the penalty of the crimes committed by his flock. Such is, unhappily, the case of the Rev. Mr. BRADY, whose name is referred to in the sub-joined letter :-

"CROSSDONEY, June 24, 1845.- Nothing can exceed the excitement that prevails, not only in this immediate vicinity, but throughout the county at large. No man feels his life safe at this moment, no matter whether he may have done anything to incur the displeasure of the 'Molly Maguires' or not. A peaceable Protestant, of the name of ABBOTT, was murdered near Arvagh, about three weeks ago. It was found out a few days after that he was murdered by mistake ! He was not the person intended for assassination ! We all feel that our identity may also be mistaken, and if so, we must take the consequences. The Protestants of the country are under the impression, whether justly conceived or not, that the Government has abandoned them; and that, unless they unite for their own protection, they will be cut off either in detail or en masse, as may best suit the views of their bloodthirsty persecutors. They met in considerable numbers on Sunday on hearing of the barberous murder of Mr. BOOTH; and, having concerted their plan of action, they separated into several parties, and scoured the country round for a distance of several miles from the bloody scene. No trace of the murderer could be found. One man was taken by the police, on suspicion of being an accomplice. He was heard to swear, upwards of three weeks ago, that he would have Mr. BOOTH shot. He has been committed to Cavan gaol for further examination. There were several hundreds of those men at the sub-sheriff's house, and in the neighbourhood of it, all night and yesterday , until the inquest had been holden, when the body was removed to Drumcarbin, whither they escorted it. The funeral of the murdered gentleman was fixed for an early hour this morning (8 o'clock). Apprehensions being entertained that there would be a collision between the inhabitants of the village of Ballinagh - through which the funeral must pass - and the persons attending the funeral, application was made to the magistrates, accompanied by statements on oath to that effect, on which the magistrates ordered that a party of military from Cavan should proceed to Ballinagh, and remain there until the people had returned to their

homes., Accordingly, Mr. WILCOX, stipendiary magistrate, with three officers and fifty men, marched there at 10 o'clock this morning. The funeral passed through without molestation. There were present about 8,000 persons on foot, the greater number of whom were armed. On being questioned why they carried their arms, they stated that, determined on attending the funeral, they brought their arms; first, because they would not be safe at their houses in their absence, but chiefly that they did not consider their lives safe in passing through the country without them. The greatest excitement prevails. At the hour of 2 o'clock this day, the road from Ballinagh to Crossdoney was covered with men and women, the former armed with pikes and pitchforks; all hurrying backwards and forwards, in a state of fury that is indescribable. The military were stationed most advantageously on a hill that commanded a view of the roads and country for some miles around. Mr. BOOTH has left a widow and six young children to deplore his loss; the eldest child is but 12 years old. Mrs. BOOTH was in Dublin at the time the assassination took place. She returned by the mail last night. On her way from Cavan to Drumcarbin she was obliged to pass the place where her husband was murdered, a large pool of blood remaining still on the road to point out the spot to her. The injury the child sustained in the passing of the gig-wheel over him (a broken arm, not thigh, as stated to your paper of Monday is, I understand, going on favourably. Your correspondent was also in error in stating that the ball entered Mr. BOOTH'S forehead - no, the villain came behind him and fired into his back, near the shoulder; the ball passed through the muscle of the back, came out where the shoulder joins the neck, entered the back of the skull, and finally passed through the forehead. He fell backwards out of his gig, exclaimed 'Almighty!' and was dead. Mrs. BELL, of the Rooks, was not more than eight yards from the horse's head when the shot was fired. She pointed out the assassin to the people on the road, begging of them 'for God's sake to stop the murderer' - 'but they made as though they heard not. The iron ramrod of the pistol used in the murder was found in the road by the sub-sheriff. The Rev. Mr. BRADY, parish priest of Kilmore, a worthy, respectable, kind-hearted man as can be found, is so much alarmed for his personal safety that he has not returned to his own home, at Crossdoney since Sunday morning. I understand that he is staying at Ballinagh, where there is a police station. When will peace be restored to this unfortunate, distracted country!

The Scotsman
Edinburgh, Scotland
28 June, 1845

MURDER OF A MAGISTRATE IN CAVAN, Cavan, 22d June: I have just returned from the village of Crossdoney, in the vicinity of which a most barbarous murder was committed this day. At a quarter past two o'clock, George F. Bell BOOTH, Esq., of Drumcarbin, was returning from Kilmore church in his gig, with two of his children - one five and the other six years old; his eldest son, a boy of about eleven, rode behind him on a pony. When he arrived at "The Rooks," the residence of the sub-sheriff, William BELL, Esq., he was met by a man, who walked coolly and deliberately along the road, smoking a long pipe. The villain walked up to Mr. BOOTH, presenting a horse pistol. It is

thought Mr. BOOTH stooped his head, and that, on his doing so, the murderer fired. The ball entered the upper part of the forehead, and lodged within the skull; he fell instantly from his gig - he was dead. The horse, frightened by the report of the shot, ran away, throwing the two children on the road - one of them had his arm broken in the fall, or by the wheel of the gig passing over it. Mrs. BELL, of the Rooks, whose carriage had just broken down, passed the murderer on foot a few seconds before he fired. On hearing the report, she turned round, and saw the body fall from the gig. What the motive is which instigated this assassination we cannot form the most distant idea, for a more kind, tender-hearted, upright gentleman did not exist. There is as yet no trace of the murderer, who crossed into the fields and escaped. I cannot conceive the cause of Mr. BOOTH being shot, except that he may have done some act as a magistrate against some of these "Mollymen," as they are called. This affair has caused the greatest alarm in this town. I am just told that Mr. BOOTH'S child is not likely to survive.-- *Evening Mail*.