

In December 1935 Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington received a parcel containing a half brick with a .303 bullet embedded, accompanied by a letter explaining its content from F. McL Scannell. (Letter in NMI archives.)

*Dear Mrs Sheehy Skeffington,*

*The following is an account of how a half brick, in which is embedded a bullet that passed through your husband's body, came into my possession.*

*I always considered that you should have it, but considered it too gruesome a souvenir to offer you.*

*After the three unfortunate victims had been murdered Bowen Colthurst made frantic efforts to wipe out all the traces of his crime which, in the shape of three sets of bullets in the wall, proclaimed to all and sundry who passed that way one of the first actions of 'a Soldier and a Gentleman' with which we became so familiar as the struggle went on.*

*With that object he had several bricklayers, who were working on a large building then being built for the British Government in Dublin, were taken with their tools, in basses, a kind of soft basket without cover but having two handles for carrying them by, to Portobello Barracks.*

*They were kept surrounded by British Soldiers with fixed bayonets, pointed at them. There were kept for a considerable time in this uncomfortable position, and then harangued at considerable length as to the consequence of divulging anything whatever of what they saw or did.*

*They were then marched with their 'escort' to the wall where the 'executions' had been perpetrated, still surrounded by fixed bayonets. They were then instructed to remove all the bricks with bullets in them and replace them with new ones which Colthurst had already a supply awaiting.*

*While this was being done the soldiers told them where each of the victims had stood. The spot being repaired by the man I knew was where your husband had been placed.*

*When the work had been completed the old bricks were left in a heap, obviously for the British to destroy.*

*The bricklayers were once again marched away and given another lecture as to what their fate would be if they breathed a word of what happened in the Barracks. They were kept surrounded by the wall of bayonets for a considerable time, evidently to ensure that their nerves were in the proper condition, before being marched to the gate where with a final caution they were sent away.*

*It was during this last tirade of frightfulness that the man I knew noticed that a portion of a brick was in his bass. He was too frightened to say anything about it. I met him shortly after and he told me what had happened and made me promise not to give him away. He asked me what he should do with the brick as he was afraid to keep it. I told him I would take it and he gave it to me.*

*I have kept it in my house ever since.*

*I tried through some of the 'Boys' to get in touch with you shortly after I got it but you were then endeavouring to reach America, and I could not do so.*

*Although I knew you were the one with the greatest right to it I could not bring myself to offer such a ghastly memento and so rake up wounds which will never be forgotten.*

