

Gang robs builders over two nights of 'mayhem'

A DUBLIN-BASED Traveller crime gang carried out 48 hours of 'mayhem' targeting the construction trade last week.

More than €30,000 worth of power tools were robbed by the gang – which has had direct involvement in some of the most violent aggravated burglaries nationwide – last Monday and Tuesday night.

Gardaí are now planning to raid the homes of the chief suspects and have already 'garnered intelligence' on the main chief suspects.

The criminals, based in the Coolock area of Dublin, targeted hotels mainly in north Dublin where builders and tradesmen stay during long-

By **Ali Bracken**
Crime Correspondent

term jobs, as well as building sites in the capital.

A source told the Mail: 'They waited until after midnight, then they drove around to hotel car parks that they could get entry to where they could see builders vans.'

'They are well aware of where workmen stay and kept an eye out. They broke into their vans and stole their high-powered tools.'

It is understood that hotel car parks in Portlaoise, Co. Laois, were also 'hit' by the gang.

This source added: 'This was well planned and orchestrated.'

It was essentially two gangs operating as one for this crime spree. One gang is from Belcamp in Coolock, while the others are based in houses in Coolock. Between them, this crew is responsible for 90% of tool thefts in Leinster.'

The senior security source said that while gardaí are 'aware' of this criminal activity by these particular individuals, 'it is impossible to watch them 24/7'.

Many of those 'in the frame' for last week's crimes 'previously spent years behind bars for a range of violent crimes', the source said, adding: 'What we will try and do now is bring them to justice.'

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Cherish the blaze of light in every word: the eternal footman waits

THEY begin to sing and, only then, do we realise that it's all over. Eight years since their first day in primary school – eight years of ups and downs, highs and lows. But this is a high note and we shall not drown their moment in a sea of tears.

Fr Aquinas Duffy, whom you have met before, takes to the stage and says Mass.

He does so with tenderness and a smile. His warm presence is enough to remind us of the deep goodness which still stirs at the heart of the Church.

The boys know their time is nigh. You can see it in their damp eyes. They are but a step away from a new life and the thought weighs heavy.

From infants to young men, they stand before us as the product of a school in which they have so much pride.

They don't want to leave, but they must and we all know the moment is at hand.

Tears of love, of pride, of mourning. Yes, mourning: that is what I began to feel shortly before the graduation ceremony. Why was I mourning when I still have two other sons in the school?

I mourn the years holding his hand, watching him grow in life and learning. I mourn the loss of his class, his friends, his time in a place he considers a second home. I mourn and I can see that he mourns with me.

For only a year, we had our three boys together in one school. It will never happen again – and I mourn that too. Only now, as the drapes descend on the year, do I realise how much I shall miss it.

The Mass ends and then this: 'Now I've heard there was a secret chord

'That David played, and it pleased the Lord.'

Hallelujah was the late Leonard Cohen's most popular composition. As they sing the opening chords, its beauty is striking.

Their still pure voices compel our hearts to weep some more.

And soon this too will be consigned to memory. This event, in which we celebrate lost times, will soon be ushered away by the 'eternal footman'. It's a 'new start', they say, but I am not yet ready to let go

of our old life. The speeches guide us through the past, through those moments of merriment which were first discussed over dinner.

Back then, we thought it would never end, and yet now we are out of road. Why do we take things for granted when we know that time is only waiting to snatch them away?

The class teachers, Ms Cadogan and Ms Hayes, take a well-deserved bow. They and all their predecessors have left such an indelible mark on our children. This is something you can't put a price on, for a good teacher is worth much more than their weight in gold.

'There's a blaze of light in every word'. Is it the 'holy or the broken Hallelujah'? They all sound beautiful to me – those tender voices which resound across the years, but which will soon fall silent.

Ms Griffin, the principal, draws the occasion to a close. It was her first year at the helm and this is her first 'farewell'. She salutes the boys and speaks of them with great satisfaction.

And then it is over. The boys sing out the night and the mourning deepens. We eat, drink and make merry, but we all know our little community will never assemble again.

WE are not alone, for all parents dread the great transitions when life surrenders to memory and then to mourning. We don't want the great phases of our family life to fade, for our children to 'move on'. If only we could pause and take lasting pleasure in what is passing with each day.

We drift into the night and then, before we know it, it is the very last day. I stand in the yard and watch them being led to class for the final time.

How come I wasn't ready for this? Is any parent ever ready for the moment when your children are wrenched from their certainties?

Our son cannot look forward yet. He still has too much to mourn and it will take time.

Like many of his friends, he has no words to describe his feeling of loss.

That is why, in the stillness of each evening, he goes before the 'Lord of Song' with nothing on his tongue but 'Hallelujah'.

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