

THE DUNDONS



John was jailed for 5½ years for making threats; Dessie is serving life for the murder of Kieran Keane

these four brothers is etched on writer explains how an ordinary depravity, meets the residents who became of those who fled in fear...

In 2009, in the Glen Court estate in Emly, Co. Tipperary, a resident was stabbed in the leg. The lead suspect is a member of the Keane-Collopy gang, who had been relocated to the rural village.

In 2010, Richard Higgins, 42, a Dundon associate originally from Ballincurra Weston but relocated to Lattin, Co. Tipperary, stabbed his next door neighbour, Sean Murphy, 29, to death. He was jailed for life in July 2011.

A detective described one 15-year-old transferred to Shannon in 2010 as a 'complete tearaway, a one-man crime wave'.

Relatives of leading Moyross convicted criminals were moved to Murroe, a village 15km from Limerick.

The village was your classic rural outpost, with a Catholic Church, Garda station, post office, and a few pubs and shops servicing a population of less than 200, who largely worked farms in the shadow of the

surrounding Slieve Felim mountains. Developers saw it as classic commuter belt territory, however, and it went from having 40 houses before the Celtic Tiger to having almost 500 houses now. Murroe's population is now 800 and many of the houses built since 2004 are empty and available for purchase by the county council, or for rent by the HSE. A three-bedroom house rents in Murroe for €600 a month.

In April 2011, April Collins, daughter of gangster Jimmy Collins, and estranged partner of Ger Dundon, fled the Hyde Road to set up home in Murroe with convicted rapist Thomas O'Neill.

One neighbour, who asked not to be named, describes the mayhem that ensued: 'The Dundons were feuding with her. The house was attacked with people shouting outside. There was a high speed car chase, one guy waving a gun threatening to shoot the others.'

John and Wayne Dundon were arrested for threatening to kill or intimidate April Collins later that month. April Collins is the supergrass whose evidence helped to send the Dundons down this week. She has since been moved from Murroe to an apartment in Limerick city.

We pass April Collins' old house at 84 Hyde Road, now boarded up. There's graffiti about 'Collins Rats' on walls along the Hyde Road, near the home of April's mother on Hyde Avenue, which runs on to Hyde Road.

On Wednesday night, after the Dundons were sentenced, a relative of April's was assaulted by Dundons out celebrating the 'light' sentences given to John and Wayne.

John Dundon's wife, Ciara Killeen, lives with their two children in Number 80 Hyde Road. Across the road on the corner of Lenihan Avenue, Wayne Dundon's home is empty at Number 92. His wife, Ann Casey,



Dispersal: Some families have moved out to rural villages like Murroe



Legacy of brutality: Boarded-up houses at Hyde Road in Limerick

has decamped to England and put their children into schools in London amid threats from rival gangs owed money by the Dundons.

The Dundons' sister, Annabelle, has moved to London too. All four Dundon brothers and their key henchmen are behind bars at present. Their 13-year reign as criminal kings of the Hyde Road is suspended, possibly over. Cathal McCarthy isn't so sure.

'Reported crime is down since the Dundons went to jail a year ago, but you still have problems with anti-social behaviour.'

'It's mostly young kids, but there's still some gangland stuff. There was one house recently in Crecora Avenue where the person was offered cash and refused it. A gang petrol bombed it. The council bought it back for €3,000. If it hadn't been burned down, it would have cost the

The community is responding, slowly, but as surely as McCarthy did in the face of intimidation a decade ago. Resource worker, Eimear Purcell, said: 'It's not as turbulent as people lead you to believe.'

'I have only been here since October but I haven't seen the chaos that was there before. There's hockey, rugby, tennis, soccer, there's talk of relaunching scouts in the area. There's plenty of services here.'

Other communities are not as well resourced.

In Cappawhite, Co. Tipperary, some locals attending a meeting with local gardai complaining about anti-social behavior. Martin Butler, who works as a volunteer at the local resource centre, commented about anti-social elements moving in from Limerick. Several hours later he was attacked with a sword and suffered such severe head injuries that he is currently unable to walk or talk, and is being tube-fed in hospital.

The violence associated with the Hyde Road hasn't ended, it has merely been dispersed.

We return to the higher land of Mr McCarthy's house at 5 Weston Gardens. The burned out houses at Numbers 1-3 remain just as they have been since 2002. The demolitions and rebuilding promised back in 2007 never happened.

'Regeneration should be about the people not houses,' Mr McCarthy says. 'We still have all these disaffected youths and lonely old people living here. The Dundons being gone won't change that. Another gang will come along, but maybe they won't be as violent as they were.'

The 42-year-old goes inside to complete a paper for the MA in sociology he's studying at the University of Limerick, courtesy of a back to education allowance. It doesn't affect his social welfare allowance so he can keep up the payments on the mortgage he took out to buy 5 Weston Gardens in 2001 for IR£37,000 (€47,000).

His special area of interest is 'Youth, Community and Social Regeneration.' He could write the book. He might as well have graduated already.

'Regeneration should be about people not houses'

council €30,000.' We walk up a street off the Hyde Road. Grass grows through the wasteland. Not far away, we pass a green area with freshly planted flowers, seating, trees and a religious mural.

It's called the Garden of Hope and it's part of a project McCarthy hopes to extend. He and a group of other residents reclaimed one piece of waste, where houses had been demolished, and in four hours, planted a fully designed garden. Other 'memory gardens' are planned.

We have coffee at a new resource centre that opened on Thursday, coordinating services for everything from drug-addiction to housing. On Monday, John Giles will officially launch a new all-weather pitch for the youth of the area. Children have painted murals. The employment centre is getting a fresh lick of yellow paint, and a new public space is being built in front of the local church.