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Hain rules out Bloody Sunday gesture

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Peter Hain has ruled out any gesture marking the 1920 massacre carried out by British soldiers at Croke Park.

Peter Hain will be at the home of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) for Ireland's rugby fixture against England on February 24.

Speculation had mounted that Mr Hain might take part in an event commemorating the 1920 shooting dead of 14 civilians by troops, which became known as Bloody Sunday.

However Mr Hain ruled out any such gesture today.

"Despite the excited speculation around the Ireland/England rugby match at Croke Park, let me be clear, I have never proposed doing anything other than attend and watch the match at the specific request of the Taoiseach and Prime Minister," he said.

"I will be there as a guest at what will be an historic occasion and, I hope, a great game of rugby."

Last weekend Ireland hosted France for the first ever rugby match at the 80,000 seater stadium.

The GAA lifted its ban on soccer and rugby being played at headquarters in 2005.

The Bloody Sunday massacre followed the shooting dead of a number of high-ranking British agents in Dublin on the orders of IRA leader Michael Collins.

At around 3pm on November 21st, 1920, when the crowd of under 10,000 was settling down to an entertaining game, a British military plane flew over and emitted a red signal flare.

Immediately, Black and Tans began to climb over the walls at each end of the ground, some using ladders.

At once, fire was directed straight into the crowd, first from small arms and then from machine guns hastily set up on the ground just inside the main entrance.

After the shooting ended, 13 people lay dead around the ground, close on 100 were injured.

The dead included the Tipperary captain Michael Hogan, a young Wexford man who had been rendering spiritual assistance to a 26-year-old Dublin woman due to get married a few days later, and three Dublin boys - aged 10, 11 and 14 years.

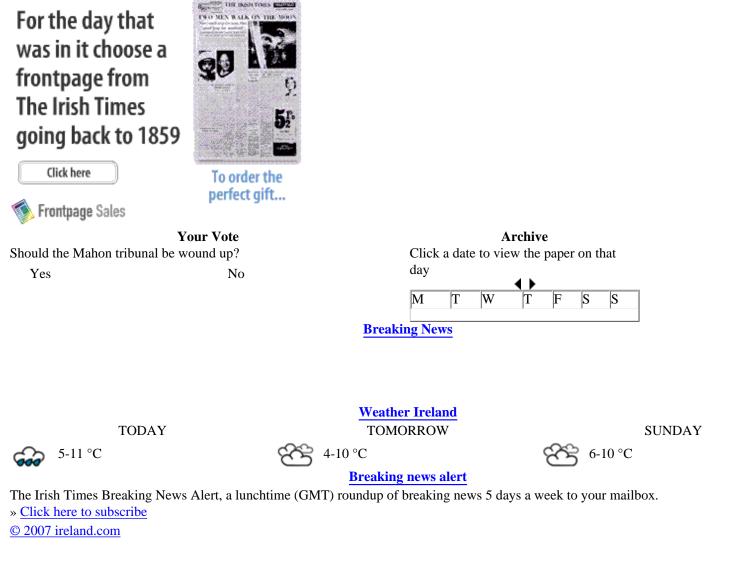
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