

CARRICKFERGUS AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**JOHN (SEAN) ERNEST LESTER, ACTING SECRETARY-GENERAL OF
THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS**

Sean Lester was born Woodburn, Carrickfergus to Robert (a grocer) and Henrietta Lester in 1888. He was educated by a scholarship to Methodist College, Belfast. He began his career as a journalist in Portadown. Later he worked on the **Freeman's Journal** in Dublin. He became a member of the Gaelic League and the Irish Republican Brotherhood by conviction and the influence of friends such as Ernest Blythe. He said he "became an Irish Nationalist of the positive kind looking for Irish freedom and happiness....". In 1929 he was appointed by Desmond Fitzgerald, Irish Minister of External Affairs, to the League of Nations as permanent representative to publicise the activities of the new State. In 1932 at the same time as Eamon De Valera became President of the Dail, Lester was appointed as the League's High Commissioner to the Free City of Danzig when his name was often in the newspaper headlines. Due to non co-operation by the German Nazi Government in 1936 he was withdrawn from Danzig and became Deputy Secretary-General of the League. In 1940 he was made Acting Secretary-General of the League until the organisation's demise on the establishment of the United Nations. In 1948 he was offered the job by Trygve Lie the United Nations Secretary-General to be the UN Head of Staff of the commission to deal with the then explosive India/Pakistan situation. He refused

Sean Lester died in 1959 and is buried in Clifden, Co. Galway.

At present he is not commemorated in Carrickfergus.