



The Irish Times “Lost Leads” series is a fortnightly retelling of stories from the archives of The Irish Times since 1859; lesser-known leads that gripped audiences when they were published, but which have since largely disappeared from memory. It is researched, written and curated by Irish Times digital journalist Dean Ruxton. Stories are sourced from the pdf archive database, supplemented by other sources and public information, retold and given digital enhancement. It’s the sole regular, digital-only archive series in any national newspaper.

It lives here: www.irishtimes.com/news/offbeat/lost-leads.

At a glance: A screengrab below shows part of the first ever Lost Leads article, “The night a river of whiskey ran through the streets of Dublin,” published August 3rd, 2016.

The night a river of whiskey ran through the streets of Dublin

The 1875 Chamber Street fire claimed many victims - each died from alcohol poisoning

© Wed, Aug 3, 2016, 10:20



Dean Ruxton

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The Illustrated London News depicts the fire in the Liberties in 1875. Photograph: Illustrated London News/ South Dublin County Council Digital Library

At William Smith’s inquest, his father, James, spoke to confirm he was a labourer, unmarried and 21 years old when he died.

That was on Tuesday evening. The previous Friday, William met his neighbour John McGrane at the corner of Bow Street in Dublin’s north inner city. Word was quickly spreading of a huge fire engulfing the Liberties. It was 10pm on June 18th, 1875, and the two young men decided to cross the city to take a look.

Lost Leads »



A broken engagement and murderous revenge on Eyre Square



A ‘religious hallucination’ and the shocking murder of a young boy



A cancelled wedding and an unsolved murder in Co Wexford



The voyage of the Swanhilda: when a death ship came to Dublin



Make Ireland a tourist resort: A novel idea by US visitor in 1898

Latest Ireland »

Science Lives: using nature to grow an understanding of science

12 mins

Toddler falls from apartment in Longford town

22 mins

€170m water refund will not be paid for by ‘whip around’ - Varadkar

28 mins

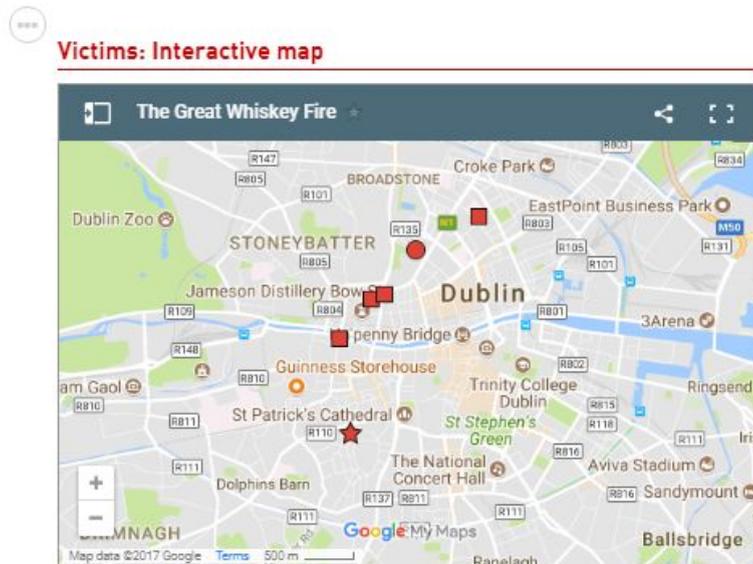
Woman (81) died after nightdress caught fire as she worked stove

45 mins

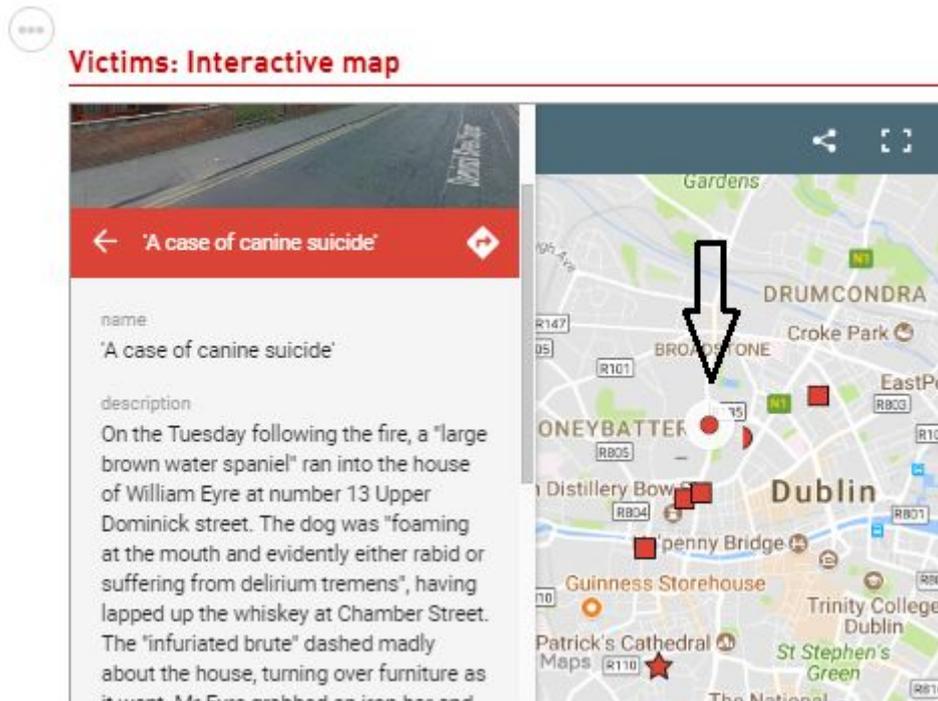
Former Miss Cork narrowly avoids serious injury at Longitude

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/offbeat/the-night-a-river-of-whiskey-ran-through-the-streets-of-dublin-1.2743517>

Story summary and example of treatment: In 1875, a fire ripped through the Liberties in Dublin. It began at a malt house and bonded storehouse on Chamber street; as barrels of whiskey burst open and the building crumbled, a river of burning whiskey began flowing through the streets. People lined up and drank with hats, cupped hands, boots - anything to “imbibe freely of the derelict whiskey”. In all, 13 people died - each of alcohol poisoning. An embedded, interactive Google map allows readers to explore the main points relevant to the fire as well as individual inquest reports to create an all-city experience.

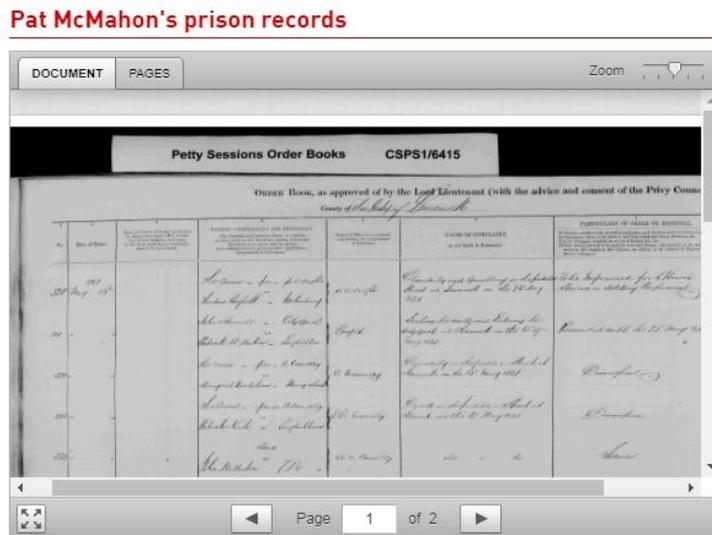


Readers can click on the icons dotted through the map to uncover the story linked to the main fire and get to know more about the cases of some of the individual victims.



Lost Leads hinges on making stories written in an older style of English readable to a modern audience, but also tries its best to dig up as many primary historical sources as possible. In the below article, a routine court case about a man who broke into Limerick jail in order to “slay the devil” is supplemented by a scan of his prison records, obtained from the national archive, which revealed further information about his arrest on the night - namely, that he was intoxicated.

Below is how the records appear embedded in the article “The night Pat McMahon broke into Limerick gaol to slay the devil,” published on September 21st, 2016.



LINK: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/offbeat/the-night-pat-mcmahon-broke-into-limerick-gaol-to-slay-the-devil-1.2799638>

Lost Leads was devised to boost our readers’ understanding of times now only memorable via newspaper clippings, archives, photographs and word of mouth. By digitising material and writing in a modern tone to make passages of older copy digestible, the series tries to provide honest, interesting snapshots of Irish life at different periods.

The samples listed are a tiny selection of the articles published in the series over the past year. In that time, **Lost Leads** has allowed us to talk about the past in frank terms; honouring the style of the old copy and making stories better in the eyes of an audience that is used to interacting with more than flat, anonymous newspaper columns.



The story of the last ‘witch’ burned alive in Ireland
In 1895, Bridget Cleary was set alight by her husband because he believed she was a fairy



Ireland’s Eye mystery: A murder gripped Victorian Dublin
The small, picturesque island off Howth was once synonymous with a ‘foul’ murder case



Tom Thumb: the circus ‘freak’ who made world headlines
When PT Barnum’s prize act married in 1861, he wasn’t going to miss a business opportunity



The night Pat McMahon broke into Limerick gaol to slay the devil
Defendant gave the court good reason for breaking into prison - he had to kill ‘the evil one’



The story of the two women who were hanged in 20th century Ireland
Mary Daly and Annie Walshe were both executed for the murder of their husbands