

# GANG BOSS

# BYRNE



**SUSPECT:** Christy Keane is said to have moved in on the drugs trade in the Limerick area

# Notorious crim Keane targeted in Garda raids

ONE of Limerick's most notorious gangland figures was the target of a major garda operation in the city last week. Well-known criminal Christy Keane, who survived an assassination attempt in 2015, is now suspected of heading up a lucrative drugs gang in the mid-west region. Keane (59), who has served time in prison over a major haul of cannabis in 2003, is believed to be cashing in on the fact that most other Limerick gangsters are currently jailed.

■ Nicola DONNELLY

the Defence Forces. During the operation, led by Limerick gardai, officers seized approximately €220,000 in euros, sterling, dirham (UAE currency) as well as old punts. They also found deeds to a property in Dubai, one car valued at approximately €50,000, €100,000 worth of jewellery and luxury watches, and, €23,500 of suspected cannabis herb, cocaine and heroin, as well as cocaine presses.

Gardai also seized "significant evidence to support the investigation, including financial accounts and property documentation," a garda spokesman said. "Two bank accounts have also been frozen containing sums in excess of €119,000," they added. Senior Limerick gardai have said of the gang turf war, that despite a lull in bloodletting, the gangs have continued to operate their drugs businesses in a more covert manner.

### Assets

"This is a very significant search operation. The operation is targeting a local organised crime group, effectively targeting (their) proceeds of crime, targeting their assets," said a source.

Operation Coronation was, a garda spokesperson said, established "to target organised criminality in Limerick city and its environs, targeting organised extended criminality, drug trafficking and the financial returns achieved from this type of activity through money laundering".



**FEUD RIVALS:** (from top) Wayne and John Dundon, Brian and Kieran Collopy

### Mobs

Limerick was once gripped by the brutal feud between the warring McCarthy/Dundon and Keane/Collopy mobs. However, Christy Keane's rivals in the McCarthy/Dundon gang, such as Wayne and John Dundon, are currently serving life sentences, while Keane's allies, Brian and Kieran Collopy are also behind bars. Sources say it means Keane has been operating the main drugs business in Limerick, and is being supplied by a Dublin-based drugs group known as The Family.

"Keane has been keeping his head down and getting on with the business," a source said. However, pressure is starting to mount on the veteran criminal following a major operation by gardai last week.

During that operation on Keane's crew last Wednesday, gardai arrested 14 people and seized around €200,000 in cash, and other suspected proceeds of crime.

In a series of raids from 6am, Limerick gardai mounted "Operation Coronation", a mammoth operation, involving 200 officers, assisted by members of



**TRIBUTE:** Lee Byrne honours his dad, senior Kinahan cartel member Liam

**HERE** are gangster brothers Liam and David Byrne alongside their mobster father before they embarked on a life of crime.

Gang boss Liam Byrne celebrated Father's Day yesterday by sharing an old photograph of himself as a child alongside his dad James "Jaws" Byrne and his slain brother David.

This exclusive image shows Liam and David as children sitting on their father's knee.

Liam, who is now considered a senior figure in the Kinahan cartel as well as a crime boss in his own right as head of the Byrne Organised Crime Group, shared the snap to wish his dad well on Father's Day.

Liam said: "Happy Father's Day to be the best dad and friend in the world. I love you to bits."

Liam's younger brother David was gunned down in the Regency Hotel in February 2016.

His death sparked the escalation of the bloody Hutch-Kinahan feud that has left 18 men dead.

### Death

Patrick Hutch, a nephew of Gerry 'The Monk' Hutch, was charged with the murder of David — but walked free from court last year as the trial collapsed after the death of the senior investigating garda in the case.

Mob boss Liam was also wished a happy Father's Day by his eldest son Lee.

Another exclusive image shows Lee posing with his gangster father in a flashy car with white leather seats.

Both father and son posed with their thumbs up as Lee — who is not involved in any criminality and has no convictions — captioned the image with, 'Happy Father's Day. Boss.'

The 19-year-old car salesman posted the image of himself and major drugs trafficker Liam, who heads up the Byrne Organised Crime Group, yesterday.

In 2018, the High Court heard how Liam Byrne is at the "very top tier"

## EXCLUSIVE

■ Laura COLGAN and Nicola DONNELLY

of organised crime in Ireland. In submissions, the Criminal Assets Bureau outlined Byrne's links to Christy 'Dapper Don' Kinahan's cartel.

It stated: "The target of this investigation is the Liam Byrne Organised Crime Group — this group is aligned to the Kinahan Organised Crime Group and is involved in the importation for sale and supply of controlled drugs into this jurisdiction.

"The investigation has uncovered a system of money laundering used by this group to hide the beneficial ownership of the various assets in their possession.

"The main target of this investigation, Liam Byrne, is a close and trusted associate and lieutenant of Daniel Kinahan.

"The Kinahan group is an international gang involved in the importation and controlled distribution of drugs into this jurisdiction, the UK and mainland Europe. It has bases in Spain, the UK, Netherlands and Dubai.

"Liam Byrne and Sean McGovern are at the very top tier of this group and are regularly collated in the company of Daniel and Christopher Kinahan," the submission in the High Court stated.

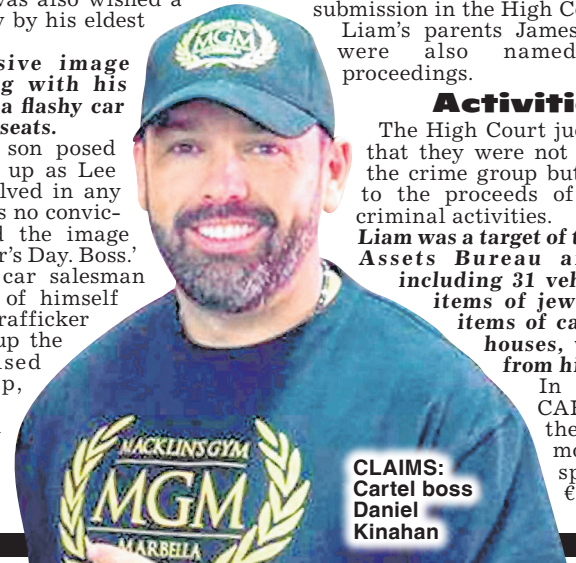
Liam's parents James and Sadie were also named in the proceedings.

### Activities

The High Court judgment said that they were not members of the crime group but had access to the proceeds of the gang's criminal activities.

Liam was a target of the Criminal Assets Bureau and assets, including 31 vehicles, eight items of jewellery, four items of cash and two houses, were seized from him.

In June 2019, CAB took over the home the mobster once spent over €740,000 ren-



**CLAIMS:** Cartel boss Daniel Kinahan

# LIAM'S FATHER'S DAY PIC

# BABY BYRNE



FAMILY: James 'Jaws' Byrne with his sons Liam (left) and David in Father's Day snap posted by Liam



## Mobster brothers in throwback childhood snap with dad 'Jaws'

ovating with state-of-the-art security, reinforced doors and a jacuzzi.

Number 2 Raleigh Square in Crumlin, Dublin, which was bought in his sister Maria's name although Liam lived there, was considered to be worth over €1million.

**Gardai destroyed his criminal empire when they not only seized his home – but almost €3million worth of property, luxury cars and jewellery linked to his criminal gang.**

Liam and David's father James, who also goes by the nicknames "Jaws" and "Jemmy" is a convicted criminal who was once an

associate of 'The General' Martin Cahill. He has a history of fraud and counterfeiting and his last known paid employment was way back in 1974.

### Revenue

He paid the Revenue Commissioners €208,400 in 2004 after Revenue and the Criminal Assets Bureau issued him and wife Sadie with a tax assessment of €378,612.

He also agreed to repay €43,353 in unemployment assistance he was not entitled to in November 2002.



VIOLENCE: Scene at Regency Hotel where David Byrne was shot dead in 2016