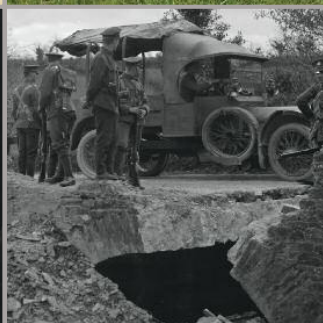
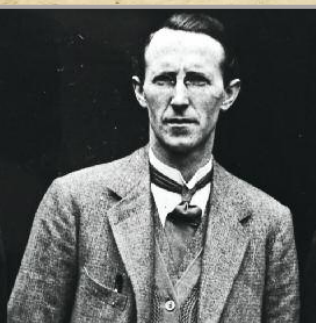
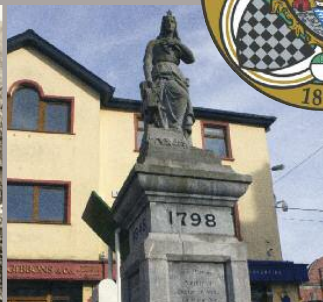


# HERITAGE CENTENARY SITES

## of Rebel County Cork



**HERITAGE  
CENTENARY SITES**  
**of Rebel County Cork**

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An Chomhairle Oidhreacht  
The Heritage Council



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Message from **Cllr. Séamus McGrath**,  
Mayor of the County of Cork and  
**Tim Lucey**, Chief Executive, Cork County Council



**Cllr. Séamus McGrath**  
Mayor



**Tim Lucey**  
Chief Executive

**This book, a publication of the Heritage Unit of Cork County Council, looks at the monumental role played by the County of Cork over the pivotal years that shaped the Ireland of today. It is the fourth in a series of such Heritage Publications; a series which was shortlisted for the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards in 2015. The initial three books in this series focused on Heritage Bridges of County Cork (2013); Heritage Houses of County Cork (2014) and Heritage Churches of County Cork (2015) and this latest offering continues in the same manner, this time, conveying the very reason why Cork is known as the Rebel County.**

The publication of this book is a timely one. Throughout 2016, as we commemorate the centenary of 1916, the County of Cork has done itself proud with in excess of five hundred 1916 themed events right throughout the county. Of course, 1916 cannot in itself be viewed in isolation and this publication takes an excellent and well deserved look at Ireland's and indeed Cork's efforts over the preceding centuries and of course, those pivotal years that followed 1916, taking in the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War.

This publication, gives an overview and understanding of the challenges facing Ireland for many centuries, and why the County of Cork had such a bearing on the country's quest for Independence. It highlights the major events that took place in the county, ranging from the Battle of Kinsale to Béal na mBláth, and documents the key figures, men and women, of County Cork, who all played such an invaluable role including household names such as Michael Collins and Diarmuid Lynch as well as those not so well known.

Throughout these pages the reader will marvel at the role that Cork's people and places played in Ireland's quest for Independence. It features numerous first hand accounts of the events that took place and also documents a number of sites that can be visited today, where people can indeed revisit this very important period of our collective heritage.

We commend all of those involved in producing this fascinating and informative publication, as we set our sights to commemorating the War of Independence and Civil War over the coming years.

## Preamble and Acknowledgements



**This publication is an action of the County Cork Heritage Plan which has gratefully received funding from the Heritage Council and through the heritage budget of Cork County Council. For more information on the effortless work and support of the Heritage Council, visit their website [www.heritagecouncil.ie](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie).**

The Heritage Unit of Cork County Council ([www.corkcoco.ie/heritage](http://www.corkcoco.ie/heritage)) wishes to sincerely thank Damian Shiels (Rubicon Heritage) as the primary author of this publication. Damian is a store of information on Ireland's Revolutionary Landscape and his knowledge, experience and inviting writing style has resulted in a most enjoyable and educational read. Enda O'Flaherty, Hannah Sims, Jonathan Miller and Carmelita Troy of the Rubicon Heritage team were also of great assistance. Additional text, images, amendments and overall editing was carried out by Conor Nelligan, Mary Sleeman and Mona Hallinan of Cork County Council's Heritage Unit.

The project process from commencement to completion was managed by County Heritage Officer and 'Ireland 1916' County Coordinator, Conor Nelligan; County Archaeologist Mary Sleeman and County Conservation Officer Mona Hallinan with the backing and support of John O' Neill, Director of Service. A special thank you also to Isabell Smyth, Head of Communications, Heritage Council, for her advice and support.

As part of this project, numerous Heritage Groups and individuals throughout the County were asked to get involved, drawing on the county's knowledge of the revolutionary sites and people that have shaped the County. The response was fantastic with dozens of submissions received and it is this involvement that has resulted in a publication with such a variety and wealth of information. Thank you all.

There are many aspects to the production of a book but the two most critical ones most certainly relate to the design and type-setting of the book and indeed its printing. A very special thank you in this regard to Ian Barry for his creativity in design and indeed a warm thank you as well to all at Carraig Print who have produced a most delightful end product.

Lastly, thanks to you, the reader, for your interest in the shared Heritage of County Cork.

**Mona Hallinan**

Conservation Officer  
Cork County Council

**Conor Nelligan**

Heritage Officer  
Cork County Council

**Mary Sleeman**

County Archaeologist  
Cork County Council





## Chapter 1

### Introduction



**The revolutionary decade of 1913 to 1923 was the defining period in the history of modern Ireland. Collective memory of the momentous events that shook the country during those years remain deeply imbedded in the cultural identity of people across the island, be they nationalist or unionist, North or South. It was this period that directly led to the creation of what we now call the Republic of Ireland, and it remains the time period that dominates our historic consciousness. Those who bore witness to it never forgot it.**

The aim of this book is to tell the story of County Cork's role in the revolution. The county played a major role in many of the significant events of this key 20th century decade, as it had done through the centuries in previous rebellions and conflicts spanning more than a millennia. Many of the volunteers who participated in the conflicts that punctuated the revolutionary decade themselves looked to historic events for inspiration and as a source of patriotic pride. This book hopes to highlight some of the landscapes of conflict that still surround us in the county, along with a number of individuals from County Cork who played central roles in some of these events. Using existing sites and first-person accounts, it aims to explore where they fit in the historical story of Cork and Ireland, and what we can do to explore evidence for their surviving traces, which often lie largely unnoticed around us.

Cork was first shired by 1207-8, though the county boundaries would be further adapted in the Tudor period<sup>1</sup>. Long before this date, the region we now call County Cork was familiar with conflict, be it between local Irish kings, or later invading groups such as the Vikings. One such example involving local Kings occurred in 125 A.D. when 'a memorable battle was fought at Ard-Neimheidh, i.e. the Great Island, between Niadh Nugent and Aengus, Monarch of Ireland, in which conflict the former regained the Crown of Munster from the latter'<sup>2</sup>.

However, it was the 12th century arrival of the Anglo-Normans which fundamentally changed the future history of what is now Cork and Ireland as a whole. The centuries that followed would see Cork retain both Anglo-Norman and Gaelic traditions, largely dependent on their geographic location within the county. The region was the scene of intensive fighting during the Elizabethan period, and was the location of one of the pivotal battles in Irish history, when at Kinsale in 1601 the English Crown secured a victory that would finally lead to the complete conquest of the island. Though Cork witnessed its last formal engagement between what might be regarded as two regular armies in the late 17th century, the story of Cork and Ireland would move into a new phase – one that would culminate in a series of armed uprisings, the memory of which early 20th century republicans would draw upon more than any other.

Certainly from the 17th century onwards for the Irish there was a steadily growing unease with the prevalent societal situation in the country, namely a protestant ascendancy, who were the land owning class and to whom the majority of Irish people paid rent to. The Irish people were growing increasingly dissatisfied and subsequent action was inevitable. The first of these revolutionary historic signposts came with the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798. Although Cork was not a central location of the fighting, there were many Cork men and women caught up on both sides of the conflict. The memory of 1798 would become an inspiration for future generations of nationalists, be they the Young Irelanders of 1848 or particularly the Fenians of 1867 and beyond. These armed uprisings combined with other political and cultural movements to inspire a growing sense of nationalism among many in the county. By the late 19th century, Cork began to witness the construction of memorials to commemorate fallen heroes and events relating to the independence struggle, something that continues to this day. These memorials served a number of purposes; to remember those who had fought for their nationalist or republican beliefs in the past, to draw parallels and connections between contemporary struggles and those of previous generations, and to provide an opportunity for a call to action for future efforts.

The core focus of this book is the revolutionary decade. We examine the events from 1913 onwards in which Cork played such an important role. They include the rise of the Volunteer movement and the sequence of events surrounding Cork's participation in Easter Week and the 1916 Rising. These episodes in turn directly led to the crucial role the county played in the War of Independence. Perhaps more than anywhere else in the country, Cork can lay claim to being to the fore in the actions played out in the lanes, fields and streets of Ireland that ultimately led to the foundation of the Irish Free State. It was in Co. Cork that some of the most famous victories- and worst defeats- were experienced by the IRA, and it was also here where civilians often suffered the harshest consequences of living in the midst of a guerrilla war. Unfortunately, Cork was again to play a pivotal role in the final conflict of the revolutionary decade, as comrade turned on comrade in the Irish Civil War. It was to be this struggle that witnessed the largest engagement fought in Co. Cork during the 1913-23 period, and it was also to be this struggle which ended the lives of two of the men most associated with Cork's role in the War of Independence - Michael Collins and Liam Lynch - both dying as leaders on opposing sides.

It was from the traumas, trials and triumphs of this revolutionary decade that the building blocks of modern Ireland were laid. The book features thirty sites from around the county which seek to capture some of the conflict landscapes and individuals who help to tell this story, many of which have been put forward by individuals and historical groups throughout Cork.

In Ireland, and indeed in the County of Cork, much of our revolutionary landscape remains to be identified and explored. As such, this book also seeks to provide advice on how local communities can go about uncovering, revealing and enhancing our understanding of the sites and locations that relate to this intriguing - and fundamentally important - period in the history of our island.

In order to truly appreciate this heritage one needs to start at the beginning of recorded history here in Ireland, as will be documented in the very next chapter.



<sup>1</sup> Potter, Matthew 2012. "Geographical Loyalty?" Counties, Palatinates, Boroughs and Ridings' in *History Ireland* Volume 20, Issue 5, Sept/Oct 2012, 24-27, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Tuckey, Francis, H. 1837 "Cork Remembrancer" Osborne and Son, Cork, 2.





## Chapter 2

### The Scene Is Set: Cork's Conflict History

In the 2nd century AD, an Alexandrian Greek geographer named Ptolemy sat down to record what he had heard of the island we now call Ireland<sup>1</sup>. His work, which represents our earliest detailed account of those who lived here, places a tribe called the Iverni in the vicinity of modern day county Cork. It is thought that the people Ptolemy called the Iverni may be the Érainn, who seem to have dominated Munster at this time. The Érainn may in turn be those who ultimately gave their name to the island as a whole - Ériu, or Éire<sup>2</sup>. The culture and society that took shape in Ireland in the centuries that followed Ptolemy's writings remain among the most celebrated in the history of the island. It is a past landscape that we can still explore throughout much of Ireland today, as the country boasts one of the best preserved Early Medieval landscapes to be seen anywhere in Europe, and Cork is no different with a fine example being at Garranes and the stone cashel at Knockdrum. Cork at this time was made up of a patchwork of kingdoms which often vied for position against each other. By the 7th century the Érainn had lost their dominant position in Munster to the Eóganachta, who had their capital at Cashel<sup>3</sup>. In what makes up the modern county, the dawn of the 8th century saw kingships like those of the Corcu Loígde, Eóganacht Raithlind and Múscriage Mittine active<sup>4</sup>. The period is often referred as Ireland's 'Golden Age', particularly with respect to the ecclesiastical achievements of the island at the time.

In the late 8th century, a new threat emerged that was to add a new dimension to the power struggles so typical of Irish kingdoms. In 795 AD the annals recorded "the burning of Rechru by the heathens"<sup>5</sup>. The Vikings had arrived. It wasn't long before parts of the south coast attracted their attention, and as the 9th century progressed raids were carried out against



Spectacular ringfort of *Lisnacaheeragh*  
Garranes in foreground with two of the three enclosing banks visible through the trees and the remains of *Lisnamanroe* visible as a circular crop mark top left.

locations such as St. Fin Barre's Monastery on the River Lee (attacked in 821 and 839) and the monastery at Cloyne (likely attacked in 822, 835 and again in 888)<sup>6</sup>. The Irish annalists recorded much Viking activity around the country. A typical entry is that from the Annals of Innisfallen for 924 AD: "Gothbraid, grandson of Ímar, went by sea westwards and took the hostages of the south of Ireland by sea to Ros Ailithir [Rosscarbery]"<sup>7</sup>.

Within a short period of time the Viking presence began to take on a more permanent character. By the middle of the 9th century they had begun to overwinter in Ireland, establishing fortified bases known as longphorts, one of which was probably set up near St. Fin Barre's in Cork<sup>8</sup>. The Vikings were masters of the seas, and evidence of that skillset has survived in the county. Excavations at Lonehort Harbour on Bere Island have revealed the remains of a 'naust'- an artificial boat shelter of Scandinavian origin- as well as a large artificial breakwater at the harbour's entrance, which may have been constructed by the Vikings<sup>9</sup>. The Viking influence on the development of the city of Cork would be their most lasting legacy. Though historical records are scant, a Viking presence at Cork is noted in 867, and the unfortunate St. Fin Barre's Monastery was once again plundered in 915<sup>10</sup>. It seems probable that the Hiberno-Norse town of Cork began to develop in the 10th and 11th centuries. The Vikings quickly became a part of the political and social reality in Ireland for the native kings, who soon began to treat them as potential allies and enemies in their power struggles. Despite their impact, the majority of what is now county Cork remained under Irish control during this period. Indeed, by the 12th century the Mac Carthaigs would regard Cork as the capital of their Kingdom of Desmond (South Munster) as the Hiberno-Norse town developed side-by-side with St. Finbarre's monastic settlement<sup>11</sup>. The Mac Carthaig dominance of the area was reinforced at this time with the construction of a castle by the family in Shandon<sup>12</sup>.



**ABOVE:**

St. Fin Barre's Cathedral as it appears today, on the site of the former monastery, which played a major role in the story of Viking Cork. Image courtesy of Dr. Louise Nugent.

**BELOW:**

The medieval town walls of Youghal, a key town in the Anglo-Norman colony in Cork. These walls have benefited through significant investment with the support of the Heritage Council through the Irish Walled Town Network.



While the arrival of the Vikings undoubtedly had a major impact on the Cork region, a much more significant change to the status quo was to emerge in the late 12th century. In 1166, the Leinster King Diarmait Mac Murchada had lost his kingdom and been forced into exile. In an effort to restore his position, he travelled to the court of King Henry II and acknowledged him as his lord, in return for permission to recruit troops in England and Wales. Anglo-Norman adventurers from the Welsh marches answered his call, and so the events which led to the invasion of Ireland were set in train. A series of landings in 1169 and 1170 led to rapid successes, as Wexford, Waterford and Dublin were taken under Anglo-Norman control. Henry II himself landed in 1171, and in Waterford a number of Irish kings – including Diarmait Mac Carthaig (McCarthy), King of Desmond – submitted to his authority. However, it seems to have been a number of years before the Normans actually began to make their presence felt in Cork. The first time they ventured west of Waterford into Munster was to raid Déise territory in Lismore in 1173<sup>13</sup>. Much of their plunder from the excursion was loaded aboard 13 vessels and sailed down the Blackwater, where it was set upon near Youghal Bay by a fleet of Cork based Hiberno-Norse warships led by Gilbert Mac Turger<sup>14</sup>. The Anglo-Norman chronicler Gerald of Wales left a description of the naval engagement at Youghal:

**“ ... a naval battle began, with one side attacking fiercely with stones and axes, while the others put up a vigorous resistance with arrows and metal bolts, of which they had a plentiful supply. At last the men of Cork were beaten, and their leader Gilbert Mac Turger was killed by a sturdy youth, by name Philip of Wales<sup>15</sup>. ”**

The description of the battle indicates that much of the fighting was at close quarters and hand-to-hand. The Normans may have been armed with crossbows- “metal bolts”- which it has been suggested may be the earliest reference to the use of this weapon in Ireland<sup>16</sup>. The Anglo-Norman presence in what is now county Cork accelerated after 1177, when Henry II made his son John Lord of Ireland, and granted the Kingdom of Desmond to Miles de Cogan and Robert Fitzstephen, who were also given possession of the city of Cork<sup>17</sup>.

The progress of the Anglo-Norman colony in Cork had a lasting legacy. The manorial system they introduced took greatest hold in the eastern and central parts of what now makes up the modern county, while much of the west remained largely under Gaelic control through the medieval period<sup>18</sup>. Many of the county's market towns developed in Norman controlled areas during the 13th and early 14th centuries, and ports like Youghal and Kinsale joined Cork as important trade centres<sup>19</sup>. It was during this period that many of the most famous families of Cork arrived, such as the Barrys and Roches, major Norman lords who, along with the Geraldine Fitzgerald earls of Desmond, controlled large sections of the county<sup>20</sup>. Other Norman families of note in Cork included the Barrets, Courcys, Condons and Fitzgibbons. Some of these families' major power centres retain significant traces of their medieval position, such as the Castle of Barryscourt, the seat of the Barry lordship. In the west, the



MacCarthys retained Gaelic power in lordships like Duhallow, Muskerry and Carbery, with the head of the former pre-Norman Kingdom of Desmond now known as MacCarthy Mór<sup>21</sup>. Among the lesser Gaelic lords who controlled sections of the county during the medieval period were the O'Keefes, the O'Callaghans, the MacAuliffes, the O'Mahonys, the O'Donovans, the O'Driscolls and the O'Crowleys<sup>22</sup>. As with the Normans, the Gaelic lords sought to protect their holdings through fortification, as is evidenced at sites such as Dunlough Castle, which although of 15th century date was originally constructed as an O'Mahony stronghold in the 13th century.

The expansion of the Anglo-Norman colony in Ireland during the 12th and 13th centuries also led to the movement of a number of Gaelic Irish territories, reshaping the history of Cork. Perhaps the most notable example of this are the O'Sullivans, who were forced from north Munster into what is now western county Cork and Kerry by the Norman expansion, carving out new lordships for themselves at locations such as the Beara Peninsula<sup>23</sup>.

By the year 1300, some two-thirds of the county of Cork was under effective centralised Anglo-Norman control<sup>24</sup>. However, by that date the continued westward expansion of the colony had already been blunted thanks to Mac Carthaig victories at the battles of Callan in 1261 and Mangerton/Tooreencormick in 1262, both in modern Co. Kerry<sup>25</sup>. It was the 14th century that dealt the severest blow to the Anglo-Normans both in Cork and Ireland as a whole. That century saw the island engulfed in a succession of calamities that both halted Norman expansion and aided the resurgence of the Gaelic Irish. Harsh weather conditions, which resulted in poor crops and famine conditions for many, were exacerbated by the arrival in 1315 of a Scots army in Ireland under Edward Bruce, brother of Robert the Bruce<sup>26</sup>. Although eventually defeated at Faughart in Co. Louth in 1318, the three-year war devastated much of the lordship of Ireland and placed an

**Barryscourt Castle, seat of the Barry Lordship.** Image courtesy of Bernie Carney.



immense strain on the colony's resources. All this was compounded by the Black Death, which arrived in Ireland in the summer of 1348. One of the worst towns affected was Youghal, which lost an estimated 40% of its population to the pestilence<sup>27</sup>.

The upheavals of the 14th century ensured that the Anglo-Norman conquest remained incomplete. Large tracts of the island remained in Gaelic Irish hands, and the English administration increasingly relied upon powerful magnates to secure their interests in Ireland. The most important of these great houses were the Fitzgerald Earls of Kildare, the Butler Earls of Ormond and the Fitzgerald Earls of Desmond. The 15th century remained a time of trial for English interests in Cork, with the citizens of Cork, Kinsale and Youghal expressing concern in 1449 that their Irish enemies "have the whole country under them" except for those areas controlled by Lords Roche, Barry and Courcy, and were worried that they if they did not receive more support "then we are all cast away, and then farewell Munster for ever!"<sup>28</sup>. At the same time, many of the old Norman lords- particularly those, like the Roches and Barrys, who lived in close proximity to their traditional Gaelic Irish enemies- were beginning to adopt many of customs and practices of the 'native' Irish<sup>29</sup>. Efforts to address and prevent this 'gaelicisation' of settlers were a common theme through much of the period, most famously with the introduction of the 1366 Statutes of Kilkenny, which sought to ban the Irish language<sup>30</sup>.

The fate of English interests in Ireland were often tied to events closer to home, and in this too Cork played a part. Throughout much of the second half of the 15th century England was engulfed in the War of the Roses, the series of conflicts for control of the throne fought between rival claimants from the houses of Lancaster and York. Ireland became a theatre of intrigue for this struggle, and when in 1491 Perkin Warbeck, a Yorkist pretender to the Crown, landed in Cork he received support from a number of the city and county's citizens<sup>31</sup>. His efforts would ultimately prove unsuccessful, and Warbeck was executed in London in 1499. It was reputedly Cork's act of support for Warbeck that led to it receiving the nickname 'The Rebel County', which it still takes pride in today.

The conflicts which periodically erupted in Ireland began to take on a different character towards the latter part of the 16th century. The reign of King Henry VIII led to the English Reformation, which in 1534 saw the King become the head of the Church of England and led to the monarch's permanent break with Rome. In a follow on to this, in 1542 Henry's title was changed from Lord of Ireland to King of Ireland. In the future, religious difference would add fuel to the fire of the disputes between the English and Irish. A number of Gaelic Irish leaders also saw opportunity in the exploiting of their Catholicism as a means of soliciting aid from the Continent in their wars against the English. The religious dimension would also occasionally lead to alliances between some of the 'Old English', those descendants of the original Norman colonists who held fast to the Catholic faith, and the Gaelic Irish, as they sought to limit the control of the 'New English' colonists, who were largely Protestant in belief. It was in this period that we also see the movement of numbers of the famed professional Irish soldiers of Scottish descent into Munster, as Gallóglaigh- or Gallowglass as they better known- such as the Mac Sweeneys can be found in locations like Carbery<sup>32</sup>.

The first conflict to see the use of the Counter-Reformation as a tool in opposing English power was the Second Desmond War, which devastated much of Munster between 1579 and 1583. That conflict, fought between the Fitzgerald Earl of Desmond and the administration of Queen Elizabeth I, witnessed the landing in 1580 of a Papal force of Italians, Spanish and Basque troops at Dún an Óir, Co. Kerry to support the Fitzgeralds<sup>33</sup>. Defeat in the war led to the execution of Desmond and the plantation of Munster, a scheme which sought to attract English settlers to the region in order to make it easier to govern. Among those to benefit with lands in Co. Cork were Sir Walter Raleigh, who received territory around Youghal, and the famous poet Edmund Spenser, who received an estate centred on Kilcolman Castle<sup>34</sup>.

It was the greatest war of the 16th century that had the most dramatic impact on the conflict landscape of Cork, and led to one of the most significant battles ever fought on the island occurring in the county. The causes of what became known as the Nine Years' War (1594-1603) are many and varied, but the attempt to replace the Gaelic system of power and control with a more anglicised model was a major contributor. The seat of the war was in Ulster, where the principal Irish leader was Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone. He was supported by two other Ulster Lords, both of whom were related to him by ties of marriage; Hugh Roe



Depiction of the 1601 Siege and Battle of Kinsale from *Pacata Hibernia* (1633).

O'Donnell of Donegal and Hugh Maguire of Fermanagh. Initially, the conflict was largely confined to Ulster, but all that changed in 1598 with the stunning victory of O'Neill's forces over an English army at the Battle of the Yellow Ford in Co. Armagh<sup>35</sup>. Following the success, much of the country, including parts of Cork, rose against the English, and the Munster plantation was swept away. It was hoped that swift support from Catholic Spain would help to consolidate the Irish position, but the much looked for aid did not arrive. As a result, by the close of 1600 most of Munster had been subdued by the English, with all of the rebel castles taken<sup>36</sup>. By the summer of 1601 the war was again largely confined to Ulster, where O'Neill was surrounded by English garrisons and Crown troops were able to penetrate the province's interior<sup>37</sup>. Then, on 21 September 1601, the Spanish finally came. Their force consisted of some 3,500 troops under the command of Don Juan del Águila - but they had landed in Kinsale, Co. Cork, at the other end of the Country<sup>38</sup>.

The hills and fields which surround the town of Kinsale bore witness to some of the most decisive moments in Irish history. The English administration immediately recognised that the outcome of the fight at Kinsale had the potential to decide the fate of the Kingdom. When news of the Spanish arrival in Kinsale was relayed to the English Lord Deputy Mountjoy, he quickly began to pull troops from all over the Country to meet the threat. Leaving a substantial number of troops in Ulster to act as a deterrent to the Gaelic Irish Lords, (O'Neill and O'Donnell particularly- Maguire had been killed), they now had to leave their lands defenceless if they marched to the Spaniards aid<sup>39</sup>. By the 18 October Mountjoy and his forces began to entrench in what was to become their main siege camp on what is still known as Camphill outside the town<sup>40</sup>. As the days passed and further reinforcements arrived, Mountjoy began to extend his stranglehold on the town, constructing further camps and entrenchments, while also beginning to cannonade the town<sup>41</sup>. O'Donnell and O'Neill succeeded in marching the length of the Country to support the Spanish, O'Donnell famously avoiding a blocking force under the command of Lord President Carew. On the 6 December they arrived in the vicinity of Kinsale, and the Crown forces now found themselves caught between the Spaniards and the Irish<sup>42</sup>.



**When professionally excavated and recorded, the archaeological remains of Cork's past conflict can teach us a great deal about events in the past. These lead bullets were dropped by soldier's in the Lord Deputy's Camp in Kinsale in 1601, and were uncovered during a recent survey undertaken by the Kinsale Battlefield Project.**

Image courtesy of Kinsale Battlefield Project.



So the situation remained throughout much of December, with losses building especially among the entrenched English. Then on the 24 December the Gaelic Irish force of some 6,000 men and 800 horse (including some 200 Spaniards from an outlying garrison) attempted to link up with the Spaniards in the town. The English appear to have spotted this move before the Irish were in position, as they launched c.1,500- 2,000 foot and c.400- 500 horse against O'Neill and his allies, while keeping the majority of their men in the entrenched positions in case of a Spanish break-out attempt<sup>43</sup>. From this point on things happened quickly, as the Irish appear to have suffered a complete collapse. Though the English forces lost only a small number of men in the Battle, thousands had died due to the weather conditions during the Siege. Fynes Moryson, who witnessed the siege, remembered how the troops "died by dozens on a heap, for want of little cherishing with hot meat and warm lodging"<sup>44</sup> (Morsyon 2007, 294). Sir George Carew in a letter written from the siege noted the conditions:

**“ You may think that the demands for men and supplies made... are large... but when you consider the time of year at which this siege is conducted, the quality of the country and the tenderness of new men, it seems to me remarkable that any of them are living. There has never been a more miserable siege than this in which many die, many more are too sick to serve, and others run away from faintness of heart, in spite of the fact that they are severely punished for doing so...<sup>45</sup> ”**

These bones are yet to be found, and may still lie in the fields and hills that surround the town.

Fighting in the open ground and in a place not of their choosing, the key moment of the battle seems to have been the cavalry showdown. The English cavalry had stirrups, allowing them to couch their lances, and therefore withstand the impact of a charge. The Irish horse was both smaller in size and had no stirrups, preferring to carry their lances and darts overarm. In previous battles this had little bearing, as the manoeuvrability of the smaller Irish horse had often been an advantage on chosen ground. However, as the Irish infantry attempted to deploy into Spanish tercio formations, their horse turned and broke into the ranks when faced with a determined English cavalry charge. With the Irish formation disrupted, the English charged home, precipitating a rout that resulted in the slaughter of large numbers of O'Neill's and O'Donnell's men<sup>46</sup>. The Gaelic Irish suffered something in the region of 1,000 dead, while the English placed their losses at between one and three men, although in the region of 6,000 of Mountjoy's troops died from illness during the course of the siege<sup>47</sup>. The Spanish forces in Kinsale surrendered a few days later. Sir Henry Power was there at the moment of the English charge. He remembered:

“ My companies being in fight the horse gave a proffer to charge but that was not performed which caused the rebels to give a great shout; so that I came up with the remainder of my regiment and then the horse and foot together charged through them [and] brake that gross, which consisted of 1,500 men. They were all of the country of Tyrone. This being such a fearful thing to the rest that they all brake and shifted for themselves, so that if our horses could have held out I think very few had escaped. Their horse were the first that brake.<sup>48</sup> ”



The remains of Dunboy Castle.

The Gaelic Irish defeat at Kinsale did not end the war. There had been Cork lords supporting both sides during the struggle, and now the future looked bleak for those who found themselves on the wrong side. Among them were many of the Gaelic Irish of Carbery and Beara, including Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare. The war would now be brought to their doorsteps. Aside from the Spanish who fought with O'Neill, small garrisons had also been placed in Castlehaven, Baltimore and at Dunboy Castle. O'Sullivan Beare decided to take back Dunboy before the Spaniards could surrender it, in the hope that it could hold out until additional help might arrive from Spain. An English force under Sir George Carew, the Lord President of Munster, set out to take the fortress. By the beginning of June, an advance party under the Earl of Thomond was on Bere Island, awaiting Carew's main body<sup>49</sup>. They had elected to sail up Bantry Bay to begin the siege rather than negotiate the difficult terrain of the Beara Peninsula. The siege proper began when the English were transported to the mainland and began to construct works on 7th June 1602<sup>50</sup>. What followed was one of the most savage struggles of the Nine Years' War, and one of the most dramatic. As a first step, the English forces captured an outlying garrison on Dursey Island, executing those they captured, which reportedly included a number of civilians<sup>51</sup>. It was the 16 June before Carew's artillery began to batter the walls of Dunboy, and within a matter of hours the fort began to collapse, burying some of the defenders. A breach was made in the western wall, and on 17

June Carew decided to assault it- the officers casting dice to see who would be first through the gap<sup>52</sup>. A desperate hand-to-hand struggle ensued when the English entered the castle, with the defenders firing hail-shot into their faces, before in turn cutting them down at their guns. The hellish struggle over the ruined stonework continued for a number of hours, until eventually the English made a decisive breakthrough. Some of the garrison's survivors sought to escape along the shore, where they were overtaken and killed, while those still within the castle were pinned down in the castle cellar. Thus penned in, they offered to surrender if they were promised their lives, but Carew refused. In a last ditch effort to be granted mercy, Thomas Taylor, one of the men trapped in the cellar, threatened to blow up the castle using black powder stored there. In response, Carew targeted his artillery on the remains of the vault; threatened with being buried alive, Taylor's comrades forced him to submit. A final postscript came as the English finally entered the cellar, when the mortally wounded garrison commander, Richard MacGoghagan, apparently made an effort to blow the powder himself, but was killed before he could do so<sup>53</sup>. All those who surrendered were ultimately executed. Thomas Stafford, who was present at the siege, remembered the dramatic conclusion to the standoff at the mouth of Dunboy Castle's cellar.

**“ Thomas Taylor... who having nine barrels of powder, drew himself and it into the vault, and there sat down by it with a lighted match in his hand, vowing and protesting to set it on fire and blow up the castle, himself and all the rest except they might have promise of life, which being by the Lord President refused, for the safety of his men his Lordship gave directions for a new battery upon the vault, intending to bury them in the ruins thereof, and after a few times discharged, and the bullets entering amongst them in the cellar, the rest that were with Taylor, partly by intercession, but chiefly by compulsion...constrained him to render simply.<sup>54</sup> ”**

The siege of Dunboy effectively brought the war in Munster to an end, and the focus of operations would be on Ulster until Hugh O'Neill's submission in 1603. Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare had not been in Dunboy during the attack, and following its fall he led his followers to Ulster in what became known as O'Sullivan's March. On this march, it is believed, over 1,000 people embarked on the journey, with only 35 arriving. He would ultimately flee to Spain, and would be followed to the Continent in 1607 by Hugh O'Neill and others in the Flight of the Earls - a watershed moment in Irish history.

The Nine Years' War had devastated much of the island of Ireland. Through the hard won victory, the Crown had finally achieved what had not been accomplished since the first excursions of the Anglo-Normans in the 12th century-dominance over all the Kingdom. Many of the Gaelic lordships would never recover from the blow. Any perceived security in the realm would be shortlived, however. The 17th century would bring two more major wars, with many more battles to be fought within the bounds of County Cork.



**ABOVE:**

The preserved medieval ford at Manning Ford, near Fermoy in Co. Cork, which played a major role in the Battle of Cloghlea/ Manning Ford in 1643. An example of how many of these historic landscapes remain preserved around us.

**BELOW:**

The Battle of Knocknanuss is still remembered to this day - this monument having been erected in 1997 in memory of the 1647 North Cork Battle.

Image courtesy of Desmond G. Sharp Bolster.

**BOTTOM:**

The Hill of Knocknanuss, scene of the battle in 1647.



Bloodshed returned to Ireland- and Cork- on a dramatic scale in the 1640s. In 1641 a rebellion broke out when a number of Catholic Irish leaders, claiming to be acting on behalf of the King, attempted to seize control of the Irish government. Motivated by increasing pressure on Catholic landowners, the impact of the Ulster plantations and the deteriorating relationship between the King and Parliament, the revolt was initially largely centred on Ulster, but soon spread through the country. Many of the 'Old English' who had retained their Catholic faith joined with the rebels, who became known as the Confederates. Over the course of the decade that followed numerous armies entered the fray, variously championing the cause of the Confederates, the Royalists, the Parliamentarians and (in Ulster) the Scots. Most famously, Oliver Cromwell led his forces to Ireland in 1649, in a decisive move that ultimately brought about the war's endgame, though the last fortress did not fall to Parliamentary troops until 1653. The wars were characterised by religious hatred, which often led to the wholesale slaughter of soldiers and civilians alike.

Among the major engagements fought in Cork early in the war were the battle at Liscarroll in 1642, where the Confederate Army of Munster led by Garret Barry was defeated by a Royal army under Baron Inchiquin and the battle at Manning Ford/Cloghlea near Fermoy in 1643, where the Confederates succeeded in defeating a Crown force, one of their few battlefield successes in Munster<sup>55</sup>. By far the best-known confrontation of the conflict in Cork occurred at the hill of Knocknanuss, near Kanturk, on 13 November 1647, the biggest battle ever fought in Munster<sup>56</sup>. During the battle, it is alleged, that at least 3,500 people were killed, and in 1997, 350 years following the battle, the Castlemagner Historical Society erected a commemorative monument at the site.

At Knochnanuss, the Confederate Army of Munster, led by Viscount Taaffe, faced Inchiquin's Parliamentary Army. The Confederates, who had



been bolstered by a force of Scots under Alasdair MacColla MacDonald, brought c. 7,000 men to the field. Although Inchiquin had fewer men, his troops were better armed, with more carrying muskets than their opponents<sup>57</sup>. The Confederates formed up on the hill itself, with the Parliamentarians lining up about 600 yards away<sup>58</sup>. In the fighting that followed, Inchiquin drove back the Confederate left and centre, but in turn MacColla's Scots on the right succeeded in putting the Parliamentarian left to flight. However, the decisive moment came when the Scots became bogged down in looting the Parliamentarian baggage train, allowing Inchiquin to organise a force to send against them and complete his victory<sup>59</sup>. There was little mercy shown to defeated soldiers in Ireland during the 1640s. The majority of deaths usually occurred once one side broke and ran- the slaughter up and down the Cork countryside following Knocknanuss was recounted by Inchiquin:

**“...though we were killing till night, as fast as we could, yet we found two or three hundred the next day in the woods, as we were viewing the bodies, but could not possibly get any exact account of the number slain; for after I had an account of more than 2000, that the pursuing parties slew in their several walks, I was informed of many hundreds that were slain in divers other places, so as our men believe there were not less than five thousand slain, but I do not think it possible there could be above three thousand...”<sup>60</sup>”**

Although Knocknanuss represented the effective destruction of the Confederate Army of Munster, there was hard fighting still to come. Much of it centred around small-scale actions, where Parliamentarian forces sought to take and destroy fortifications that could be held against them. Many ruinous castles around the county are testament to this, such as the tower house at Castledonovan, which was put out of use by Parliamentarian forces in 1650. There were still battles to be fought, such as the victory of Lord Broghill's Parliamentarians over the allied Royalist-Confederate forces under David Roche at Macroom Castle on 10 May 1650. Roche's men were camped in the demesne of the castle (likely in the vicinity of the present day golf course) and were set upon before having an opportunity to form up. Following three cavalry charges they broke and fled<sup>61</sup>. In a postscript to the engagement at Macroom, Parliamentarian troops were reputed to have forced Bishop MacEgan of Ross, a captured Confederate, to try and negotiate the surrender of the garrison at nearby Carrigadrohid Castle. When MacEgan shouted to the men to try and hold out, he was mutilated and hanged from a tree in front of them by the reigns of his own horse<sup>62</sup>.

The last major battle of the war in Cork - and the last major open field battle of the Confederate wars in Ireland - took place at Knockbrack/Knocknaclashy near Banteer on 26 July 1651. There a Royalist-Confederate force under Viscount Muskerry was defeated in a hard-fought battle with Lord Broghill's Parliamentarians on the banks of the Blackwater.



**ABOVE:**

Some of the fields that bore witness to the 1651 Battle of Knockbrack, the last major open field engagement of the Confederate Wars in Ireland.

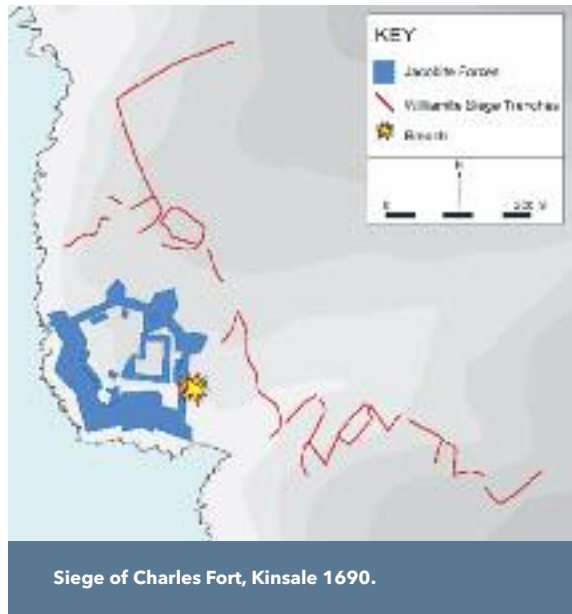
**BELOW:**

Charles Fort, Kinsale. This is the view the Danish artillery batteries had of the fortification when they were bombarding it in 1690, with the breach made directly in front of this position.



The aftermath of the Parliamentary victory in Ireland saw still further pressure placed on Catholic landholding on the island, with significant re-distributions of property occurring as a result of the Act of Settlement. It was hoped that the restoration of the monarchy, which took place in 1660 (King Charles I having been executed in 1649), would lead to an improvement in the fortunes of those who had opposed the Parliamentary forces during the war. However, it wasn't long before Ireland became the scene of yet another conflict, when it served as the main theatre of operations in the struggle for the English throne.

In 1688, King James II, a Roman Catholic, was deposed in favour of the Protestant William of Orange, who became King William III. On 12 March 1689 James landed in Kinsale to begin a campaign to reclaim his throne, and sparking what has become known as *Cogadh an Dá Rí* - the War of the Two Kings. Over the course of 1689 and 1690 the war did not progress well for James's followers, the Jacobites, against their Williamite foe. They failed in



their efforts to capture Derry, and defeat at the Battle of the Boyne meant that most of the north and east of the country were under Williamite control. Following his reverse at the Boyne James elected to return to France rather than stay with his supporters in Ireland and once again made for Kinsale, this time as his port of departure. Eager to bring the conflict to a speedy conclusion in 1690, the Williamites pushed forward and attempted to take Athlone and Limerick, but were repulsed. The war came to Cork in earnest when the Earl (later Duke) of Marlborough John Churchill arrived in Cork Harbour on 21 September 1690, later landing at Passage West<sup>63</sup>. He quickly advanced to Cork and laid siege to the city, where he was soon joined by Danish, Dutch and Huguenot reinforcements<sup>64</sup>. Williamite artillery pounded the city (one of the cannonballs they fired can still be seen in St. Fin Barre's Cathedral) and on 27 September, as they made ready to make a final assault, the city surrendered<sup>65</sup>.

Marlborough and his fellow commander, Ferdinand Willem of Württemberg moved fast for Kinsale, where they intended to capture the two main forts, James Fort and Charles Fort, and as a consequence deny the harbour to the Jacobites. The first element of the Williamite force arrived in Kinsale on 1 October, and called on the Jacobite Governor of Kinsale, Sir Edward Scott, to surrender. Scott, who was in his seventies and was a veteran of the 1640s wars, refused<sup>66</sup>. He was confident that his position in Charles Fort and that of James Fort across the harbour could be held, and he hoped for a relief force from Limerick. On 2 October the main Williamite army arrived, and soon the ground around Charles Fort was a patchwork of trenches and batteries as the attackers dug in for a siege. That same night a Williamite force of some 800 men stole across the Bandon River in order to assault James



**The view Jacobite defenders within Charles Fort had of the Danish positions. The artillery trenches of the Williamites likely survive beneath the sod on the hill, awaiting scientific discovery by archaeologists.**

Fort at daylight. When the sun rose the Williamites poured towards the defences, where they were met by a stern defence from the c. 450 Jacobites garrisoning the position. The Williamites eventually fought and bombed their way towards the donjon in the middle of the fort, where an accidental gunpowder explosion killed dozens of the garrison and presented the Williamites with an opportunity to launch a final attack that secured victory and the fort's capture<sup>67</sup>. Now in a position to concentrate their efforts on Charles Fort, the Williamites sought to tighten their grip. Both the English and Continental troops constructed siege works and began to pound the outer defences. The two sides clashed in a series of sallies and feints until by the 15 October a breach sufficiently wide to allow for an assault had been made<sup>68</sup>. Out of options, Scott and his c. 1500 men surrendered on terms, and were allowed to vacate the fort and rejoin Jacobite forces in Limerick.

The taking of Kinsale was another step on the path that would lead to Williamite victory in the war, ultimately sealed at Limerick in 1691. The taking of Charles Fort was the last large-scale set-piece engagement ever to take place in Co. Cork. From that date on, warfare in the county would be characterised by conflict on a smaller scale, which from an Irish perspective, was largely undertaken by non-professional but highly motivated citizenry, seeking to achieve their aims by physical force.



- <sup>1</sup> Duffy, Seán (ed.) 2005. *Medieval Ireland: An Encyclopaedia*. Routledge: Abingdon, 14.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., 18.
- <sup>4</sup> Ó Cróinín, Dáibhí 1995. *Early Medieval Ireland 400-1200*. Longman: Essex, 307.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., 234.
- <sup>6</sup> Bradley, John and Halpin Andrew 1993. 'The Topographical Development of Scandinavian and Anglo-Norman Cork' in Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttmer (eds.) *Cork History & Society*, 15-44. Geography Publications: Dublin, 16; Fischer, Lenore n.d. *A County by County Reference List for Viking Activities in Ireland as Described in the Annals*. Available at [www.vikingage.mic.ul.ie/pdfs/c7\\_viking-activity-in-ireland-by-county-in-annals.pdf](http://www.vikingage.mic.ul.ie/pdfs/c7_viking-activity-in-ireland-by-county-in-annals.pdf) accessed 25 July 2016.
- <sup>7</sup> Mac Airt, Seán (ed.) 1988. *The Annals of Innisfallen*. Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies: Dublin, 149.
- <sup>8</sup> Logan, F. Donald 1991. *The Vikings in History*. Routledge: London, 46.
- <sup>9</sup> Breen, Colin 1995. 1995:022- Lonehort Harbour, Ardnaragh East, Bere Island, Co. Cork. Excavation summary for [www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie). Available at [www.excavations.ie/report/1995/Cork/0001864/](http://www.excavations.ie/report/1995/Cork/0001864/) accessed 25 July 2016.
- <sup>10</sup> Bradley and Halpin, Op. Cit., 18-19.
- <sup>11</sup> Ó Cróinín, Op. Cit., 267.
- <sup>12</sup> Duffy, Op. Cit., 106.
- <sup>13</sup> Harrison, Stephen 2008. *Report on the Battle of Youghal*, 1173. Unpublished report by Eneclann Ltd & Rubicon Heritage Services Ltd for the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, 3; Orpen, Goddard Henry 2005. *Ireland under the Normans 1169-1333 with an introduction by Seán Duffy*. Four Courts Press: Dublin, 124.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Gerald of Wales 1978. *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland*, A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin (eds). Royal Irish Academy: Dublin, 137.
- <sup>16</sup> Harrison, Op. Cit., 5.
- <sup>17</sup> Bradley and Halpin, Op. Cit., 23.
- <sup>18</sup> O'Brien, A.F. 1993. 'Economy and Society: The Development of Cork and the Irish South-Coast Region, c. 1170 to c. 1583' in Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttmer (eds.) *Cork History & Society*, 83-156. Geography Publications: Dublin, 94.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., 88, 93.
- <sup>20</sup> Nicholls, Kenneth 1993. 'The Development of Lordship in County Cork, 1300-1600' in Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttmer (eds.) *Cork History & Society*, 157- 212. Geography Publications: Dublin, 157.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 158.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., 164.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., 158-9.
- <sup>25</sup> Duffy, Op. Cit., 189.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 163.
- <sup>27</sup> Kelly, Maria 2004. *A History of the Black Death in Ireland*. Tempus: Gloucestershire, 128-9.
- <sup>28</sup> Ellis, Steven G. 1998. *Ireland in the Age of the Tudors 1447-1603*. Longman: London, 54.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., 47-8.
- <sup>30</sup> Duffy, Op. Cit., 319.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 176.
- <sup>32</sup> Hayes-McCoy, G.A. 1937 (Reprint 1996). *Scots Mercenary Forces in Ireland 1565-1603*. De Búrca: Dublin, 59
- <sup>33</sup> Shiels, Damian 2007. 'Dún an Óir 1580: The Potential for Intact Siege Archaeology' in *Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society Journal Series 2*, Volume 7, 59.
- <sup>34</sup> Hadfield, Andrew and Maley, Willy 1997. 'Introduction' in Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds.) *A View of the State of Ireland* by Edmund Spenser. Blackwell Publishers: Oxford, xiii-xiv.
- <sup>35</sup> Hayes-McCoy, Gerard Anthony 1969 (Reprint 1990). *Irish Battles: A Military History of Ireland*. Belfast: The Appletree Press, 127.
- <sup>36</sup> Silke, John J. 1970 (Reprint 2000). *Kinsale: The Spanish Intervention in Ireland at the End of the Elizabethan Wars*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 89.
- <sup>37</sup> Morgan, Hiram 2004. 'Disaster at Kinsale' in H. Morgan (ed) *The Battle of Kinsale*, 101- 146. Bray: Wordwell, 102.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 101-2.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 102-3.
- <sup>40</sup> Shiels, Damian 2004. 'Fort and Field: The Potential for Battlefield Archaeology at Kinsale' in H. Morgan (ed) *The Battle of Kinsale*, 337-350. Bray: Wordwell, 341-2.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 341-4.
- <sup>42</sup> Morgan, Op. Cit., 112.
- <sup>43</sup> Shiels 2004, 346.
- <sup>44</sup> Moryson, Fynes 2007. *The Commonwealth of Ireland*. Translated by Charles Hughes. Available at UCC Celt Online, [www.ucc.ie/celt/online/ T100072.html](http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/ T100072.html) accessed 25 July 2016.

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<sup>45</sup> Pentland Mahaffy R. (ed). 1912. *Calendar of State Papers Ireland 1601-3 and of the Hanmer Papers Preserved in the Public Record Office*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 216.

<sup>46</sup> Shiels 2004, 346-7.

<sup>47</sup> Morgan, Op. Cit., 129-30.

<sup>48</sup> Pentland Mahaffy, Op. Cit., 242.

<sup>49</sup> Cronin, John 2010. *Report on the Battle of Dunboy, 1602*. Unpublished report by Eneclann Ltd & Rubicon Heritage Services Ltd for the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>52</sup> Stafford, Thomas 1896. *Pacata Hibernia or a History of the Wars in Ireland during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth (first published 1633). Volume 2*. Downey & Co.: London, 198-9.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 200-203.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>55</sup> O'Brien, Barry 1971. *Munster at War*. The Mercier Press: Cork, 133-7.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>57</sup> Cronin, John 2010b. *Report on the Battle of Knocknanuss, 1647*. Unpublished report by Eneclann Ltd & Rubicon Heritage Services Ltd for the

Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, 5-6.

<sup>58</sup> O'Brien 1971, 145.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 144-6.

<sup>60</sup> Inchiquin 1647. *A true relation of a great victory obtained by the forces under the command of the Lord Inchiquine in Munster in Ireland, against the Rebels under the command of the Lord Taaff, Novemb. 13. 1647*. Edward Husband: London.

<sup>61</sup> Cronin, John 2010c. *Report on the Battle of Macroom, 1650*. Unpublished report by Eneclann Ltd & Rubicon Heritage Services Ltd for the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, 4-5.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>63</sup> Holmes, Richard 2008. *Marlborough: Britain's Greatest General*. Harper: London, 169.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>66</sup> Cronin, John 2009. *Report on the Battle of Kinsale, 1690*. Unpublished report by Eneclann Ltd & Rubicon Heritage Services Ltd for the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, 7-8.

<sup>67</sup> Childs, John 2007. *The Williamite Wars in Ireland 1688-1691*. Hambledon: London, 274-5.

<sup>68</sup> Cronin 2009, 9.

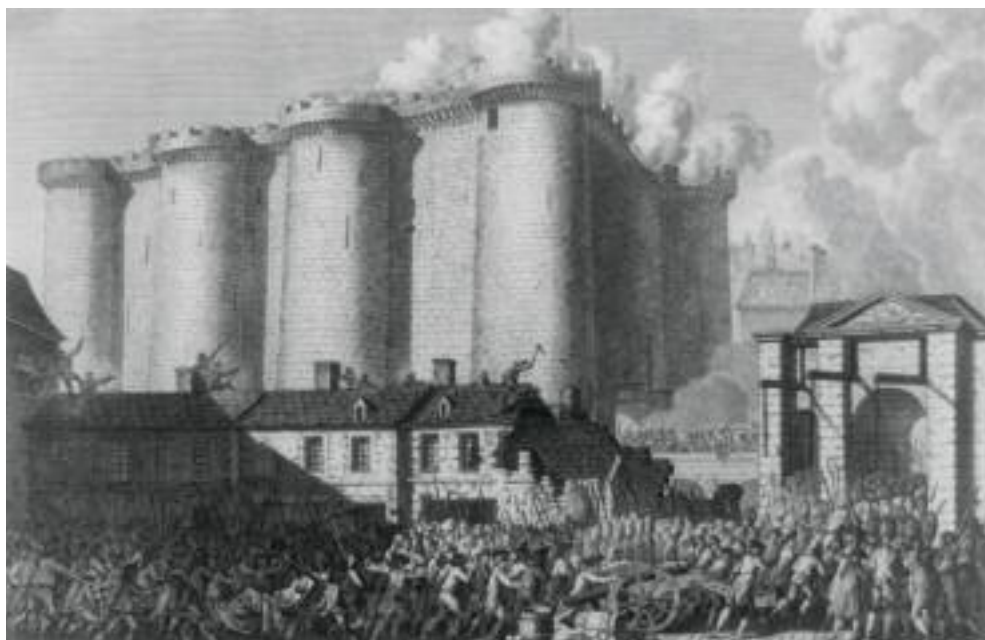
## Chapter 3

### Moving Towards Revolution



**The Williamite victory in 1691 was the last time that two conventional military forces would face off against each other in Ireland on a large scale. Though from a military perspective the next century would prove relatively quiet, there was no lack of issues on the island and tensions had been mounting between the Irish and a new land-owning elite.**

Over the course of the 17th century land ownership in Ireland had changed almost completely from the Old English (Norman) and Gaelic lordships to a Protestant Ascendancy largely of English origin. These new landlords, who controlled the administrative, legal and economic steer of the country, were mostly members of the Established Church (Anglican) whereas the vast majority of the population, except in Ulster, remained resolutely Roman Catholic. The substantial wealth differentiation between the poor Irish rent-paying majority and this new land-owning elite coupled with increasing religious divisions, not least due to the extension of the Penal Laws directed at both Catholics and Presbyterians, led to growing



The Storming of the Bastille in Paris, 1789, an inspiration to the United Irishmen (Library of Congress)



The entrance to Bantry Bay, where in 1796 a French fleet sailed in with the intention of landing an army.

tensions in Ireland. The creation of such tension would inevitably lead to rebellion and revolt and by the end of the 18th century, the move towards a united Ireland was well underway, as evidenced by the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

In the world at the time the tides of change were to the fore and the latter half of the 18th century had seen two major revolutions in the French and American Revolutions. Indeed sweeping across Europe at the time and later into the 19th century was a wave of romantic nationalism with the establishment of some newly formed countries such as Germany, Italy and Romania, which were formed by uniting various regional states with a common national identity.

Inspired by such movements and first culminating in the Irish Revolution of 1798, a Society of United Irishmen was founded in 1791 in Belfast by a group of radicals who were determined to see parliamentary reform and the enfranchisement of both Catholics and Presbyterians<sup>1</sup>. The Society was banned by 1794, and moved underground becoming a secret organisation. It became committed to undertaking a republican revolution in Ireland and seeking independence<sup>2</sup>.

United Irish leader Wolfe Tone took a key role in attempting to form an alliance with Revolutionary France, and in 1796 the fruits of his efforts were realised when a French fleet carrying 14,000 troops sailed from Brest bound for Ireland<sup>3</sup>. However, sailing in December, the fleet was exposed to adverse weather, and a storm scattered much of their number. Between 21 December and 24 December 1796 sixteen of the fleet, containing about 6,000 men, arrived in Bantry Bay<sup>4</sup>. The arrival of the French vessels in West Cork caused great alarm in much of the local area. Richard White of Seafield Park near Bantry was one of those who had witnessed their coming, and tried to coordinate a response.

“ This morning the French fleet were plainly seen riding at anchor across the bay, from the point of Beer-Island [Bere Island] to the peninsula of Sheephead. There were very distinctly reckoned eighteen large ships at anchor; with glasses a double row of ports were seen in several; no flag or colour of any kind was perceivable. The alarm in the country was great, and such females as could get conveyance this day left Bantry; some found an asylum in Bandon or Cork; the greater number took refuge in the mountains of Kerry. On this day all the troops in Cork were under marching orders, and the roads leading to the west covered with the military equipage...<sup>5</sup> ”



Locally based units of a part-time civilian volunteer force known as the yeomanry were scrambled to meet the threat, but in the end weather conditions stymied French efforts to land, and ultimately they sailed for home. In an interesting legacy of this attempted landing, a launch from *La Résolue*, one of the French fleet in Bantry Bay, was captured on Bere Island. She is now the oldest surviving French naval vessel in the world, and is on permanent display in the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin.

The failure of the 1796 efforts did not deter the United Irishmen, and in May 1798 they launched a full-scale rebellion. Though efforts in Dublin misfired, large numbers were able to rise in rural areas, particularly in counties such as Wexford, Wicklow and Antrim. As with the majority of conflicts throughout Irish history, there were Irish to be found supporting both sides, and the activities of the North Cork Militia, made up primarily of British Interests, in assisting with the suppression of the rebellion in the southeast were particularly notorious. However, Cork also had notable United Irishman activity, though it did not witness fighting and slaughter on the scale of that seen in many other locations. The largest engagement in Munster during the rebellion took place near Clonakilty on 19 June 1798, in what became known variously as the Battle of the Big Cross, Shannnonvale or Ballinascarthy. Accounts differ widely as to exactly how these events unfolded. The first comes from Lieutenant-Colonel O'Reilly, who commanded the Westmeath Militia in Clonakilty. He was marching his 220 men and 6-pounder guns to Bandon when they were set upon near Ballinascarthy:

“ The attack was made from a Height on the left of our column of march with great rapidity... by between three and four hundred men... armed mostly with pikes, and a very few with firearms; we had hardly time to form, but very soon repulsed them with a considerable loss... when they regained the height, I could perceive that they there joined a considerable force. I... restrained the men, and halted and formed the greater part of them, when I saw that the enemy was filing off to the right, under cover of a high bank, with an intent to take possession of our guns. A detachment of a hundred men of the Caithness Legion... was on its march to replace us at Clonikilty, hearing our fire pressed forwards, and very critically fired upon them whilst we were forming, and made them fly in every direction... at the same moment a very considerable force shewed itself on the heights in our rear; a vast number of pikes appeared, and some with hats upon them, and other signals, I suppose in order to collect their forces. I ordered the guns to prepare for action, and very fortunately brought them to bear upon the enemy with good effect, as they dispersed in a short time, and must have left a considerable number dead: some were killed in attempting to carry away the dead bodies...<sup>6</sup> ”

George Bennett provided a very different version of the event in his 1862 book *The History of Bandon*. Citing the fact that many in the Westmeath Militia had United Irish sympathies, he noted that they had refused to engage the rebels:



1798 is an event that is remembered throughout the county. Here is an example of one such memorial, which remembers the 19th century Risings in Skibbereen.

“ Sir Hugh [Reilly] called a halt, formed his men, and gave the word to load. The order they obeyed, and rammed down cartridges in due form, but without the ball: these they bit off, and dropped upon the road. The rebels still pressing on, the section of the right of the column was ordered to fire; but the harmless discharge only produced merriment. Anticipating little injury after this friendly reception, the insurgents now boldly came up. Some of them shook the soldiery by the hand, and familiarly addressed them by name. More of them slapped them on the back, and swore the day was their own. Others bestrode the cannon; and one huge fellow, named Teige an Astna, more audacious than his fellows, actually walked up, and seized the colonel’s charger by the bridle. But a sergeant, who was in the ranks, and one of the few that had loaded with ball, stepped a pace or two to the front, and levelling his piece at Teige, shot him dead; but he did not live long to congratulate himself upon his loyalty; for his rear-rank man, taking aim, discharged his musket through his back, and he fell in agony upon the ground.<sup>7</sup> ”

According to Bennett, the dissention in the ranks of the Westmeath Militia was only halted with the arrival of the Caithness Legion, who opened fire on the rebels<sup>8</sup>. It is recounted that the body of Tadhg an Astna was dragged through the streets and after being left for days at the market house, was taken to the strand in Clonakilty and put in a pool called the Crab Hole.



Although the engagement outside Clonakilty was the only major confrontation in Cork during 1798, there had been a number of other incidents of note. Among them were the events in Ballymacoda. The local United Irishmen there had identified a suspected informer among their number, Patrick Murphy, and in December 1797 had taken the decision to execute him<sup>9</sup>. The killing resulted in a large number of local arrests, including Thomas O'Neill, Patrick Shanahan and Robert Walsh who were among those charged with the man's murder<sup>10</sup>. O'Neill was tortured and forced to sign a confession before his execution on 13 June 1798, with Shanahan and Walsh sharing his fate at Cork's Gallows Green on 6 October<sup>11</sup>. Today a monument to their memory can be found in Ballymacoda village. They were among a number of people around the county executed for seditious activity during the period.

The United Irish rebellion of 1798 was ruthlessly put down. The French did send support, but it came too late. By the time General Humbert landed with 1,000 men at Killala, Co. Mayo on 22 August 1798 the efforts of the rebels had been almost entirely suppressed. Despite some initial success, this French force was finally defeated at the Battle of Ballinamuck, Co. Longford on 8 September.

Although Cork did not play a central role in the events of 1798, memory of the rebellion became extremely important in the decades that followed, as each new generation of Irish nationalists identified with the United Irishmen's republican ideals. The memory of individuals like Tadhg an Astna would become key symbols for those involved in the movement in Cork, and today his memory is preserved at Astna Square in Clonakilty. The defeat of the rebels in 1798 did not quiet concerns in government regarding the potential risk that Ireland posed, particularly if the French succeeded in landing a significant force. The monuments in stone to this concern can still be seen around the county's coastal regions, in the form of Martello and Signal towers and fortifications constructed in the face of renewed invasion fears.



**A Napoleonic Battery, built in response to the threat of French invasion, overlooks Berehaven.**

Many of those involved in the revolutionary struggle between 1916 and 1921 regarded the events of 1798 as a key starting point. It was the first in a series of efforts and movements that would characterise the century that followed; a century that began with the Act of Union in 1800, which created a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

A number of these Irish Movements eventually manifested themselves as attempted armed struggles, notably those in 1803, 1848 and 1867. However, other campaigns and events also had a major influence on what was to come in the revolutionary era. Daniel O'Connell's efforts finally achieved Catholic Emancipation in 1829, and he would later (unsuccessfully) set his sights on repeal of the Act of Union. Cultural movements came to the fore as the 19th century progressed, typified by the Gaelic revival that saw an increased move towards the promotion and preservation of Gaelic culture and the Irish language. Major components of this revival were the development of organisations like the Gaelic League, founded in 1893 and the Gaelic Athletic Association, formed in 1884. Many Cork natives played a role in these cultural movements, for example Father Peadar Ua Laoghaire from Clondrohid, a noted Irish writer, and Archbishop of Cashel Thomas Croke, a native of Kilbrin, near Charleville in North Cork, for whom Croke Park is named. The Charleville Heritage Society held a weekend of remembrance in his honour in September 2016. Archbishop Croke was perhaps best known

for his support of the Land League, which formed part of another major form of 19th century movement that would become tied to nationalism – agrarian protest.

Agrarian agitation was nothing new in the 19th century. This had been largely due to the rise of the landed gentry, who owned the majority of the land and indeed the wealth in Ireland, causing in the process, increasing unrest amongst the people. For example, the 1841 Census of Ireland census found that almost half the Irish population (48%) were living in the poorest of accommodation<sup>12</sup>. These structures, as discussed in the publication ‘Heritage Houses of County Cork’, consisted of only one if two rooms, in stark contrast to the 1st class houses of the elite, which consisted of 10 plus rooms. Land ownership by the Irish at this time was also a rarity, indeed as late as 1870 only 3% of Irish farmers owned the land they worked<sup>13</sup>. The Irish were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with this state of affairs, and land activism increased significantly towards the end of the 19th century. However, and in truth, such activism had begun well over a century beforehand.

The 1760s had witnessed the growth of the ‘Whiteboy’ movement, so named because of the white-shirts that were a common form of every-day clothing at the time<sup>14</sup>. The Whiteboys and other similar groups such as the ‘Rightboys’, had a range of grievances surrounding issues such as the enclosure of commonage, the encroachment of livestock on tillage land and the payment of the tithe tax to the Church of Ireland<sup>15</sup>. The protests that they began led to the introduction of a number of laws which saw some run the risk of being charged with capital offences<sup>16</sup>. The term ‘Whiteboy’ continued to be used into the 19th century. For example, men referred to as Whiteboys in Duhallow posted a proclamation throughout the barony in 1823 that set out their demands:

“ **Article 1.** That no person or persons shall propose for or take into his possession directly or indirectly any house, farm or lot of lands wrested from a tenant by his landlord, until the expiration of 7 years after the eviction.

**Article 2.** That no person shall pay Tithe money to the Minister or any person acting under him.

**Article 3.** That no wolfish Proctor shall sue for Tithe money.

**Article 4.** That no person shall serve a process or processes for Tithe money.

**Article 5.** Any person transgressing any of these will suffer shooting, burning, & c.

**Article 6.** N.B. A voracious Minister screams aloud in Dreary Tartarus for a merciless Proctor, and for Sworn Process Servers let Charles McCarthy, Barrett, and Daririd, prepare, as they are considered very fit persons to fill a Situation in Hell.

CAPTAIN ROCK, by the Grace of God.<sup>17</sup> ”



'Captain Rock' was a mythical figure whose name was often signed to documents such as these, particularly during the major agrarian resistance movement of the 1820s. The threat of violence against those who transgressed these demands was not an idle one. In January 1822 there was an engagement near Bandon between local yeomanry and these 'Whiteboys', or 'Rockites' as they were often known. One of the altercations during this period came at the pass of Keimaneigh between Bantry and Macroom when a military party was attacked and a soldier killed<sup>18</sup>. The 'Rockites' then blocked the pass to deny further troop access<sup>19</sup>. A monument erected by the Ballingeary Historical Society and Bantry Historical Society now stands at the site. Again and again agrarian unrest came to the fore. After Catholic Emancipation a campaign against the payment of the tithes to the Church of Ireland erupted in the 1830s and became known as the Tithe War<sup>20</sup>. In 1879 the Land League was founded in an effort to prevent rent abuses and to protect tenants<sup>21</sup>. From it the Land War emerged, which had spread across much of Ireland by 1880 and quickly developed into a campaign against landlordism<sup>22</sup>. Many believed that it was this landlordism, and particularly the absenteeism seen in the 19th century, that had led to such Irish hardships as the Great Famine and indeed large-scale emigration. During the Land War the Irish had unified together in a campaign to change the status quo by setting out to disrupt the eviction of tenants, characterised by mass meetings and speeches as well as ostracization tactics such as boycotting, although violent attacks did also occur.

One of the best known figures in Cork associated with the Land War was Seán Riobaird O Súilleabháin often referred to as 'The Bard.' Born in Kilcorney in 1852, he became a leader of the movement in Millstreet and the North Cork area, although he was ultimately sentenced to 24 years hard labour in 1891 as a result of his activities<sup>23</sup>. For fifteen years his wife Ellen raised their six children while he was imprisoned- he was eventually released in 1906<sup>24</sup>. A monument in his memory was unveiled in 2016 at the Kerryman's Table, near Millstreet, County Cork.



A monument to the Bard  
was erected on 14th August  
2016, near Millstreet.

Around this time, tensions soared in many parts of the county, and not least in Mitchelstown, North Cork. On 9th September 1887, and encouraged by John Mandeville, 8,000 supporters marched to New Square, Mitchelstown in protest. British Officers opened fire on the crowd and three men were killed, with many more injured. A number of meetings regarding land ownership were held in North Cork and one household in particular, the Tobin Household in Cloughleafin, must have been a hive of activity, with William Tobin very much involved at the time. William Tobin was 'the father of David Tobin who was imprisoned in Kilmainham for his part in 1916 who in turn was the father of Liam Tobin (Chief of Intelligence for Michael Collins) who was sentenced to death (later commuted) and of Nicholas who was killed in that period'<sup>25</sup>.

The Land War ultimately resulted in the passage of a number of laws that provided tenant security and also facilitated the cancellation of rent arrears<sup>26</sup>. Agrarian agitation and the efforts of tenants to procure rights of ownership over their own land would continue to represent a major dynamic in Irish society up to 1923<sup>27</sup>. In the context of events to come in 1916, one figure who was particularly notable in these efforts was Thomas Kent, who was active in the Land League and the Plan of Campaign, a stratagem in the 1880s and 1890s to secure rent reductions for distressed tenants. While Thomas had been in the United States three of his brothers had served prison sentences for their part in land agitation, and his involvement on his return saw him arrested in 1890. A charge of conspiracy to encourage evasion of rent landed him in prison along with his brother William, and proved a harbinger of things to come<sup>28</sup>.

19th century Ireland was defined by one calamitous event that unquestionably had a major impact on both Irish nationalism and in the rise of nationalist movements outside of the country. In 1845 the Great Famine descended. By 1852, a million people were dead and at least a million and a quarter had emigrated from the island. Cork bore witness to



**ABOVE:**

John Shinnick, Michael Lonergan and John Casey were shot by British Forces on the 9th September 1887. This memorial plaque in Mitchelstown, together with three stone crosses on the pavement, depicting the exact locations where these men were gunned down, can be seen today in Mitchelstown.

**BELOW:**

Pass of Keimaneigh, looking north.





Depiction of famine times in Skibbereen as featured in the Illustrated London News. Image courtesy of Terri Kearney.

some of the most distressing scenes anywhere in the country, and the depictions of the starving near Skibbereen that appeared in the Illustrated London News remain some of the most haunting and vivid images associated with the disaster.

Scattered around the county are reminders of the period; workhouses still survive throughout Cork, and many public works such as roads were constructed to provide 'outdoor relief.' However, by far the most poignant reminders of the unimaginable scale of suffering are the famine graves within the county, where thousands of bodies were buried in unmarked plots. Among some of the larger examples are those at Abbeystrewery near Skibbereen, where it is believed that up to 9,000 people are buried and Carr's Hill near Carrigaline, where it is alleged that the site may hold up to 30,000 victims.



**LEFT:**  
The Famine Cemetery at Carr's Hill.

**OPPOSITE:**  
A 19th century depiction of Thomas Davis surrounded by other notable Irish figures.

Image courtesy of Library of Congress.





In the midst of the Great Famine another effort was made to strike a blow for revolution in Ireland. It was carried out by the Young Irelanders, who included among their number men like William Smith O'Brien, John Mitchel and Thomas Francis Meagher. Their names are today preserved in a number of locations around the county, including Fort Mitchel on Spike Island and Fort Meagher in Crosshaven. Another Young Irelander to have his name given to a Cork harbour fort was Thomas Davis. One of the most inspirational figures within the movement, he had been born in Mallow in 1814 and grew up in Dublin. In 1842 he was one of the founders of *The Nation* newspaper, and his writings had a major political and cultural influence on nationalists of the period<sup>29</sup>. Today he is perhaps best remembered as the author of *A Nation Once Again*. Davis died from scarlet fever at the age of 30 in 1845 and a statue of him was unveiled in the town of his birth by President Higgins in 2014.

The Young Irelanders had originally formed a part of Daniel O'Connell's repeal movement, but split with him in 1846 over the issue of when it was appropriate to use physical force<sup>30</sup>. The Young Irelanders became strongly influenced by the French revolution of 1848 and hoped to go some way towards emulating it in order to achieve repeal of the Act of Union. The British Government sought to move quickly against them, arresting John Mitchel and sentencing him to transportation before any Rising could take place. Mitchel was brought briefly to Spike Island, where he wrote his famous prison journal, before being sent out of Ireland. He later remembered the experience:

“...we came to anchor opposite Cove, and within five hundred yards of Spike Island - a rueful looking place, where I could discern, crowning the hill, the long walls of the prison, and a battery commanding the harbour... We were rowed rapidly to the island, and as we walked up the approach we met an elderly, grave-looking gentleman, who said, “Mr. Mitchel, I presume!”... he turned and escorted us to his den, over a draw-bridge, past several sentries, through several gratings, and at last into a small square court. At one side of this court a door opened into a large vaulted room, furnished with a bed, table, chair, and basin-stand, and I was told that I was in my cell.”<sup>31</sup>





When the 1848 Rising did eventually occur, it was abortive, with the most significant engagement taking place at a house near Ballingarry, Co. Tipperary, often disparagingly referred to as the Battle of Widow McCormack's Cabbage Patch. However, the real legacy of 1848 was in the trial and transportation of its leaders, who would be among those who began to support the cause of Irish nationalism from abroad, most particularly from the United States.

The 1850s saw the rise of another major nationalist figure in Cork, a man who had been profoundly influenced by his experiences of witnessing the Famine in the west of the county. Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa had been born in Reenascreena, Rosscarbery in 1831. In 1847, his father was working on a public works scheme instituted for Famine Relief:

“ He had charge of a gang of men making a new road through Rowry Glen. He took sick in March, and Florry Donovan, the overseer of the work, put me in charge of his gang, while he was sick. I was on the road the twenty-fifth of March, '47, when the overseer came to me about noontime and told me I was wanted at home. I went home, and found my father dead.<sup>32</sup> ”

The forts renamed for the 1848 Young Irishmen in Cork Harbour. Camden Fort Meagher in the foreground, Fort Mitchel on Spike Island in the middle distance, and Fort Davis to the centre right.





An Irish eviction scene printed in New York in 1871, with verses written to accompany it by Mrs. O'Donovan Rossa. Image courtesy of Library of Congress.

The destitution of the poor of Cork was something that would continue to deeply impact Rossa in the years that followed. In the 1860s he worked on Cape Clear and Sherkin Islands distributing meal to some of the worst off inhabitants. In one report to the Skibbereen Board of Guardians in May 1862 he described some of his activities:

“ On Friday, the 23d inst., I left at 12 o'clock noon, with one ton of meal, for distribution among the poor of Cape Clear and Sherkin Islands. I arrived in Sherkin about 3 o'clock, and left seven and a half cwt. of the meal at the house of Dan Minihane. I made arrangements to have word sent to all the poor whose names were taken down by Mr. Barry, that they may attend the next day. I then proceeded toward Cape Clear with twelve and a half cwt. of the meal, but did not land before half-past seven o'clock, as the weather was most unfavourable.

That evening and next morning I gave eleven cwt., two quarters and eleven lbs. of meal to 81 families numbering 225 individuals. Among those are five or six farmers with families, apparently in the greatest destitution - who would not go into the poorhouse. In the house of one - Thomas Regan of Lisamona - a child was dead, and from her wretched appearance I considered she died from want and starvation. I left undistributed in Cape Clear about one cwt. of meal. I came to Sherkin Island on Saturday, and distributed the three sacks of meal I left there the previous day, among 53 heads of families, and single old infirm persons, numbering 172 individuals. About 40 were left unsupplied with any, and I requested some of those supplied to assist the others until I could come again. It is, of course, possible that in discharging so urgent a duty, and so promptly, some mistake might have been made; but I did my best.<sup>33</sup> ”

Constantly witnessing such hardship had been one of the reasons behind Rossa's founding in 1856 of the Phoenix National and Literary Society in Skibbereen. The name 'Phoenix' was selected as it symbolised, in the words of Rossa, "that the Irish cause was again to rise from the ashes of our martyred nationality"<sup>35</sup>. It was an early step on a path that would see him become one of the most noted Fenians of the 19th century. In 1859 the Phoenix Society became part of another organisation, formed the previous year, that would survive to play a major role in the events of the 1913-23 period - the Irish Republican Brotherhood, or IRB<sup>36</sup>. The American counterpart to the IRB, also formed in 1858, was known as the Fenian Brotherhood. These organisations were dedicated to the creation of an independent republic by physical force. They quickly set about putting plans in train for a Rising, and hoped to make use of returned emigrants from the United States- particularly those who had served in the American Civil War - for that purpose. When a Rising seemed imminent in 1865 Rossa was one of those arrested, and he was subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment. Paroled in 1871 on condition that he would remain outside Ireland, he went to New York where he eventually played a major role in directing the Fenian dynamite campaign that took place in Britain in the 1880s<sup>37</sup>. His death and the return of his remains to Ireland in 1915 represented one of the key events on the road towards the 1916 Easter Rising, with the graveside oration at Glasnevin being delivered by Patrick Pearse: .....



Jeremiah O' Donovan Rossa's work on Cape Clear was commemorated on the island during a most fitting event on August 13th 2016.

“ I was asked to speak today on behalf of everyone gathered in this place and on behalf of all living Gaels, to praise the lion that we have buried here and to give courage to the friends who mourn him. Friends, let no one standing at this grave be sad; rather let our hearts be thankful to the grace of Jesus, who created Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's noble beautiful spirit and who blessed him with a long life. You were a splendid and brave man Jeremiah. Fiercely you waged war for the rights of your race, and no small amount did you suffer; you will never be forgotten... Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations. The Defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! - they have left us our Fenian dead; and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.”<sup>38</sup>



**Crowds of people line the streets for the funeral cortege of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in Dublin in 1915, an important milestone on the lead up to the 1916 Rising.** Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

The historical significance of Rossa's funeral and Pearse's oration was such that its commemoration was the first event in the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme. Also as part of the centenary year in 2016, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's great-grandson, Williams Rossa Cole, produced and directed a documentary on his famous forebear, entitled *Rebel Rossa*<sup>39</sup>.

The threat of a Fenian Rising had not dissipated with the arrest of Rossa and other Fenian leaders in 1865. In 1866, the British administration suspended *habeas corpus*, which allowed for detention without trial. That same year, Fenians in the United States who hoped to spark a border dispute between the U.S. and Britain launched a raid into Canada, which came to grief at the Battle of Ridgeway. Plans moved ahead for a Rising in Ireland, and a number of American Civil War veterans made their way to the country in the hope of providing assistance. In addition, the American Fenians dispatched the vessel *Erin's Hope* to Ireland on 13 April 1867 with a supply of arms to support the effort<sup>40</sup>. But by the time the ship arrived, the attempted Rising was already over. It had taken the form of a series of disjointed and largely abortive actions at different locations around the country, beginning in Kerry in February<sup>41</sup>. The major effort was in March, and was introduced by the issuance of a proclamation of the Irish republic that can be seen as a precursor for what was to be delivered at the GPO in 1916:

“ I.R.- Proclamation:- The Irish People to the World. We have suffered centuries of outrage, enforced poverty and bitter misery. Our rights and liberties have been trampled on by an alien aristocracy, who, treating us as foes, usurped our lands and drew away from our unfortunate country all material riches. The real owners of the soil were removed to make room for cattle, and driven across the ocean to seek the means of living, and the political rights denied to them at home; while our men of thought and action were condemned to loss of life and liberty. But we never lost the memory and hope of a national existence. We appealed in vain to the reason and sense of justice of the dominant powers. Our mildest remonstrances were met with sneers and contempt. Our appeals to arms were always unsuccessful. To-day, having no honourable alternative left, we again appeal to force as our last resource. We accept the conditions of appeal, manfully deeming it better to die in the struggle for freedom than to continue an existence of utter serfdom. All men are born with equal rights, and in associating together to protect one another and share public burdens, justice demands that such associations should rest upon a basis which maintain equality instead of destroying it. We therefore declare that unable longer to endure the curse of monarchical government we aim at founding a republic based on universal suffrage which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour. The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored. We declare also in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and State. We appeal to the Highest Tribunal for evidence of the justice of our cause. History bears testimony to the intensity of our sufferings, and we declare, in the face of our brethren, that we intend no war against the people of England-our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields- against the aristocratic leeches, who drain alike our blood and theirs. Republicans of the entire world, our cause is your cause. Our enemy is your enemy. Let your hearts be with us. As for you workmen of England, it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by the oppression of labour. Remember the past, look well to the future, and avenge yourselves by giving liberty to your children in the coming struggle for human freedom. Herewith we proclaim the Irish Republic. THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT <sup>42</sup> ”





A depiction of the Battle of Ridgeway. Image courtesy of Bob Bateman.



The former barracks in Castlemartyr, outside which Fenian leader Timothy Daly was mortally wounded during the 1867 Rising.

The 5 March was set as the date for the main Rising, but poor-coordination and the efficiency with which the Government had targeted the movement's leaders meant that it ended in failure. The largest engagement in the country took place in Tallaght, but there was also notable activity in Cork. Police barracks such as that at Ballyknockane were attacked in order to obtain arms and railway tracks were targeted to disrupt communications<sup>43</sup>. One of the major incidents involving the Fenians in the county was that led by Timothy Daly. The actions of he and his followers, which began in Midleton, were later described in the London *Times*:

“ The Fenians collected on the fair green to the number of about 50, and marched through the town in military order. They were all armed, and had haversacks of provisions. At the end of the town, near Copinger's-bridge, they were met by an armed police patrol of four men. The Fenian leader called on the patrol to surrender, and the demand was followed up by a volley, by which one of the four constables were killed and another slightly wounded. The uninjured men returned the fire, with what effect is not known, and made their escape hastily into an adjoining house, whence they afterwards regained the barracks. The Fenians marched from Midleton to Castlemartyr, leaving the police barrack in the former town unmolested. On the route they were joined by several parties of armed men, and arrived in Castlemartyr with a force about 200 strong. Daly, the Fenian leader, drew up his men in front of the police-barrack, which had been closed and barricaded on their approach, and called on its occupants to surrender. The policemen, who did not exceed six or seven in number, replied by a well-directed fire, killing Daly and wounding several of his band. The remainder then retired in the direction of Killeagh, to which place small parties of men were seen making their way from Cloyne, Youghal and several other places during the night.<sup>44</sup> ”



Officers of the 9th Massachusetts Infantry celebrate mass during the American Civil War, 1861. A number of the men in this regiment- including some in this image- returned to Ireland to participate in Fenian activities.

Image courtesy of Library of Congress.

It is interesting to note the role played by returned American Civil War veterans in the county. Patrick J. Condon had served as a Captain in the 63rd New York Infantry, Irish Brigade, fighting at battles such as Antietam and Fredericksburg<sup>45</sup>. Condon had been assigned to take military command in Cork, but was arrested on 2 March, before the Rising began<sup>46</sup>. Some of these Fenian veterans were American by birth. John William Mackey Lomasney, who had participated in the attack on Ballyknockane barracks and who later in the year launched a raid against Monning Martello Tower at Fota – supposedly the only Martello Tower ever taken– has variously had his place of birth recorded as Maryland, Ohio and Fermoy<sup>47</sup>. He is likely to have served in the 179th New York Infantry during the Civil War<sup>48</sup>. Another was John McClure, who had been born in Dobbs Ferry, New York in 1846 to Irish parents<sup>49</sup>. During the Civil War he had served as a Quartermaster Sergeant in the 11th New York Cavalry, but in March 1867 he found himself creeping towards a coast guard station in East Cork at the head of a group of Fenians<sup>50</sup>. Due to his military experience, McClure had been assigned command of the Midleton District<sup>51</sup>. Their action at Knockadoon Coastguard Station was later described by John Devoy:

“...at the outset they had only one rifle... a few old shotguns, and McClure’s Colt’s revolver. There were a few pikes, and some of the men had sharpened rasps, fastened to rake handles with waxed hemp. With that paltry armament very little could be expected of them, but they did a very creditable piece of work. On three sides of the Coastguard Station there was a sort of platform made of planks, and on the one in front a sentry paced up and down... After carefully examining the surroundings, Crowley’s men took up a position in the rear of the station and McClure and Crowley crept silently along the plans on one of the dark sides, stood up close to the front and waited. When the sentry reached the corner McClure gripped him by the collar of his coat, put the revolver to his breast, and whispered to him that if he said a word he would be shot. They then took his rifle and went to the door, which was not locked, the men following silently, opened it and went in quietly. The Coastguards were all lying down and most of them were asleep. The arms rack was beside the door and the rifles were secured at once. The Coastguards were made prisoners and marched toward Mogeely, a station on the Youghal Railway ten or twelve miles away, where they were set at liberty.”<sup>52</sup>

It quickly became apparent that the Rising was a failure. Among those with John McClure at Knockadoon was Peter O’Neill Crowley, who led the Ballymacoda Fenians and Edward Kelly from Youghal<sup>53</sup>. When they realised no aid was coming and that the Rising had failed they moved off northwards, with police and troops on their trail. Kelly could not keep up the pace and was arrested, but McClure and Crowley made it as far as Kilclooney Wood near Mitchelstown<sup>54</sup>. There they were surrounded on 31 March:

“...[They] were soon confronted by a soldier, who shouted to them to halt and give the countersign. Crowley levelled his rifle and fired at him, saying: “There’s the countersign for you.” The bullet did not hit the soldier and they were fired on from several points at once. The wood was filled with soldiers, evidently searching for them. The two men turned in other directions several times, but every time they turned they found soldiers in front of them, not in military formation, but scattered singly. Every soldier who saw them fired, and at last Crowley was hit and severely wounded. Evidently several bullets struck him, but not one hit McClure. They could have escaped the bullets in the beginning of the running fight by surrendering, but neither had the slightest thought of doing so. Shortly after Crowley was hit they reached the edge of the wood where they attempted to cross the Ahaphoooca stream which skirted it. Crowley was weak from loss of blood, and in the stream McClure had to put his left arm around him, as his legs were fast weakening. He was six feet two in height, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and very powerfully built, and in his efforts to hold him up McClure, who was only five feet seven, but strongly built, had to stoop, so that the revolver in his right hand dipped into the water and the old-fashioned paper cartridges with which it was loaded got wet. But McClure, in his excitement, didn’t know it. Soldiers and policemen came running up on the outer bank of the stream, with a magistrate at their head, and the magistrate, who wore top boots, stepped into the water and called on McClure to surrender. McClure pointed his revolver at him and pulled the trigger, but, of course, it didn’t go off, because the ammunition was wet. He was speedily overpowered and dragged up on the bank. Crowley was lifted up and placed lying on the bank, and it was at once seen that his wounds were mortal.”<sup>55</sup>



The probable location of the coastguard cottages in the townland of Knockadoon Warren, which John McClure and his men attacked during the 1867 Fenian Rising.



The Memorial to Peter O'Neill Crowley in Ballymacoda. Image courtesy of Martin Millerick.

The spot where Peter O'Neill Crowley gave his life in Kilclooney remains well remembered to this day and a memorial has been erected at the site, which details:

“ The 'Red Coats' shot Peter O'Neill Crowley three times in the river. Capt. John McClure (aged 22) and John Edward Kelly (aged 19). Both arrested 'arms-in-hand' and sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. Philip Boyle O'Reilly and local sentry Thomas Walsh escaped capture. ”

There were individuals from all over the county closely associated with the events of 1867. A number of memorials to them are dotted around Cork, such as that to Ricard O'Sullivan Burke in his native Kenneigh, who had served in the 15th New York Engineers during the American Civil War and who is mentioned in James Joyce's *Ulysses*<sup>56</sup>. Another is to Timothy Deasy in Millstreet. Originally from Clonakilty, Deasy served as an officer in the 9th Massachusetts Infantry during the American Civil War<sup>57</sup>.

On June 30th, 2016, the Mayor of County Cork, Cllr. Séamus McGrath, welcomed to the County Hall, Timothy Deasy's Great Grand-nephew Bob Bateman of Lawrence, Massachusetts, now living in Ossining, New York, together with his wife Camille. On the occasion, Mr. Bateman generously donated a number of wonderful items relating to Timothy Deasy, which are now in display in Millstreet Museum.

The 1867 Fenian Rising had further echoes beyond Ireland's shores that involved both Deasy and O'Sullivan Burke. In September 1867 Timothy Deasy and fellow Fenian leader Thomas Kelly (a veteran of the 10th Ohio Infantry) were arrested in Manchester<sup>58</sup>. It was decided to



**The Mayor of County Cork, Cllr. Séamus McGrath, together with Bob Bateman, Great Grand-nephew of Timothy Deasy, when they met at Cork County Council HQ on 30th June 2016. Image courtesy of Martin Walsh.**



**The Manchester Martyrs Memorial in Ladysbridge.**



try and break them out, and on 18 September, while the prisoners were being transferred in a prison van, a rescue was staged, coordinated by O'Sullivan Burke. Though Deasy and Kelly were freed, a policeman was accidentally killed during the action. Among those participants in the breakout subsequently arrested were William Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien. William Allen and Michael O'Brien were both from Cork - Allen from Bandon and O'Brien from near Ballymacoda. Like so many others, O'Brien was an American Civil War veteran, having served in the 5th New Jersey Light Artillery<sup>59</sup>. The three were tried and executed for their role in the events, and subsequently became known as the Manchester Martyrs. Today a memorial commemorates them in the village of Ladysbridge, near where O'Brien was from.

The ease with which the Fenian movement was infiltrated by informers had proved a major impediment to successful operations. The importance of organisational security would be a lesson hard learned, and one that was taken to heart in the revolutionary efforts of the early 20th century. The decades following the 1867 Rising were difficult ones for many Fenians, though they were punctuated by militant efforts such as the 1880s dynamite campaign, which saw a series of bombings in Great Britain carried out by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and the Phoenix Park murders carried out by the Invincibles group, a radical splinter group of the IRB.

Aside from the general rise in Gaelic cultural and political movements of the late 19th century described above, the bulk of those politically engaged with Irish nationalism rallied not behind the more militant Fenians, but with the efforts of men like Charles Stewart Parnell, who at the head of the Irish Parliamentary Party sought to bring about Home Rule for Ireland. The Irish Home Rule League had been formed in 1873, and the political successes of the Irish Parliamentary Party led to Home Rule Bills being brought forward in 1886 and again in 1893, though they failed to pass<sup>60</sup>. Although the fortunes of the party fluctuated, they continued to be the dominant force in Irish politics in the early 1900s, when they were under the stewardship of John Redmond. With the First World War on the horizon, it seemed that Home Rule may soon be achieved. The future role of physical force Irish republicanism was far from clear, but organisations like the Irish Republican Brotherhood had not gone away. Memories of the men and women of 1867, 1848 and 1798 loomed large, as they awaited an opportunity to strike.

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<sup>1</sup> Lalor, Brian (ed.) 2003 *The Encyclopedia of Ireland*, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 1098.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Kerrigan, Paul M. *Castles and Fortifications in Ireland 1485-1946*, Collins Press: Cork, 150-1

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Lee, Philip G. 1915 'A Journal of the Movements of the French Fleet in Bantry Bay in 1796' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 1915, Vol. 21, No. 107, pp. 121-128, 122.

<sup>6</sup> Dublin Castle, 1798. *Bulletins of the Campaign of 1798*, George Grierson, Dublin, 103-4.

<sup>7</sup> Bennett, George 1862. *The History of Bandon*. Henry and Coghlan Printers and Publishers, Cork, 357-8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Mac Cormaic, Tomás 1998. *1798! Rebel Cork in Insurrection: The United Irishmen of Cork City and County*, Private Publication, 94.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 96-8.

- <sup>12</sup> Fraser, M. 1996 *John Bulls Other Homes*, Liverpool Press, UK, 23
- <sup>13</sup> Donnelly, J. 1975, *The Land and the People of 19th Century Cork*, Routledge, London, 17
- <sup>14</sup> Lalor, Op. Cit., 591.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Lane, Jack (ed.) 2003 'A Proclamation by Duhallo Whiteboys' in *A Millstreet Miscellany*, Aubane Historical Society, 21.
- <sup>18</sup> Katsuta, Shunsuke 2005 'The Rockite Movement in County Cork in the early 1820s' in *A Millstreet Miscellany 2*, Aubane Historical Society, 24-42, 28.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Lalor, Op. Cit., 543.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 300.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Millstreet Community Website 2016. "Unveiling of a Monument to 'The Bard' at 2pm on Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> August at the Kerrymans Table on the Butter Road in Aubane", Available at [www.millstreet.ie/blog/2016/07/12/unveiling-of-a-monument-to-the-bard](http://www.millstreet.ie/blog/2016/07/12/unveiling-of-a-monument-to-the-bard). Accessed 15 September 2016.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Pers. Comm. Mary Noonan 05/06/16
- <sup>26</sup> Lalor, Op. Cit.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> UCD Centenaries Website. "Kent (Ceannt), Thomas" by Desmond McCabe and Lawrence William White. Available at <http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Kent-Thomas.pdf>. Accessed 26 September 2016.
- <sup>29</sup> Lalor, 272.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 1161.
- <sup>31</sup> Mitchel, John 1854. *Jail Journal; Or, Five Years in British Prisons*, Office of The Citizen, New York, 32-33.
- <sup>32</sup> O'Donovan Rossa, Jeremiah 1898. *Rossa's Recollections 1838 to 1898*. O'Donovan Rossa, New York, 118.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 325.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., 149.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> Lalor, Op. Cit., 554.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., 813.
- <sup>38</sup> RTE Century Ireland. "Patrick Pearse's Graveside Oration at the Funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, August 1915". Available at [www.rte.ie/centuryireland/images/uploads/further-reading/Ed59-](http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/images/uploads/further-reading/Ed59-GravesideOrationFinal.pdf)
- GravesideOrationFinal.pdf*. Accessed 26 September 2016.
- <sup>39</sup> "Rebel Rossa A Documentary Film". Available at <http://www.rossafilm.com/filmmakers/>. Accessed 26 September 2016.
- <sup>40</sup> Ó Concubhair, Pádraig 2011. *'The Fenians Were Dreadful Men': The 1867 Rising*. Mercier Press, Cork, 167.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 58.
- <sup>42</sup> *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 16 May 1867
- <sup>43</sup> Ó Concubhair, Op. Cit., 139.
- <sup>44</sup> *The London Times* 8 March 1867.
- <sup>45</sup> Savage, John 1868. *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs*. Patrick Donahoe, Boston, 255.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., 153, 259.
- <sup>47</sup> Kane, Michael 2002. 'American Soldiers in Ireland, 1865-67' in *The Irish Sword: The Journal of the Military History Society of Ireland* Volume 23, No. 91, 103-140, 125; Dictionary of Irish Biography. "Lomasney, William Francis Mackey" by Desmond McCabe and Owen McGee at <http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?jsessionid=4DF08581ACAA223F4CBE7A3AC95621FD?articleId=a4877> Accessed 16 September 2016.
- <sup>48</sup> Kane, Op. Cit.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> Savage, Op. Cit., 273.
- <sup>52</sup> Devoy, John 1929. *Recollections of An Irish Rebel*. Chase D. Young, New York, 213-4.
- <sup>53</sup> Ó Concubhair, Op. Cit., 139-40.
- <sup>54</sup> Devoy Op. Cit., 215.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., 215-6.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., 116.
- <sup>57</sup> Kane, Op. Cit., 119.
- <sup>58</sup> Ó Concubhair, Op. Cit., 146; Kane, Op. Cit., 124.
- <sup>59</sup> Kane, Op. Cit., 130.
- <sup>60</sup> Lalor, Op. Cit., 496.

## Chapter 4

### 1916 Rising



We begin our story of 1916 in Cork five years before the events of Easter Week. 1911 was an important year for Irish politics, as it witnessed the introduction of the Parliament Act. This brought to an end the ability of the House of Lords to veto legislation; all the upper house could now hope to achieve was delay passage for up to two years<sup>1</sup>. From an Irish perspective, this removed the main stumbling block to Home Rule, and presented the very tangible prospect of making it a reality, as the Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power in Parliament. In April 1912 the third Home Rule bill was duly brought forward by the Liberal Government.

The prospect of Home Rule elicited a strong reaction from Ulster Unionists, led by Sir Edward Carson. On 19 September 1911 he presented the Ulster Covenant, which declared that Home Rule would be disastrous for both Ulster and Ireland and stated the intent of loyal subjects to defend their position in the United Kingdom by all means necessary<sup>2</sup>. The Covenant (and it's female equivalent, the Declaration) would ultimately be signed by almost 500,000 people<sup>3</sup>. There had been some Ulster Unionist drilling at the time of the first two Home Rule bills in 1886 and 1893, but it was in 1912 that it most dramatically came to the fore<sup>4</sup>. Unionist Clubs commenced drilling classes in 1912, and it was from this base that the Ulster Volunteer Force emerged in 1913, and quickly sought to arm itself<sup>5</sup>.



Sir Edward Carson. Image courtesy of Library of Congress.

In the south of the country, the highly secretive Irish Republican Brotherhood also took to drilling in July 1913<sup>6</sup>. Later that year, a number of their members became involved in efforts to form a new organisation in response to the growing crisis – The Irish Volunteers. Eoin MacNeill, a

Gaelic scholar and nationalist, was asked to lead the organisation, and he held the first recruitment meeting for the group at the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin on 25 November 1913<sup>7</sup>. The Irish Volunteers aimed to “secure and maintain the common rights and liberties of Irishmen” and soon also took to drilling<sup>8</sup>. It didn’t take long for the Irish Volunteers to be established in Cork; they were organised at Cork City Hall on 14 December 1913, in a meeting that included individuals such as Eoin MacNeill and Sir Roger Casement<sup>9</sup>.

The situation escalated further in March 1914. Concerns about the UVF efforts to arm itself in Ulster led the British to seek to militarily reinforce the province. This set off a chain of events known as the ‘Curragh Incident’, when a significant number of British officers stated they would be prepared to resign their commissions rather than engage in operations in Ulster<sup>10</sup>. In April 1914 the UVF successfully imported almost 50,000 weapons from Germany through Larne, Bangor and Donaghadee<sup>11</sup>. These incidents had a dramatic impact on recruitment into the Irish Volunteers. The organisation, which had totaled only 27,000 in April 1914, boasted 130,000 by May and 170,000 by the summer<sup>12</sup>. In June 1914, John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, announced his support for the movement. In the face of a potential split, the Volunteer executive acceded to the inclusion of Redmond and his supporters, despite the differing views many of them held with respect to Irish nationalist politics<sup>13</sup>. On 26 July 1914 the Irish Volunteers succeeded in partially emulating the UVF, when they landed 900 guns at Howth aboard Erskine Childers’ yacht, *Asgard*. John K. Cotter from Cape Clear was in Howth that day aboard his fishing vessel *Gabriel*, and was one of the first to help open the cargo boxes holding the weapons. Cotter and his crew also towed the *Asgard* out from the pier after the operation so she could escape to sea<sup>14</sup>.

The Irish situation was soon to be overtaken by occurrences in Europe. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in June 1914 by Yugoslav nationalist Gavrilo Princip had set in motion a series of events that led directly to the outbreak of the First World War. Great Britain entered that conflict on 4 August 1914. Meanwhile, on 18 September, Home Rule, in the form of the Government of Ireland Act, received royal assent, but was immediately suspended until the conclusion of the war<sup>15</sup>. With Home Rule seemingly achieved – albeit delayed – on 20 September 1914 John Redmond gave a speech calling on the Irish Volunteers to support the war effort, and go “wherever the firing line extends in defence of right, freedom, and religion in this war”<sup>16</sup>. Four days later the members of the original Volunteer executive, led by Eoin MacNeill, decided to split the movement, not sharing Redmond’s view that the Volunteers should fight for Britain<sup>17</sup>. They retained the name ‘Irish Volunteers’ while those who followed Redmond took the title of ‘National Volunteers.’ The vast bulk of the membership – 158,300 out of 170,000 – elected to side with Redmond<sup>18</sup>. The same was true for Cork; far more former Cork Irish Volunteers marched off to the front in British uniform than stayed with MacNeill and it is now documented that close to 4,500 Corkmen died from this War. Following the split, Florrie O’Donoghue estimated that only about three hundred and sixty men remained with the Irish Volunteers in the county, then under the leadership of Tomás MacCurtain<sup>19</sup>.



**ABOVE:**  
The Funeral of O'Donovan Rossa at Glasnevin Cemetery in 1915.

Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

**BELOW:**  
John Redmond. Image courtesy of Library of Congress.

Those that remained in the Irish Volunteers following the split were clear in their purpose to achieve a self-governing nation outside of the British Empire<sup>20</sup>. In addition, the IRB, who were committed to the use of physical force to achieve their aims, retained a strong presence among the Volunteer executive. The immediate requirement in 1915, in Cork as elsewhere, was to rebuild. On 29 June Cork native and dedicated Fenian Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa died in New York. His body was taken back to Ireland, where he was laid to rest in Glasnevin Cemetery on 1 August<sup>21</sup>. The burial presented an opportunity for the Irish Volunteers to draw parallels between Rossa's efforts and the current struggle. As noted in the previous chapter, Pádraig Pearse was given the opportunity to deliver the graveside oration, in what would become his most famous speech.





Pádraig Pearse was the Director of Military Organisation for the Irish Volunteers, as well as a leading IRB member. As part of the drive to increase Volunteer membership and organisation he visited Cork soon after his Glasnevin speech<sup>22</sup>. Pearse spoke at Millstreet on 22 August, and from there was making his way to Cork when he stopped off in the village of Carriganimma. Paud O'Donoghue was there:



**Pádraig Pearse.** Image courtesy of Library of Congress.

“ In August, 1915, an Aeridheacht was held at Millstreet under the auspices of the Gaelic League and an address was delivered by Padraig Pearse. A number of Volunteers from Cork City attended the Aeridheacht in uniform, travelling by train to Macroom and cycling from there through Carriganimma. The presence of uniformed Volunteers in this remote village naturally attracted a good deal of attention. The party on their return in the evening were accompanied by Pearse, who travelled in a waggonette. They stopped at Carriganimma and approached a number of local young men, asking them to join the movement. Seán Nolan and I interviewed the local Curate, the late Revd. John Casey, brother to the late Bishop Casey of Ross. He agreed to support the movement and arrangements were made for a public meeting after Mass on the first Sunday in September.<sup>23</sup> ”

In August 1915 Terence McSwiney took on the role of organiser of the Cork Volunteers<sup>24</sup>. By November, membership in Cork had increased to such an extent that they were able to mobilise 1200 Volunteers in a parade to honour the Manchester Martyrs<sup>25</sup>. By Easter 1916, that figure had grown to about 1500 men around the county<sup>26</sup>. They were arranged in forty-seven companies, forty-four of which were under the overall command of Tomás MacCurtain as part of the Cork Brigade<sup>27</sup>. The Mitchelstown, Glanworth and Charleville companies formed part of the Galtee Battalion<sup>28</sup>. The other county battalions were centred on Bandon (commanded by Tom Hales), Macroom (commanded by Dan Corkery) and Dounoughmore-

Mourne Abbey (commanded by Patrick Twomey)<sup>29</sup>. The Irish Volunteer companies were largely formed around the local parish area, and in 1916 ranged in size from groups of eight to ten up to eighty men<sup>30</sup>. John Crimmins from Milford was one of those who joined the organisation in early 1916:

“ My first connection with any organisation was with the Irish Volunteers, which I joined when they were formed in Milford in 1916 at the age of 15 years. The Volunteers were formed in February 1916... the unit was about 14 strong at this time. Foot drill and parades were held about twice weekly in the open, and sometimes at the week-ends we used to go on a route march to neighbouring units. Drill was carried out by John Drew who was an ex-British soldier. He was only with us for a few weeks when the drilling and control of the unit was taken over by Jerry Falvey who was elected Captain. There was no other officer at this time.<sup>31</sup> ”



Irish Volunteers on the march on St. Patrick's Day in Cork City. Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

With the approach of Easter 1916, the Cork Volunteers were initially unaware that senior IRB figures within the movement intended their manoeuvres of Easter Sunday to develop into a rising<sup>32</sup>. However, given the role that they had been assigned, the majority did anticipate the possibility of some fighting. The Irish Volunteers in the south and west of the country had been instructed to mobilise as part of an operation to protect and distribute a shipment of German weapons due to be landed in Co. Kerry aboard the *Aud*<sup>33</sup>. The best location to land the weapons had been the mission of IRB man Diarmuid Lynch, a native of Tracton, who had been sent to Kerry by Pearse for that purpose:

“...I had a talk with Pearse. He desired that I secure the views of Tralee men and others in that part of Kerry as to the relative merits of Ventry Harbour and any other advantageous spots in that region for the landing of a cargo of arms and their expeditious distribution therefrom... My visit coincided with a meeting of the Tralee Volunteers. There I contacted Austin Stack and a few of his chief lieutenants. All favoured Fenit as the landing place - from which a light railway ran to Tralee... Next afternoon I went on to Dingle... I contacted the IRB Centre. In the dusk of the evening he, accompanied by two of his men, met me outside the town. Sitting in the middle of a field we had out chat. They also favoured Fenit, pointing out that Ventry was some twenty miles from Tralee (where the necessarily large body of Volunteers needed for the first state of transmission was located); that the conveyance of the cargo from Ventry through the bottle neck of the Dingle peninsula would be extremely hazardous as a small body of police posted there might bring the whole enterprise to disaster. The Centre at Listowel was equally convinced that Fenit was preferable to any other point on the Kerry coast.<sup>34</sup>”

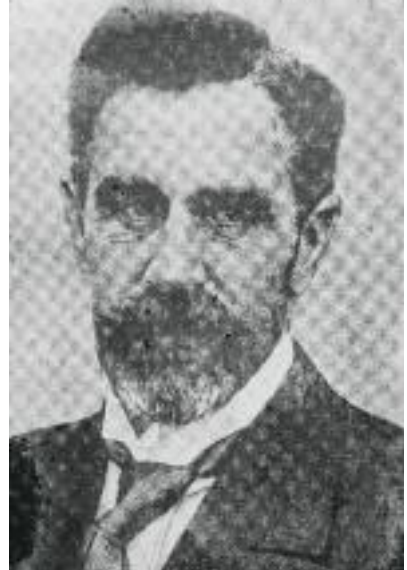


Unveiling of the *Aud* Anchor at Cobh Heritage Centre by the Mayor of County Cork, Cllr. John Paul O' Shea, together with diver Eoin McGarry, on 2 April 2016.

As a result of Lynch's mission Fenit was selected as the point where the arms from the *Aud* would land. He brought the news back to Dublin, where he would later serve in the GPO during Easter Week. The role of the Cork Brigade with respect to the *Aud* shipment was to occupy a series of positions on the Cork-Kerry border, with their main concentrations at Carriganimma and Bweeng where they were to receive their arms quota and cover the main rail and road routes into Kerry<sup>35</sup>. According to Florrie O'Donoghue, the Cork leadership was "planning for a limited mission of gun running, not planning for an insurrection"<sup>36</sup>.

On 9 April 1916 the company and battalion officers of the Irish Volunteers met in Volunteer Hall on Cork's Sheares Street to receive their orders from MacCurtain for the Easter Sunday parade on the 23rd<sup>37</sup>. However, as the day approached, and unbeknownst to the Cork Volunteers, plans were beginning to unravel. On Thursday 20 April the leader of the Irish Volunteers, Eoin MacNeill – who was not a member of the IRB – learned of the plans by the IRB Military Council to begin the Rising during the Easter Sunday manoeuvres. MacNeill immediately set to work issuing countermanding orders to prevent it. Meanwhile, the *Aud* was intercepted off the Kerry coast by the Royal Navy on 21 April, and Roger Casement, who landed on Banna Strand from a German submarine in order to rendezvous with the vessel, was also captured<sup>38</sup>. The Volunteers in Cork, unaware of the fate of the *Aud*, proceeded with their preparations.

The Cork Brigade received MacNeill's cancellation order on Good Friday 21 April, the first in a series of confusing and seeming contradictory instructions they were to get that weekend<sup>39</sup>. The very same day MacNeill was convinced by Seán Mac Diarmada – one of the IRB Military Committee – to support the Rising, and so a second set of orders were sent to Cork, arriving early on Saturday 22 April. Written by Mac Diarmada and apparently authorised by MacNeill, it now told the



**Sir Roger Casement.**

Image courtesy of Library of Congress.

Cork men to proceed as originally planned<sup>40</sup>. News also began to filter through of the capture of the *Aud*, but deeming it too late in the day to amend the marching orders for the Cork Brigade, MacCurtain and McSwiney decided to proceed as planned<sup>41</sup>.

From early on Easter Sunday 23 April Volunteers around Cork began their movements. The city company and the Bandon battalion along with a number of other units marched to Macroom<sup>42</sup>. By the early afternoon c. 1000 men had assembled at eight locations around the county. Florrie O'Donoghue noted that there were 399 at Macroom, 55 at Inchigeela, 29 at Kealkill, 120 at Carriganimma, 67 at Millstreet, 222 at Bweeng, 57 at Barley Hill and 80 near Lauragh on the road to Kenmare<sup>43</sup>. Con Meaney remembered the day:

“ At Easter, 1916, I was about 14 years of age, but I paraded with the Kilnamartyra Company on Easter Sunday as a dispatch rider. We proceeded to Carriganimma. There were 200 men from Cork in Macroom, the idea being to meet the consignment of arms from the 'Aud'. I remember the Cork men were armed and the Kilnamartyra men had shotguns and pikes. (Con Meaney WS787, 2)<sup>44</sup> ”



Locals commemorate the 1916 march of the Volunteers to Bweeng in 2016. Image courtesy of Donie O'Sullivan.



William Powell from Lissarda was another of the Volunteers on the march that Easter Sunday:

“ When a company of the Irish Volunteers was formed in Kilmurry in November 1915, I joined up... When, on Easter Sunday 1916, the men from Ballinadee and some other companies in West Cork, under Tom Hales, arrived at Kilmurry for 12 o'clock Mass, about a dozen members of Kilmurry Company joined them and marched to Macroom. On the way we were joined by some units from Cork City and other areas.<sup>45</sup> ”

In a final twist, before MacCurtain and McSwiney had left Volunteer Hall in the city, they received yet another countermanding order from MacNeill<sup>46</sup>. Having learned of the failure of the *Aud* the previous night, MacNeill, believing the Rising had no prospect of success, sought once again to prevent it. MacCurtain and MacSwiney set out into the countryside to inform the assembled Volunteers of the change in plans. Con Meaney again:

“ At Carriganimma a motor cyclist... told us the news of the failure of the ‘Aud’ to land the arms. We returned home and stood to arms for the whole of Easter Week, getting scraps of news of the Rising in Dublin.” (Con Meaney WS787, 2)<sup>47</sup> ”

William Powell recalled:

“ The parade was dismissed on reaching Macroom and there was a general discussion as to what was on foot. After a few hours, the parade re-assembled and we marched back to Crookstown with the Ballinadee men. They billeted in Horgan's publichouse in Crookstown for the night and continued their march back to Ballinadee next day. The members of the Kilmurry unit, who went to Macroom, returned to their homes on Sunday night.<sup>48</sup> ”



**1916 Monument at Barley Hill.** Image courtesy of Duhallow Ancestry.

Not everyone received the orders to disperse. Denis Lyons of the Kanturk Company was among those who had been told to assemble at Barley Hill:

“...we were to march to Barley Hill, Newmarket with all arms and equipment and three days’ rations. Everybody was mobilized and seven men paraded on Easter Sunday morning... The only arms we had was one .38 revolver and a small quantity of ammunition for it. We marched to Barley Hill. DI John McCoy and an RIC Sergeant and Constable followed us from Newmarket to Barley Hill and back. We had no information as to what the purpose of the parade was. We waited at Barley Hill until about 5 o’clock. I am not sure if anyone brought us word that the exercises were off or if we decided to return, having got no orders. I do not remember anyone coming to us at Barley Hill. We marched back to Newmarket and I called a parade of the Newmarket Company and put then through some drill.”<sup>49</sup>

The confused situation ultimately meant that the 1916 Rising was largely restricted to Dublin, where fighting broke out on Easter Monday 24 April. That the Rising would go ahead in Dublin was determined by only five men at a secretive meeting on the eve of Easter Sunday, including Cork’s Diarmuid Lynch. The Rising on Easter Monday 1916, began with Pádraig Pearse reading the Proclamation of the Irish Republic outside the GPO, shortly after 12 noon.

**POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.**  
**THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT**  
**OF THE**  
**IRISH REPUBLIC**  
**TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.**

**IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN:** In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

**THOMAS J. CLARKE.**

**SEAN Mac DIARMADA.**

**THOMAS MacDONAGH.**

**P. H. PEARSE.**

**EAMONN Ceannt.**

**JAMES CONNOLLY.**

**JOSEPH PLUNKETT.**



**Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin.** Image courtesy of Philip O'Regan.

Of the seven signatories of this document, a number had connections to Cork. For example, Thomas MacDonagh had taught at St. Colman's in Fermoy between 1903 and 1908, while James Connolly had spent much of his British Army service in the county. A number of Cork natives were also involved in the fighting in Dublin, which would continue until the surrender of Saturday 29 April. One of them was Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin from Skibbereen, who was said to have raised the Irish flag over the GPO. Another was Seán Hurley from Moulagow, Drinagh. A member of the Gaelic League, the GAA and the IRB, Hurley was working in Harrod's of London when he travelled back to Dublin in 1916 to participate in the Rising – another of the group who made the journey with him was a certain Michael Collins from near Clonakilty<sup>50</sup>. Hurley became a member of Ned Daly's First Battalion and during the Rising initially manned a barricade near Father Matthew Hall<sup>51</sup>.

When Daly's Volunteers retreated to the Four Courts

on the Friday of Easter Week, Hurley shifted position to another barricade, where he was mortally wounded on the afternoon of Saturday 29 April, dying at Richmond Hospital on May 1st after the surrender<sup>52</sup>. He was the only Cork Volunteer to die in the Dublin fighting and a large centenary commemorative event was held in his honour in Drinagh on May 1st 2016.

Despite the lack of action in Cork during Easter Week, the county did experience some tense moments. Notification that the Rising was starting was taken to Cork by a member of Cumann na mBan, who on Easter Monday delivered a note to Volunteer Hall in the city from Pádraig Pearse stating "We go into action at noon today, P.H.P"<sup>53</sup>. However, lack of clarity with respect to the note (which was written on the page of a pocket diary, and was not an order) meant there was little that could be done. Nevertheless, the Volunteer Hall was put in a state of defence, and after a number of days, it took the intercession of the Bishop of Cork together with the Lord Mayor to prevent bloodshed, coming to an arrangement where the Volunteer's arms would be handed over to the Mayor, although they were later confiscated by the military<sup>54</sup>.

Cork was also the scene for the dramatic conclusion of the *Aud's* part in the 1916 story. Having been intercepted by the Royal Navy off Kerry, her Captain, Karl Spindler, was forced to head for Cork Harbour under escort<sup>55</sup>. Determined not to allow the vessel to fall into British hands, Spindler decided to take matters into his own hands. He takes up the story as they approached Cork:



“ The moment, which was to decide our fate, was now at hand. In view of the dangerous cargo, which we carried above the explosive bombs, I had to reckon with the fact that when I blew up the ship we might all be blown to bits... Then there was a muffled explosion. The *Aud* shivered from stem to stern, beams and splinters flew up in the air, followed by a cloud of dirty grey smoke, and flames burst forth from the saloon, the charthouse, the ventilators and the forecastle... It required our utmost efforts to get clear of the sinking ship. While we were doing this there was a second violent explosion amidships. Several more followed, accompanied by clouds of thick sulphurous smoke. The munitions were probably catching fire. If we did not get clear soon the whole ship might blow up round our heads... About five minutes after the first explosion a dull, rumbling noise came from the *Aud*. The cargo and bunkers were shifting. The masts tottered. The blazing bow rose perpendicularly out of the water and next moment the *Aud*, as if drawn down by an invisible hand, sank with a loud hissing noise.<sup>56</sup> ”

The *Aud* was scuttled close to the harbour entrance, and her crew was initially imprisoned on Spike Island, being the only part of Irish Soil they set foot on during 1916. The vessel stills rests where she sank in 1916, and the stockless anchor from the *Aud* can be seen on display at the Cobh Heritage Centre.

In the immediate aftermath of the Rising, the authorities moved to arrest senior figures in Cork's Volunteer movement. Many who weren't apprehended were forced to go on the run<sup>57</sup>. Seamus Fitzgerald was a senior Irish Volunteer in Cobh:

“ On Tuesday, May 3rd, at 11 a.m., I was instructed to cease working at my lathe and report at the Chief Engineer's office [at the naval dockyard in Haulbowline]. He presented me to the local District Inspector of the RIC. He asked if I were Secretary of the Sinn Féin Volunteers in Queenstown. I said that we called our movement the Irish Volunteers, and that I was Secretary of the Cobh unit. He asked where my rifle was, and I told him that I had not a rifle. After further stating that I had no arms or ammunition at my house, he said that he would have to detain me under Martial Law, and his accompanying Sergeant handcuffed me on his instructions... I was conveyed under arrest... in a launch to Cobh and on to Cork by train.<sup>58</sup> ”



The 1916 Memorial in Cobh, which names Seamus Fitzgerald.



It was during these roundups that the biggest confrontation to occur in Cork during 1916 took place. On the morning of 2 May, forces surrounded the home of the Kents at Bawnard House near Castletyons. The family had a long tradition of agitation. They were active participants in the Land War, and Thomas, who had spent a number of years working in Boston during the 1880s, had thrown himself straight back into movement on his return to Cork. He and three of his brothers ultimately served jail sentences at various times during 1889 and 1890 for their activities<sup>59</sup>. Now the Kents were members of the Irish Volunteers, and Thomas was commandant of the Galtee Battalion. The night of 1 May had been the first they had spent in their home since the commencement of the Rising<sup>60</sup>. Thomas, David, William, Richard and their mother were inside when it was surrounded, and William later recalled the morning's events:

“...The first news of the Rising that reached Bawnard was contained in the newspapers. Ammunition was immediately got ready for rifles, revolvers and shot guns, in anticipation of being called upon to join other Volunteers in a fight. Days passed and no order came.

Notwithstanding the news that the Rising was over in Dublin, we still remained alert, and did not remain at home at night. The night of the 1st May was the first that we returned to sleep at home. Early on the following morning we were awakened by loud knocking on the hall door. The house was surrounded by British Crown Forces. I was sleeping in the Eastern side of the house. I jumped out of bed, put my head out of the window and asked “Who’s there?”. The answer was “Police; come down”. I immediately awakened Tom, who was sleeping in the Western side of the house, and said, “The whole place is surrounded. We are caught like rats in a trap.” Tom put some clothes on, armed himself with a rifle, and, without showing himself, called to those below, “What do you want?”. As expected, the answer came, “We are police and have orders to arrest the whole family.” The reply was given definitely by the whole family, “We are soldiers of the Irish Republic, and there is no surrender”. Our mother, then over eighty years of age, dressed herself, and all during the ensuing fight assisted by loading weapons and with words of encouragement.

The police fired a volley to which we replied and a fierce conflict began. We were armed with three shot guns and a rifle. The fight lasted about three hours. Head Constable Rowe was shot dead, while other members of the RIC were wounded. David was also badly wounded, having lost two fingers and received a gaping wound in his side. Military reinforcements arrived and when the last shot was fired from the house we had no alternative but to surrender. Our ammunition was exhausted. The house was wrecked. Not a pane of glass was left unbroken. The interior was tattooed with marks of rifle bullets...<sup>61</sup>”



**Tom Kent with his brother William being led across the bridge at Fermoy following his capture.**

Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

After surrendering, the Kents were taken out of the house through a window, with Thomas still in his sock feet. As he and William were being handcuffed, their brother Richard attempted to escape by bounding over a nearby hedge. He was shot down, mortally wounded. For a moment it seemed as if the other brothers would also be dispatched, but a military officer interceded, stating "I am in command here. Enough lives have been lost, and I take these men prisoners of war"<sup>62</sup>.

Thomas Kent was convicted of the murder of Constable Rowe and executed by firing squad at Victoria Barracks (now Collins Barracks) on 9 May 1916. Kent's body was laid to rest in the Barracks, until his remains were disinterred and given a state funeral at the Church of St. Nicholas, Castlelyons, on 18th September, 2015, with over 2,000 people present. Today, Cork's railway station is named for him, and the main bridge in Fermoy was dedicated as the Kent Bridge in his honour on 2 May 2016.



**Unveiling of plaque and bridge naming in Thomas Kent's memory, Fermoy, on May 2nd, 2016. On the occasion the plaque was unveiled by Prudence Riordan, Niece of Thomas Kent, joined by Michael Riordan, Grand-nephew of Thomas Kent, with Cllr. John Paul O' Shea, Mayor of County Cork and Chair of Cork County Council's 1916 Commemorative Committee, Cllr. Frank O' Flynn in attendance.**

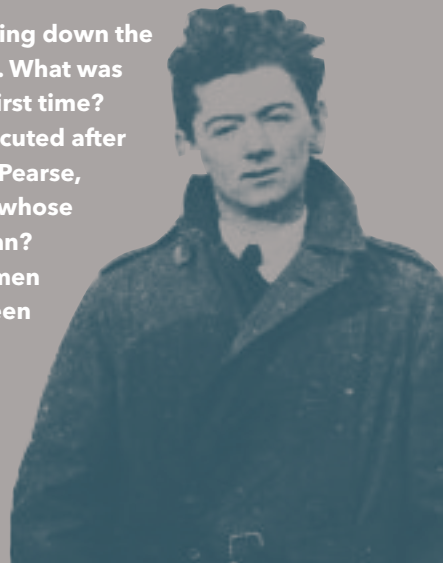
It wasn't long before the actions of Kent and other rebels were already capturing the imaginations of young men in Cork. Seán O'Driscoll, who would later serve in Cork No. 3 Brigade during the War of Independence, recalled:

“...I was still at school at Easter, 1916. I was always keenly interested in Irish history and the Irish language. My parents were descended from staunch Irish families- a grand uncle of my mother being shot by the Red Coats. About the middle of Easter Week 1916, when news of the Rising had reached our district, I unearthed a stick of gelignite with detonator and fuse. With two or three others, including one of my brothers, I put it in a hole in the wall of the railway bridge [at Ballydehob] near my home and exploded it. No damage done.”<sup>63</sup>

Even some Irishmen far away at the front were influenced by what had occurred. Tom Barry was with the British Army in Mesopotamia when the Rising took place:

“One evening I strolled down to the orderly tent outside which war communiqués were displayed. These one usually scanned in a casual manner, for even then, war news was accepted in a most skeptical way. But this evening there was a “Special” communiqué headed “REBELLION IN DUBLIN.” It told of the shelling of the GPO and Liberty Hall, of hundreds of rebels killed, thousands arrested and leaders being executed. The communiqué covered a period of several weeks and contained news which up to then had been suppressed from overseas troops.

I read this notice three or four times... Walking down the nullah my mind was torn with questionings. What was this Republic of which I now heard for the first time? Who were these leaders the British had executed after taking them prisoners, Tom Clarke, Padraic Pearse, James Connolly and all the others, none of whose names I had ever heard? What did it all mean? ... Thus through the blood sacrifices of the men of 1916, had one Irish youth of eighteen been awakened to Irish Nationality.”<sup>64</sup>



The execution of Kent and fifteen other leaders of the 1916 Rising between 3 May and 3 August ultimately helped to garner sympathy in the months that followed the rising. However, such sympathies were far from universal. With thousands of Cork men serving in the First World War, many around the county continued to take a dim view of the actions of the Irish Volunteers. Thomas Culhane was a member of the Charleville Company:



Far more Corkmen enlisted in British regiments such as the Royal Munster Fusiliers than remained with the Irish Volunteers, and the wives and families of those at the Front were often openly hostile towards them.

Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

“About July, 1916, I took part in a parade to Charleville railway station to welcome home released prisoners - Seán O’Dea, Company Captain, and others. We were attacked by a hostile mob on returning to town, composed of British soldiers’ wives and relatives, but this mob came out second best.”<sup>65</sup>

A number of those Volunteers arrested in Cork, such as Seamus Fitzgerald, ultimately ended up in Frongoch Internment Camp, Wales. The camp later became known as the ‘University of Revolution’ because of its impact on the actions of future years. According to Fitzgerald:

“Here [Frongoch] was reborn the revolutionary movement that was to win Irish independence; here was laid the organisation for future success, and comradeship closely knit between men from almost every county in Ireland.”<sup>66</sup>

The 1916 Volunteers took pride in their efforts to continue the traditions of the 19th century Fenian movements. As the year progressed and more of the internees were released, many made preparations for the next steps. Michael O'Sullivan of Kilnamartyra:

**“ My uncle [Daniel] was released from Frongoch, one of the very last, at Christmas, 1916. It was he who started the whole thing around here. He was a link with the Fenian movement through an elder brother of his, who actually served eleven months in Limerick Gaol for illegal drilling at Bandon late in the nineteenth century.<sup>67</sup> ”**

Unsurprisingly, the events of 1916 had a significant impact on the Irish Volunteers, and a major re-organisation of the movement was required. This process saw a number of new companies being formed throughout the county. Joseph Aherne noted how this evolved in the east of Cork:

**“ The first volunteer company was formed in Cobh in 1913, and many of its members were interned in Frongoch after the 1916 Rebellion. After 1916 the area was thoroughly organised and companies were formed in all parishes. Midleton was the first company organised... and Youghal some time later. Knockraha was organised in 1917.<sup>68</sup> ”**

Many of the buildings where these post-1916 companies were formed still survive and are commemorated. An example is the small house known as 'Liberty Hall' in Knockraha, where in 1917 Martin Corry set up the local Volunteers that would become E Company, 4th Battalion of Cork No. 1 Brigade during the War of Independence.



**'Liberty Hall' in Knockraha, where the local Volunteer Company was founded by Martin Corry in 1917.**



Post 1916, while some new Volunteer Companies were being set-up, many more who had been established prior to the Rising, continued to be active, one example being the Volunteers from the West Cork town of Bantry, who had been established in December 1913<sup>69</sup>. Ted O' Sullivan, a member of the Bantry Volunteers, noted that 'The Bantry Company engaged in the manufacture of pikes in the summer and autumn of 1917'<sup>70</sup> and that Volunteers at this time carried out two raids for arms – one at a local hardware store and one on the Barytes Mines – during which they obtained a supply of explosives. Indeed the Bantry Company also created home-made bombs 'which were made by filling paint tins, coca tins and suchlike, with scrap metal and charging them with gelignite, detonator and fuse'<sup>71</sup>.

While new Volunteer Companies were forming and others reorganising and obtaining arms, in essence the 1916 Rising had changed everything. In February 1917 Count George Noble Plunkett, father of executed 1916 leader Joseph Plunkett, won the Roscommon North by-election, thereby securing Sinn Féin's first parliamentary victory. June 1917 saw the formation of a provisional committee to draw up a new Sinn Féin constitution and their Ard Fheis in October declared the aim of the party to be "the international recognition of Ireland as an independent Irish Republic"<sup>72</sup>. By-elections through the year continued to return Sinn Féin candidates – including Éamon de Valera in East Clare – as major momentum was building throughout the country. Patrick O'Brien recalled how this was greeted in Dunmanway, and how it affected the Volunteers:

**“ For every bye-Election held in 1917 there was a victory parade in the town of Dunmanway and which resulted in the formation of three extra Companies, namely, Aultagh, Togher and Drinagh... In 1917 there was not a whole lot doing beyond organisation. Later in the year, a Company was formed at Coppeen, also at Shanaway. All the Companies were principally engaged in carrying out drilling and getting disciplined. The tendency this year was to concentrate on the political side and as Sinn Féin Clubs were springing up throughout the area the great majority of the members were Volunteers.<sup>73</sup> ”**

The numbers of Corkmen in the Irish Volunteers would continue to swell in 1918, with the advent of the Conscription Crisis. The prospect that conscription for service in the First World War would be extended to Ireland led to the creation of the Anti-Conscription Campaign, with groups such as the Catholic Church, the Irish Parliamentary Party, the Labour Party and Sinn Féin opposing its introduction<sup>74</sup>. Seán O'Connell noted its impact in Cork:

**“ In mid 1918, when the British Government proposed to introduce conscription in Ireland, there was a large influx of Volunteer recruits, and, as a result, the organisation in Cork was divided into two battalions and later three, viz. the First, Second and Third.<sup>75</sup> ”**



Ultimately conscription was not introduced in Ireland, and O'Connell reckoned that 50% of those who had recently joined melted away<sup>76</sup>. However, his was not a view shared by another Corkman, Seán Ua Luasa:

“During the conscription threat in June 1918, we had a big influx of recruits. A fair proportion of these remained with us when the conscription crisis had passed, which brought the strength of the company up to about 150.”<sup>77</sup>

From May 1918 Sinn Féin began planning for the next election<sup>78</sup>. Their campaign was run on the basis of self-determination for Ireland, an argument they made forcefully in the context of the conclusion of the First World War, which they argued was supposedly fought to “make the world safe for democracy”<sup>79</sup>. The people went to the polls in 1918, and their decision was resounding. Sinn Féin’s seats soared from seven to seventy-three, whereas the Irish Parliamentary Party was crushed, seeing their representation drop from sixty-eight to six, with the Unionists taking twenty-six seats<sup>80</sup>.

Having run their campaign on a platform of self-determination, Sinn Féin decided on 19 December 1918 to establish Dáil Éireann. The first proceedings occurred on 21 January 1919 at Dublin’s Mansion House – the very same day that violent events in Co. Tipperary heralded a new chapter in the struggle for Irish independence. However, as the next chapter will show, things were already well underway in the County of Cork.

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<sup>1</sup> Connell Jr., Joseph E.A. 2013. 'Founding of the Irish Volunteers' in *History Ireland* Issue 6 (November/December 2013), Volume 21, 66.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Bowman, Timothy 2013. "'The North Began'...But When? The Formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force' in *History Ireland* Issue 2 (March/April 2013), Volume 21, 28-31.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, Peter 2013. 'How Revolutionary Were the Irish Volunteers?' in *History Ireland* Issue 6 (November/December 2013), Volume 21, 32-36, 32.

<sup>7</sup> Connell Jr., Joseph E.A. 2013. 'Founding of the Irish Volunteers' in *History Ireland* Issue 6 (November/December 2013), Volume 21, 66.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> O'Donoghue, Florence 1966a. 'The Irish Volunteers in Cork 1913-1916' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 1966, Volume 71, Nos. 213-214, 41-48, 44; Witness Statement 1598: Sean Murphy, Thomas Barry, Patrick Canton, James Wickham, Officers of the Irish Volunteers, 1916 Association (Cork), 1;

<sup>10</sup> Mulvagh, Conor 2014a. The Curragh Crisis, March 1914. Available at [www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/the-curragh-crisis-march-1914](http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/the-curragh-crisis-march-1914). Accessed 16th August 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Townshend, Charles 2005. *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion*. Penguin: Allen Lane, London, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 52-3.

<sup>14</sup> Cape Clear Museum, "Commemorative Exhibition: The Howth Gun-Running and its connection with Cape Clear islanders". Available at [www.capeclearmuseum.ie/news.php](http://www.capeclearmuseum.ie/news.php). Accessed 26th September 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Dicey, A.V. 2013. *The Law of the Constitution*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 423.

<sup>16</sup> Mulvagh, Conor 2014b. Statement to the Irish Volunteers, 24 September 1914. Available at <http://historyhub.ie/statement-to-the-irish-volunteers>. Accessed 16th August 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> O'Donoghue, Florence 1966a. 'The Irish Volunteers in Cork 1913-1916' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 1966, Volume 71, Nos. 213-214, 41-48, 42.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, Peter 2013. 'How Revolutionary Were the Irish

Volunteers?' in *History Ireland* Issue 6 (November/December 2013), Volume 21, 32-36, 36.

<sup>21</sup> Connell Jr., Joseph E.A. 2015 'Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's Funeral' in *History Ireland* Issue 4 (July/August 2015), Volume 23, 66.

<sup>22</sup> Witness Statement 787: Con Meany, Captain Mushera (Co. Cork) Company Irish Volunteers 1916; O/C 7th Battalion Cork 2 Brigade post 1916; O/C 1st Battalion Cork 4 Brigade, later, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Witness Statement 74: Paud O'Donoghue, Carriganimma Company Irish Volunteers, 1915-1916, 1.

<sup>24</sup> O'Donoghue 1966a, 41.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Witness Statement 1039: John D. Crimmins, Member of Milford Company Irish Volunteers, Co. Cork, 1916; Q.M. same Company later, 1.

<sup>32</sup> O'Donoghue 1966a, 42.

<sup>33</sup> O'Donoghue 1966b, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Witness Statement 4: Diarmuid Lynch, Part 1, The IRB, Some Recollections and Comments, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> O'Donoghue 1966a, 42.

<sup>38</sup> Townshend, Charles 2005. *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion*. Penguin: Allen Lane, London, 128-131.

<sup>39</sup> O'Donoghue 1966a, 43.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 44-5.

<sup>44</sup> Meaney, Op. Cit.

<sup>45</sup> Witness Statement 1699: William Powell, O/C, Crookstown Company, Macroom Battalion, Cork 1 Brigade, IRA, Member, Flying Column, 1.

<sup>46</sup> O'Donoghue 1966a, 44.

<sup>47</sup> Meaney, Op. Cit.

<sup>48</sup> Powell, Op. Cit.

<sup>49</sup> Witness Statement 73: Denis Lyons, Kanturk Company Irish Volunteers, 1915-16, 1.

<sup>50</sup> O'Donoghue 1996a, 47.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Witness Statement 1598: Sean Murphy, Thomas Barry, Patrick Canton, James Wickham, Officers of the Irish Volunteers, 1916 Association (Cork), 7.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 8-12.

<sup>55</sup> O'Donoghue 1996b, 61.

<sup>56</sup> Captain Karl Spindler *The Mystery of the Casement Ship* quoted in Ellis, Peter Bereford 2008. *Eyewitness to Irish History*, John Wiley and Sons: London, 207.

<sup>57</sup> Meaney, Op. Cit.; Witness Statement 793: Michael O'Sullivan, Dispatch Rider, Kilnamartyra Company Easter 1916, Battalion Engineer Officer, 8th (Ballyvourney) Battalion, Cork Brigade, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Witness Statement 1737: Seamus Fitzgerald, TD in First Dáil Éireann, Chairman of Parish Court, Cobh, President of East Cork District Court, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Power, P.J. 2013. 'The Kents and Their Fight for Freedom' in Brian Ó Conchubhair (ed.) *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story 1916-21*, 106-112. Mercier: Dublin, 106-7.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>61</sup> Witness Statement 75: William Kent, Fight at Bawnard House, May 2nd 1916, 1-2.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>63</sup> Witness Statement 1518: Seán O'Driscoll, O/C, Schull Battn., Cork 3 Bde., IRA, Member of Flying Column, Cork 3 Bde., IRA, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Barry, Tom 1989. *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, Anvil: Dublin, 1-2.

<sup>65</sup> Witness Statement 831: Thomas Culhane, Member of Irish Volunteers, Charleville, 1916-; Member of Battalion Flying Column, Cork, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Fitzgerald, Op. Cit., 14.

<sup>67</sup> O'Sullivan, Op. Cit., 2.

<sup>68</sup> Witness Statement 1367: Joseph Aherne, Company Captain, Midleton, Co. Cork; Commandant, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, 1.

<sup>69</sup> O' Donovan, Angela 2016. 'Bantry Historical and Archaeological Society - Bantry Remembers 1916 - 1921' Cork, 10

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>71</sup> O' Sullivan, M. and O' Sullivan, T. 2014 'Ordinary People Extraordinary Lives - the lives of Ted, Dan and Ellen O' Sullivan Millíní Bantry and Catherine (Katty/Ga) Daly O' Sullivan', 54. Unpublished.

<sup>72</sup> Murphy, Brian 1994. 'The First Dail Eireann' in *History Ireland* Issue 1 (Spring 1994), Volume 2. Available at [www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-](http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/the-first-dail-eireann/)

[history/the-first-dail-eireann/](http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/the-first-dail-eireann/). Accessed 19 August 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Witness Statement 812: Patrick O'Brien, Member of Irish Volunteers, Dunmanway, 1916; Adjutant, 10th (Dunmanway) Battalion, Cork Brigade, 1917-; Adjutant 3rd (Dunmanway) Battalion, Cork 3 Brigade, 1-2.

<sup>74</sup> Murphy, Op. Cit.

<sup>75</sup> Witness Statement 1706: Seán O'Connell, Captain, 'G' Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, Member of Cork City Active Service Unit, 2.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Witness Statement 1579: Seán Ua Luasa (Seán Lucey), Captain, D Company, 1st Battalion, Cork 1 Brigade, Quartermaster, Cork 1 Brigade Flying Column, Assistant Brigade Quartermaster, 2.

<sup>78</sup> Murphy, Op. Cit.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 5

### Cork At War, 1918-21



At dusk on St. Patrick's Day 1918, Joe Foley, Seán Driscoll, Con Dwyer, Peter O'Neill and Christy O'Connell left their homes in disguise and stole through the village of Eyeries in West Cork towards the local RIC Barracks. While four of the men waited in a breen beside the building, O'Connell headed around the front, where he came face to face with one of the police:

“...I whipped out my little gun and ordered, “Hands up”. In return, he swiftly pointed his right hand at me, and I pulled twice on the trigger. There were two dull clicks- my two rounds were duds. There was no shot from his side either - it was his finger he was pointing at me, thinking I would mistake it for a gun in the dark. Then he backed in quickly to slam the door, and I hurled myself at him with full force. There was a step down inside, and the force of the impact sent him reeling into the hallway. Again, I ordered, “Hands up”, and this time he obeyed. It was with mixed feelings I stood there in the hall, holding up this giant R.I.C. man. I can still picture him- fair complexion, broad shoulders and deep chest, a man of splendid physique- and the light from the table-lamp in the dayroom shining through the open door. I was thrilled at having taken this symbol of British imperialism, as it were, by assault, anxious that my comrades should come to my assistance and fearful every moment of getting a clatter....<sup>1</sup>”



Men of the Royal Irish Constabulary in Cork. The War of Independence began by targeting them and their barracks for arms. Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.



O'Connell's comrades quickly burst through the door, two of them also armed with revolvers. Rushing upstairs, the men fumbled around in the darkness for the object of their raid – RIC rifles. Grabbing a table lamp from the dayroom, they eventually found the guns, and within minutes the men were rushing back into the darkness with their prize<sup>2</sup>.

A few days before the Eyeries attack, volunteers in Ballyvourney had also intended to seize weapons from their local RIC barracks, but their plan had failed to come off<sup>3</sup>. They had more luck on 7 July. That day a group of volunteers concealed themselves behind a rock at Béal a Ghleanna, on a mountain road between Ballingeary and Ballyvourney. There the men lay in wait for a party of two RIC police who they knew were travelling that way on a side car. When the patrol appeared, the volunteers, who were disguised, leapt from their hiding place and confronted the policemen<sup>4</sup>. One of the volunteers was Jamie Moynihan:

“...I was to be the first person on the road, to catch and hold the horse... As soon as the grey horse and side-car came into line, I jumped out onto the road and caught the horse by the head. [Johnny] Lynch jumped after me and caught the older of the two policemen, who was a powerfully strong and well-built man. Lynch and the policeman were struggling fiercely and eventually the RIC man pulled the mask off Lynch's face. Dan Thady and Liam Twomey came out of a little gap on the southern side. One of them fired a shot and hit the young policeman through the neck. At this stage, Johnny Lynch was getting the better of the RIC man and pulled him off the sidecar and on the road, rifle, cushion and all. I picked up Lynch's double-barrelled shot gun, which was loaded and thrown on the road, I gave the RIC man a belt of it across the shoulders and the backside, and he collapsed in a heap on the road...<sup>5</sup>”



The rise in appreciation of Gaelic culture played a big role in the decision of many men and women to support the War of Independence. This image shows a fleadh underway in Connongh in 1920.

Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

The ambushers had quickly subdued the two men, unharnessed their horse and threw the car over a cliff. They escaped the scene with the RIC carbines and ammunition, having fired the first shots of their campaign<sup>6</sup>. A monument to commemorate this event was unveiled by An Taoiseach Seán Ó Loingsigh in 1970.

“Historians have written that the first shots in the Irish War of Independence, after 1916, were fired at Soloheadbeg in Co. Tipperary on the day the First Dáil met, 21 January 1919. This is the accepted historical picture, but it is not correct, because six and a half months earlier, on the evening of Sunday 7 July 1918, a group of six armed Volunteers and myself ambushed and disarmed two constables of the RIC at Béal a’ Ghleanna, or the Mouth of the Glen, a few miles to the west of Renaniree. This ambush was, in fact, the first armed attack on the crown forces in Ireland after 1916.”

The day following the Béal a’ Ghleanna ambush the Muskerry area was placed under martial law by the British authorities and “Connradh na Gaedhilge, the GAA, Sinn Féin, the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan were declared illegal organisations by the British authorities”<sup>8</sup>. At this time British involvement in the area was very real and only a few weeks prior to Béal a’ Ghleanna, on the 20th of June 1918, local Volunteer Michael Dinneen from Kilcorney had been tortured and executed by British forces<sup>9</sup>.

These occurrences were only the very beginning of what was to be witnessed in the Irish War of Independence. During the period following the Easter Rising of 1916 up until the Truce in July 1921 there were in excess of 1000 people killed or wounded in Cork, more than anywhere else in the country<sup>10</sup>. The county’s Volunteers were also the deadliest on the island, accounting for one in three of all IRA victims<sup>11</sup>.

The War of Independence was characterized by highly active local units, who “believed that the war they were fighting was morally right and justified”<sup>12</sup>, and who proved a constant thorn in the side of the British administration. Many of the historic landscapes that formed the backdrop to this



Advertisement for a Sinn Féin meeting in Cork, as support for the movement began to rise. Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

war survive in the County of Cork, making it perhaps the best place to gain an understanding of how the War of Independence was conducted until the Truce of 11 July 1921. The 11 July 1921 is also alleged as having been the last day to witness an ambush, same having taken place at Céim Carraige in Millstreet, Co. Cork<sup>13</sup>.

The War of Independence differed greatly from the 1916 Rising with respect to the tactics employed. Whereas the Easter Rebellion had seen Volunteers and the Citizen Army seize and attempt to hold positions in an orthodox military fashion, the War of Independence witnessed volunteers engaging in guerilla tactics to strike suddenly and swiftly at their targets before melting back into the countryside. There were few areas where these tactics were more successfully employed than in Cork.

Though to a certain extent the Irish effort in the War of Independence was under the centralised control of General Headquarters (GHQ) in Dublin, who sought to direct and organize the national effort, invariably many of the decisions with respect to the prosecution of the war were taken by local and regional groups<sup>14</sup>. At a local level, IRA volunteers were members of Volunteer companies that were based around their local towns and parishes. These formed part of a larger battalion area, which in turn came under the control of one of Cork's brigades. An example of what such a structure looked like can be seen by examining the makeup of the 1st Battalion, Cork No. 4 Brigade as it appeared at the time of the Truce, on 11 July 1921.

Company	Locality	No. Volunteers
A	Millstreet	100-102
B	Dooneen	50-60
C	Coole Cross	20-27
D	Kilmeedy	65-84
E	Rathduane	103-104
F	Cullen	119-134
G	Derrinagree	74
H	Rathcool	93-94
I	Mushera	68-69
J	Kilcorney	70-73
Total		762-821

**Makeup of 1st Battalion, Cork No. 4 Brigade, 1st Southern Division (1st Southern Division formed in 1921) at the time of the Truce, 11 July 1921. Variance in figures reflects different numbers provided by former battalion officers<sup>15</sup>.**

It is interesting to ponder where the men came from that made up these companies. Analysis suggests that Cork Volunteers were drawn from a wide range of backgrounds in the working and lower middle classes, including tradesmen, apprentices, shop assistants, artisans, teachers and farmers<sup>16</sup>. They tended to be young; a number of Cork IRA men appear to have been under 30 years of age<sup>17</sup>. By the time of the Truce, upwards of 20,000 men may have been involved with the IRA in the county at some point<sup>18</sup>. The name transition from Irish Volunteers to the Irish Republican Army occurred in August 1919, following recognition by the First Dáil, or first Irish Government, that the Volunteers were the soldiers of the Irish Republic. By August 1920 an oath of allegiance was being administered to all officers in the IRA<sup>19</sup>.

Despite the large numbers of people in the IRA, the vast majority would never have engaged in direct military action against British forces, and many came and went as the struggle progressed. The majority role at this time was one of support including tasks such as information-gathering, supply, communication disruption and concealment.

Ireland’s women played a very strong role in this regard and large numbers were active in Cork’s Cumann na mBan, which was integral to the success of the IRA during the War of Independence. They were organised by District, Branch and Squad. Their structure and strength can be demonstrated by taking the example of Clonakilty District Council of Cumann na mBan, which covered the area of operations of 2nd Battalion, Cork No. 3 Brigade of the IRA.



Both the IRA and the British utilised the pre-existing historic landscape during the War of Independence. Here British troops are occupying Timoleague Castle.  
Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

Branch	No. Members
Clonakilty	22
Lyre And Letter	21
Rossmore And Kilmeen	16
Rosscarbery	13
Ardfield	10
Shannonvale	13
Ahiohill	13
Kilkern	15
Ring	12
Total	135

Makeup of Clonakilty District Council, Cumann na mBan, which covered area of operations of 2nd Battalion, Cork No. 3 Brigade, 1st Southern Division (1st Southern Division formed in 1921) at the time of the Truce, 11 July 1921<sup>20</sup>.



Members of Cumann na mBan protesting outside Mountjoy Prison for the release of hunger strikers in 1921.

Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

The role of Cumann na mBan members could also be every bit as dangerous as that of active IRA Volunteers. 'Catherine O' Sullivan recalled in her application for a Military Pension, that she conveyed bombs, revolvers and ammunition from Upton to Bantry and kept them in her house until called for. She cooked and washed for local men on the run ... and Cumann na mBan meetings were also held in her home'<sup>21</sup>.

Mollie Cunningham, who served in Cumann na mBan in Macroom, recalled that by late 1920:

“...my home was being raided and searched two or three times each week by enemy military and police forces. They never found anything of an incriminating nature, although such items were often under their hands in the simplest places in my father's tailor shop. Engagements between the IRA and enemy forces were now a regular feature of the daily happenings. With other members of the Cumann na mBan, I was now deputed to act as an intelligence officer and to report on the movements of enemy forces or those of suspected agents. I helped in the removal of enemy military stores from Macroom railway station. Some of these stores were actually taken through my home, which adjoined the railway premises. All members of the Macroom unit [of Cumann na mBan] were at this time engaged in supplying food to IRA prisoners taken in by the enemy forces to Macroom. This was an everyday occurrence up to the Truce.”<sup>22</sup>



Great care had to be taken in the supplying of food to local men on the run. As with any conflict there may be spys and informers in the midst and anyone buying more than their usual daily ration, particularly for a large group of Volunteers, might very quickly arouse suspicion. Alertness was paramount and such a demonstrable part of this period in Irish history. Along with this alertness, the Irish employed some very clever tactics for communicating.

“Some companies and battalions developed different systems to warn their officers of enemy movements in their respective areas. The Kilmurry Company had a unique method of warning their leaders and the local Cumann na mBan when danger threatened. Close to the village, on a high, sloping field facing north was placed a large white sheet to warn of the enemy’s presence in the area. There were four positions in the field for the sheet, each position showing where the enemy was heading. If the sheet was at the eastern end of the field, then the enemy was to the east, in Lissarda or Crookstown, and so on. When there was no enemy movement in the vicinity, the sheet was taken in. This sheet could be seen plainly from the 7th Battalion HQ, almost five miles away, and it proved to be both a safe and effective system. I’m sure that strangers passing that way must have wondered when they saw the ‘washing’ out every day of the week, even when it was lashing rain.<sup>23</sup>”



In an effort to defend the RIC barracks, their defences were augmented, particularly with the addition of armour plating over entry points like windows, as can be seen with this example at Ballinhassig.

Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

In comparison with what was to come, 1919 did see relatively less in the way of major confrontations, but there were some and indeed it was the County of Cork that witnessed the first execution in Ireland since 1916, with the death by Firing Squad, of local Millstreet Volunteer Con Murphy on 1 February 1919<sup>24</sup>. Con Murphy and a number of other executed Volunteers now lie buried in the Republican Plot at University College Cork.

As the months went by in 1919, Irish efforts were noticeably mounting and one of the most notable actions of the year took place in Fermoy on 7 September. On this day, Liam Lynch and his men attacked a group of British troops on their way to church in Fermoy, resulting in the death of one soldier and the wounding of three others; Lynch himself was injured by friendly fire<sup>25</sup>. This operation represented the first of the war to be undertaken directly against British military. In the aftermath of the attack, the dead soldier's comrades rampaged through the town, damaging a number of shops<sup>26</sup>.

Throughout the War of Independence, many Volunteer Companies were actively seeking weapons. In Bantry, attentions were even drawn to the water for this purpose:

“ In November 1919, plans were made to carry out a raid on one of the British M. L. Boats, which were based in Bantry. On the night of 17th November 1919... the boat was tied up at the Pier beside the railway station'. The Volunteers 'held up the members of the crew and placed them under guard below decks. The remainder of the party then came aboard and broke open the armoury. They seized six Ross Canadian Rifles and three short Webley revolvers with a supply of ammunition.”<sup>27</sup>

From the end of 1919, IRA units in the active parts of the country began to target local RIC barracks, a tactic that would lead to many being closed as the police retreated to the major towns and cities, leaving much of the countryside under Republican control<sup>28</sup>. From early 1920 onwards there was a marked upscaling in the intensity and violent ferocity of these attacks. The first of these more ambitious efforts took place in Cork, with the 2 January 1920 assault on Carrigtwohill RIC Barracks, which represented the first time a semi-fortified police station had been captured by the IRA<sup>29</sup>. Mick Leahy was the man who commanded that attack:



Some of the buildings opposite the RIC Barracks in Carrigtwohill that were likely occupied by Volunteers during the January 1920 attack.

“...About 11 p.m., when I had satisfied myself that every man was in his allotted position, I gave orders to open the attack. Fire was begun by our riflemen in front and from those of us in the rear. Grenades were flung at the barracks windows, but, because of the steel shutters on the windows, did no damage. The RIC replied with rifle fire and grenades. Verey lights were sent up by the garrison. This continued for about quarter of an hour when I concluded that our fire was ineffective and had no chance of forcing a surrender of the RIC. I, therefore, ordered that the gable end of the barrack wall be dynamited with a view to obtaining entrance and taking the place by assault. John Moore from Cobh, a quarry man, well versed in the art of dynamiting, was deputed for the job. A few men bored about five holes in the barrack wall while John inserted the sticks of gelignite... When the dynamite exploded, a large hole was blown in the gable end of the barracks sufficient to admit two men at a time into what was the barrack dayroom... About four of us... got through the hole into the dayroom and found that the RIC had taken to the rooms upstairs. We fired a few shots through the ceiling... I shouted to the police that we were inside the barracks and that they should surrender... They did so, coming downstairs with their hands up.”<sup>30</sup>

The Carrigtwohill action was soon followed by another major attack on the RIC barracks at Kilmurry, part of a series of engagements which for many marked the transition of the conflict to what could be called a ‘war’<sup>31</sup>. Even so, for every successful operation such as that at Carrigtwohill there were also many failures, such as the assault on Allihies RIC barracks, where despite successfully blowing in the building’s wall with a mine, the volunteers were eventually forced to withdraw<sup>32</sup>. Nonetheless, the cumulative impact was significant- for example, despite its successful defence, the Allihies barracks was abandoned<sup>33</sup>. Some 300 of these abandoned RIC barracks were burnt up and down the country during Easter Week 1920<sup>34</sup>.

**Belgooly RIC Barracks after  
its destruction by the IRA.**

Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.



With the RIC being placed under increasing pressure in Cork, some members of the force sought to strike back. On 20 March 1920 a group of RIC men disguised as civilians burst into the Blackpool home of the Sinn Féin Lord Mayor of Cork, Tomás Mac Curtain, gunning him down in retaliation for the attacks on their comrades<sup>35</sup>. Mac Curtain, a native of Ballyknockane near Mourneabbey, had been one of the leaders of the Volunteer movement in Cork, commanding the city battalion in 1916. Initially a prominent member of the Gaelic League, in 1907 he joined Sinn Féin and the IRB, and later became an IRA brigadier<sup>36</sup>. He had been elected Lord Mayor in January 1920, only a few weeks prior to his death, which occurred on his 36th birthday, and in front of his wife and son<sup>37</sup>.

Unsurprisingly, the violence of the IRA offensive also elicited an official response from the British administration. By March 1920, the first members of a new paramilitary force drafted in to aid the RIC were being deployed<sup>38</sup>. Known as the Black and Tans due to the mismatched uniforms with which they were first issued, they were drawn from ex-soldiers and sailors and posted to RIC barracks to help the beleaguered force<sup>39</sup>. They were soon joined in Ireland by a newly recruited Auxiliary Division of the RIC, raised from demobilized former army officers. The Auxiliaries operated independently of the RIC in counties like Cork, and along with the Black and Tans, quickly developed a reputation for extreme brutality<sup>40</sup>. In addition to the arrival of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, the beginning of 1920 also witnessed the increasing involvement of the British Army in offensive operations to try and stifle the IRA threat<sup>41</sup>. However, the nature of the military response by the administration only served to further alienate the civilian population.

As the war intensified in 1920, Sinn Féin continued to enjoy significant support across the country. They did well in the local government and rural council elections, and that year also saw increasing use being made of the alternative legal system that had been established by the Dáil. Referred to by the police as 'Sinn Féin Courts', these effectively took over from the British justice system in many areas, particularly those from which the RIC has been withdrawn<sup>42</sup>. Despite these successes, the campaign against the administration resulted in large numbers of Volunteers and suspected Volunteers being arrested. In April 1920 republican prisoners in Mountjoy Gaol – many of whom were from Cork – began a hunger



**A Memorial Stone, at the birthplace of Tomás MacCurtain in Mourneabbey, was unveiled on the Centenary of Easter Sunday 1916, on 23rd April 2016.**



**Black & Tans with their transport during the War of Independence.** Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

strike as they demanded to be treated as prisoners of war. The hunger-strikers enjoyed widespread support, and eventually the government backed down, releasing sixty-six of the men on parole. Further pressure was placed on British military efforts a few weeks later, as many workers declared their intention not to handle war material, and railwaymen refused to transport troops and police, causing disruption that would last until year's end<sup>43</sup>.

**The building in Knockraha that was used to hold the 'Sinn Fein' Court during the War of Independence.**





The summer of 1920 marked one of the low points for the British administration. On 26 June Liam Lynch and other volunteers of Cork No. 2 Brigade captured Brigadier-General Cuthbert Lucas in Fermoy, the highest ranking officer to be taken during the conflict<sup>44</sup>. Although he escaped his captor's custody after a few weeks, the detention of such a significant officer by the IRA was a major embarrassment to the British. Unsurprisingly, pressure on the Volunteers continued to increase, forcing large numbers to go 'on the run.' This in turn led to the development during the late summer and autumn of 1920 of a new type of IRA unit, known as Flying Columns or Active Service Units<sup>45</sup>. These formations were full-time, with a core of permanent members who could be supplemented by additional volunteers when on operations<sup>46</sup>. It would largely be the actions of these units that would achieve legendary status for many of Cork's IRA leaders, such as Tom Barry and Seán Moylan.



Tom Barry, one of Cork's most famous guerrilla leaders.

By August, the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act was passed, effectively confirming that responsibility for maintaining order now rested with the military, and substituting courts martial for the civil justice system<sup>47</sup>. That month also brought the arrest of Sinn Féin Lord Mayor of Cork Terence McSwiney - the murdered MacCurtain's successor - on charges of sedition. Terence had been born into a Kilmurry family in 1879. His father had emigrated to Australia in 1885, leaving Terence's mother Mary to raise their eight surviving children<sup>48</sup>. He co-founded the Celtic Literary Society in 1899 and in 1907 published a political manifesto in verse entitled *The Music of Freedom* and wrote a number of plays with political overtones<sup>49</sup>. He was a member of the Gaelic League and a leading organiser of the Irish Volunteers in Cork, playing a major role in the events in the county during 1916. Interned in Frongoch, he was consistently arrested over the following years for his Volunteer activities<sup>50</sup>. His arrest as Lord Mayor in 1920 and sentence to two years imprisonment led him to go on hunger strike, declaring at his hearing "I shall be free, alive or dead, within the month"<sup>51</sup>. His protest became an international story, with updates on his condition being carried throughout the world's media, with figures such as Ho Chi Minh demonstrating on his behalf<sup>52</sup>. Typical of the coverage was that of *The New York Herald* of 31 August 1920:

# McSwiney's End Near, Doctors Say

**Shows Indomitable Will, but May Die Any Moment**

**LONDON. Aug. 30**

Terence MacSwiney, Lord May of Cork, is not expected to survive the night. His brothers have received permission to remain with him till the end in Brixton Jail.

Mayor McSwiney is coughing a great deal, causing anxiety because of the bad condition of his lungs.

The hunger strike has progressed so far that he is in such condition that even if he took food now it would do him no good, according to a statement by the Brixton prison doctor to McSwiney's wife, who visited her husband this morning.

Father Dominic spent more than an hour in the prison to-night. When he left at 9 o'clock he said that Mr. McSwiney was weaker and thought he might die at any moment. The priest said Mr. McSwiney was showing an indomitable will. Mr. McSwiney's sister spent two hours in the prison this afternoon. She found her brother so weak he was unable to give her several messages he desired her to convey.

Four hunger strikers in Cork jail today completed their twentieth day of fasting and were reported to-night at the point of death.

At midnight Mr. McSwiney was still alive. He was conscious but unable to speak.

The members of organized labor composing labor's Council of Action sent a messenger to-day to Premier Lloyd George, who is in Lucerne, Switzerland, saying:

"The whole organized British labor asks you to reconsider the government's decision to allow the Lord Mayor of Cork to die rather than release him. His suffering is greater than lengthy imprisonment. His death would make an Irish solution more remote. We have appealed in vain to the Home Secretary. We appeal to you to do the big thing".<sup>53</sup>



**Lord Mayor Terence McSwiney**

Incredibly, McSwiney would hang on for almost another month, dying on 25 October, seventy-four days after he had begun his hunger strike<sup>54</sup>. His death garnered significant international sympathy for the Irish cause<sup>55</sup>.

Meanwhile the IRA attacks continued. One of the most audacious was the raid on Mallow Military Barracks by Liam Lynch and Ernie O'Malley, which took place on 28 September 1920<sup>56</sup>. The main raiding party had initially gathered in the town hall before Ernie O'Malley approached the small gate of the barracks, using a ruse to get the sentry to open it. When the soldier did so, O'Malley grabbed his rifle and the volunteers rushed inside. The troops were quickly overpowered, and as supporting units cut communications to the town the raiders loaded waiting vehicles with captured British weapons<sup>57</sup>. One of the most successful ambushes during this period was at Toureen in the 3rd Cork Brigade area on 22 October 1920, when two lorries carrying soldiers of the Essex Regiment were ambushed, resulting in the deaths of a number of troops and the capture of arms and ammunition<sup>58</sup>. This was followed up a month later with the famed Kilmichael Ambush, when Tom Barry and his men attacked an Auxiliary patrol. Jack Hennessy was there:

“ The place selected for the ambush was on the road running through marshy land. There were no fences but back a little off the road there were fairly large clumps of rock. There was no line of retreat. The Column O/C, Comdt. Barry, who was dressed in Volunteer officer's tunic, took up his position at the Dunmanway side of the ambush position where a narrow boren turned off to the left and a low stone wall gave some cover... my particular position was on a clump of rocks overlooking the road, but there was no protection on either side... coming on for dusk near 5 o'clock two of our scouts who had been on the lookout signalled two lorries approaching from Macroom... The first lorry passed our position. I heard a shot, followed by a bomb explosion from the Column O/C's position [Barry, who had been on the road in his uniform to slow the lead vehicle, had hurled a grenade into the cab]. At this time the second lorry was just opposite our position. The Auxies jumped out and tried to find cover. The lorry driver held his seat and attempted to back the lorry out of the position. I was engaging the Auxies on the road. I was wearing a tin hat. I had fired about ten rounds and had got five bullets through the hat when the sixth bullet wounded me in the scalp. Vice Comdt. McCarthy had got a bullet through the head and lay dead. I continued to load and fire but the blood dripping from my forehead fouled the breech of my rifle. I dropped my rifle and took M. McCarthy's. Many of the Auxies lay on the road dead and dying....<sup>59</sup> ”



**A woman outside a cottage in Meelin, Co. Cork, following a British reprisal.** Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

Of the 18 Auxiliaries who went into the action, 16 died on the road, one was severely wounded and another escaped but was subsequently captured and shot. The 3rd Brigade lost two men killed outright and a third mortally wounded. Kilmichael occurred only a week after Michael Collins's Squad had assassinated British intelligence agents in Dublin as part of what became known as 'Bloody Sunday', a day which had also seen the massacre of civilians at Croke Park by British forces. As 1920 was drawing to a close, counties like Cork were witnessing ever-increasing levels of violence. In December martial law was declared in Cork and the three adjoining counties<sup>60</sup>. On the 11th of that month, large areas of Cork City Centre were set alight by British forces, part of an unofficial reprisal that became known as the 'Burning of Cork' and which caused a huge amount of damage<sup>61</sup>. As yet, all of the reprisals by British and RIC forces in Cork had officially been unsanctioned. That changed after an ambush on Middleton's Main Street, carried out by men of the 1st Brigade on the night of 29 December 1920. The IRA plan was to set upon an RIC patrol that was making its way from the barracks along the street. Patrick Whelan, one of the column, described what took place:

“ The whole column... moved into Midleton under cover of darkness, and assembled at a saw-mills in Charles Street. From the saw-mills, Jack and I continued on to the main street... We were armed with .45 Webley revolvers and wore trench coats and capes. I was only about five minutes at my post when I saw a patrol of Black and Tans, marching slowly towards me. They moved in pairs, about six paces apart and on both sides of the street, four pairs on my side and two pairs on the opposite side, together with an old RIC man named Mullins. All were armed with rifles and revolvers, with the rifles slung on their shoulders... There were sixteen of us, all intimate with the layout, knowing every house and doorway in the main street. Ten of us took positions in doorways between Charles Street and along about forty yards of the main street up to the Midleton Arms Hotel. The remainder did likewise on the opposite side of the street... We were only about five minutes in position when the patrol returned - still in the same order as I had seen it earlier. Hurley judged his shot to perfection, and at once all of us opened fire. The patrol was taken completely by surprise and, in comparatively short time, the attack was over. Some of the Tans did fire back at us, and there were a few narrow escapes on our side. Dan Cashman of Midleton was fortunate to be carrying a cigarette case in his vest pocket - it was badly dented by a bullet, it probably saved his life... Constable Mullins was shot dead, and about six other Tans wounded, some of whom died later from their wounds...<sup>62</sup> ”



Rounded up IRA suspects being marched into the barracks at Bandon. Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.



Following the Midleton ambush, the British military decided to begin official reprisals. Brigadier-General Higginson ordered that homes of a number of suspected IRA sympathisers be burned in the town. Pathé were there to film the aftermath of the event, titling their reel "Reprisals By Order: 7 Houses destroyed by Military Authorities for failing to report ambush in which three policemen were killed." The scale of military pressure being placed on the IRA meant that some reverses were inevitable. On 28 January 1921 a large detachment from the 6th Battalion Cork No. 1 Brigade lay in wait at Godfrey's Cross on the road between Coachford and Dripsey, in position to ambush a British column. They were unaware that their presence had been given away to the enemy, who closed in to attack the unsuspecting Volunteers. John Manning from Donoughmore recalled what happened next:



Brigadier-General Higginson in Cork.

Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

“ Within a few minutes I saw two columns of soldiers moving in single file at each side of the road. They were coming from the direction of Dripsey. Just at this time the Column O/C made his appearance and I reported what I had seen. Fire was opened on our position immediately by the men on the road, and we replied. As it was now apparent that the enemy was aware of our position, the order to withdraw was given. The whole column now retired from our trench cover and moved to our rear in a northerly direction. After crossing the first fence to our rear, we were surprised by a party of military in the adjoining fields and had to change the direction of our withdrawal. We now moved west across a ploughed field, where we came under fire from the enemy. Four of our men were wounded while crossing this field and were taken prisoners. When I crossed the fence running north to south at the western end of the ploughed field, I got into a breen. Bullets were flying about as I crossed the fence, so I took time to fire five rounds at the pursuing enemy forces. This slowed down their advance, so I crossed into the field at the opposite side of the breen. I continued my withdrawal in a north westerly direction until I reached the vicinity of Coachford National School, where I made contact with the surviving members of the column.<sup>63</sup> ”

The operation was a disaster, and a number of IRA men were wounded and captured. Five of those who had fallen into British hands were later sentenced to death. In response, the IRA took Mary Lindsay – the woman who had revealed the presence of the ambush to the British – and her chauffeur captive, threatening to execute them in turn if their comrades were shot. Regardless, the five men were put to death on 28 February 1921, and not long afterwards the IRA also executed their two prisoners<sup>64</sup>. Intensive actions over the weeks following Dripsey would witness some victories for the Cork IRA, but also some major defeats. On 11 February a successful attack was carried out on a train carrying British troops at Drishanebeg, near Millstreet, causing five British casualties<sup>65</sup>. However, when a similar tactic was employed in an attack on a train of the Cork to Bandon line at Upton just four days later, it ended in disaster. Rather than being concentrated on a single carriage as at Drishanebeg, the soldiers were scattered throughout the train<sup>66</sup>. Frank Neville describes what happened:

“...The train was due at Upton at 9.30 in the morning. Some of the ambush party took up positions in the station premises; a few others were in the Good Store and behind a low wall close beside the railway line. The scouts on the bicycles at Kinsale Junction failed to make Upton before the train. Instead of a small party of military in a couple of carriages, as expected, military from Cork City going on to the West were in all the carriages the full length of the train... As the train stopped fire was opened by the Volunteers, to which the military replied at once. Almost in the first volley Seán Phelan, a Liverpool Irishman, and Batt Falvey were killed. Three others – Pat O’Sullivan, John Hartnett and Dan O’Mahoney – received terrible wounds. Shortly afterwards the Brigade O.C., who was on top of the iron footbridge over the railway, was wounded in the head. Six civilians were killed, four passengers and two Railway officials, the Guard and a Porter. After a short while the Brigade O.C. blew his whistle as a signal to retreat from what was a hopeless engagement...<sup>67</sup>”



The remains of Dripsey Bridge in the aftermath of the disastrous ambush, with a British intelligence car beside it.

Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

February 1921 would also bring the action that led to the greatest loss of life for the IRA in a single operation during the war, this time in East Cork. On the 20th of the month, members of the 4th Battalion of Cork No. 1 Brigade were surrounded by British forces in a farmhouse outside the village of Clonmult. In the firefight that followed, a number of volunteers were killed and the building was set on fire, forcing those still inside to surrender<sup>68</sup>. Patrick Higgins, one of those at Clonmult, described what followed:

**“...We shouted out we would surrender, and then threw our guns into the burning house. We were told to come out with hands up. We did so. We were lined up alongside an outhouse with our hands up. The Tans came along and shot every man, with the exception of three... who had been wounded in the fight in the house. These three were saved from the Tans by the officer in charge of the military party. A Tan put his revolver to my mouth and fired. I felt as if I was falling through a bottomless pit. Then I thought I heard a voice saying, “This fellow is not dead, we will finish him off”. Only for the military officer coming along I, too, would be gone.”**”



**The cottage where the IRA were trapped during the Clonmult Ambush. Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.**

A total of twelve volunteers were killed at Clonmult farmhouse, with a further two subsequently tried and executed. Despite such reverses, the IRA continued to strike hard. In yet another incident in what was a tumultuous week in Cork, a successful ambush was undertaken on 25 February by men of No. 1 Brigade under Seán O'Hegarty at Coolnacahera (Coolavokig). In the action, the IRA men were able to employ captured machine-guns against their former owners. Michael O'Sullivan was one of the men who participated:

“ On 25 February, 1921, we were in position at 7.45 in the morning at Coolnacahera and the British came along at 8 o'clock. It seems they may have been aware of us having been there as we had hardly settled into position when they arrived. They saw one of the Cork city men who showed himself. The enemy advanced very cautiously and we saw that they were Auxiliaries. They had one touring car in front and seven tenders. There were four hostages in front, walking on the road. I was No. 2 on the large Lewis gun, with Eugene O'Sullivan, an ex-Munster Fusilier, as No. 1. He was an expert gunner...

The Auxiliary tenders came on at a snail's pace and would have come right into the ambush position had they not seen a man, as already mentioned. They stopped dead and two jumped from the car and ran up the rocks to investigate. They were immediately shot dead by two men with shot guns who were stationed near Connor's Lewis gun position. We got in a burst immediately on the touring car and the first two tenders. The car was ditched and the survivors jumped out. All the others got out of their tenders and the fight became general...

The fighting continued until 12 o'clock in the day when the Auxiliaries had been forced into two cottages and the half acre around them. They were in a bad way. We moved in nearer to them again and, to make more firing room for themselves, they commenced breaking holes in the walls with bayonets. Every hole that appeared was covered immediately and brought under our fire, which was very effective. The Auxiliaries in the open space around the cottages were under fire from the Macroom men and had to dash from cover to cover. None of them succeeded in getting into the cottages. All fell before they could reach the doorsteps. We moved across the road and got ready with grenades when suddenly Seán Hegarty saw 48 lorries packed with troops coming along the road. Seán lifted his Peter the Painter and fired in their direction and then ordered us to retire.<sup>70</sup> ”

The Coolnachera ambush was notable as it also witnessed the use of planes in an effort to spot the IRA units. John and James Cronin of the Ballingearry Company remembered that “a plane circled overhead but failed to spot us as we moved quickly from the scene”<sup>71</sup>. The site is also of note in that it is depicted on Ordnance Survey mapping.



The ambush at Coolnacahera was commemorated at the site on September 11th 2016, as part of the Cork County Centenary Commemorative Programme.

The vast majority of ambushes and attacks that were attempted by the IRA during the war never came off, as intended targets failed to arrive, or unforeseen setbacks forced the cancellation of operations. Apart from launching direct attacks, the IRA was also heavily engaged in other efforts to disrupt military control, for example the digging of trenches in roads to hamper communications. One example, as featured in 'Heritage Bridges of County Cork', is Ring Bridge in West Cork, just outside Clonakilty. Here local knowledge informs that during the Irish War of Independence, locals altered the bridge with pick axes and shovels at certain places so that the British Military and RIC, garrisoned in nearby Clonakilty, could not cross with their vehicles, whilst the bridge was still easily passable on horseback or with donkey and cart, to the benefit of the locals.



Damage to a road and bridge caused by the IRA near Ballinspittle. Local labourers in the process of repairing the damage are here pictured with British officers. Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.





**A road bridge blown by the IRA near Kinsale.** Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

By 1921, many of the brigades had developed significant support networks. In the Cork No. 1 Brigade, the Knockraha Company area had effectively been turned into a depot and supply zone. Indeed this location was so important to them that they wouldn't allow any attacks on Crown forces in the locality lest it arouse suspicion<sup>72</sup>. Here two bomb factories operated, key safe-houses were located, arms and weapons taken from attacks across East Cork were stored, and prisoners were kept. A small crypt in the local Kilquane Cemetery had been turned into a makeshift prison, and was soon given the nickname 'Sing Sing', after the famous New York correctional facility. The prisoners ranged from petty thieves who were briefly held for minor offences through to important captives being kept under instructions from the brigade<sup>73</sup>. Some of these individuals were suspected informants or members of the military who were subsequently executed.

Another activity that IRA men occasionally carried out were rescue attempts. A number of military bases in Cork, such as Spike Island and Bere Island, were being used as interment camps for IRA volunteers. In 1921 there were approximately 800 men interned on Spike alone<sup>74</sup>. There were two successful escapes from the island during this time. One came on 29 April 1921 when the IRA decided to launch an audacious effort to free three of the men detained on Spike, including Seán MacSwiney, brother of the former Lord Mayor of Cork. Michael Burke was the man selected to carry out the mission:

“ On the Saturday morning about 9.30 am I informed my crew of three that I would like to go for a trial trip in the motor launch. We headed out towards Spike Island from the pier at Cobh... Proceeding to our rendezvous (with the Union Jack flying) we could see three prisoners, one of whom was Seán MacSwiney, the others being Seán Forde of East Limerick and Seán Twomey of Cork. The prisoners appeared to be rolling the golf links, under an instructor, with an armed soldier as guard. The idea was that they should ‘make a bolt for it’ when we moved in close to the island... the three prisoners... attacked the instructor and armed soldier, knocking out both of them. I immediately brought the boat in to the island... I got MacSwiney, Forde and Twomey into my boat, bringing the soldiers rifle with me, and headed for the point of land known as “Paddy’s Blocks”, Ringaskiddy, three-quarters of a mile away on the western shore of the harbour... When about fifty yards from “Paddy’s Blocks” the engine got red hot and seized up. Looking back towards Spike we could see the military swarming down the golf links, but I kept the prisoners (and all but two of the crew) lying flat on the boat while two of the crew managed to paddle the launch close to the shore. The prisoners and their rescuers waded ashore and got under cover out of view of the military at Spike, who were probably misled by the Union Jack we still flew from the launch.<sup>75</sup> ”



A 1916 and War of Independence Commemorative Weekend was held on Spike Island on Saturday and Sunday, 23rd and 24th September 2016. Over the two days, a wonderful exhibition by Spike Island Superintendent Tom O'Neill, was on display.

After the events that had taken place at Clonmult in February, there was what many considered to be a new edge to the fighting, described by one historian as taking on the ‘nature of a vendetta’<sup>76</sup>. A hard line was taken against suspected informants and spies, with a sharp rise in the number of executions in 1921<sup>77</sup>. Those suspected of being involved in the IRA also ran the risk of being summarily shot if they fell into British hands. Clonmult also warned of the dangers in having large columns concentrated in a single location, and it was to be less common in the future<sup>78</sup>. One exception to this was what is generally regarded as the largest scale action of the war, which took place at Crossbarry on 19 March 1921. In perhaps the conflict’s most famous ambush, Tom Barry led more than 100 volunteers into the fight against a significantly superior British force, which was in the process of searching for them<sup>79</sup>. In the protracted action that followed, what was surely one of the most remarkable incidents of the War of Independence occurred. As the fighting got underway and Barry’s men opened up on the enemy lorries, he remembered how one of the volunteers “played martial airs on his warpipes as four of our sections attacked”<sup>80</sup>. That piper was Florence Begley, who recalled the event:

“...Immediately they [the British] were attacked, at the same time as the firing started I proceeded to play the pipes and continued to do so whilst the firing lasted. If a lull took place in the firing I stopped playing as I felt that I may be giving our position away. On resumption of firing I played away again. The lorries on the roadside were not full of soldiers as they approached our positions as many of them had been dropped along the road leading into where we were. The occupants did not last long but we were very fortunate that a bullet penetrated the drum of an enemy machine gun which was in position on a lorry thereby jamming it... The nine lorries were captured and burned. As the action on the roadside was taking place fighting developed on our rear and flanks...”<sup>81</sup>”

The fighting at Crossbarry took place across a significant portion of countryside, and had many of the hallmarks of what might be termed a ‘battle.’ Much of the landscape of the action remains preserved today. After hard fighting, Barry managed to get his column away having inflicted at least thirteen casualties on the enemy, with the IRA losing six<sup>82</sup>.



Passengers being searched at Fermoy station during the War of Independence.

Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

The fighting rumbled on. On 31 May the military band of the Hampshire Regiment was attacked in Youghal, leaving seven dead and twenty-one wounded<sup>83</sup>. However, although few had an inkling of it at the time, the War of Independence had only weeks to run. One of the last major actions in the county prior to its end was the ambush undertaken by Cork No. 2 Brigade on the Millstreet to Banteer road near Rathcoole on 16 June 1921. Their target was an Auxiliary convoy of lorries, and in order to destroy it they decided to employ mines. Jack O'Keeffe was there:

**“...The site selected for the ambush was on high ground overlooking the road below the wood. In the early morning six mines were laid in the road. They were spread over a distance of about 1,200 yards at intervals approximating to the distance between lorries travelling in convoy. The mines were iron casting, sealed at both ends by steel plates, held in position by a long ½” bolt which passed through the casing. The mines were charged with war flour (an explosive substance) manufactured by the column...”<sup>84</sup>”**

Sean Healy was one of the men waiting to set off a mine:

**“I was with the section covering the mine at the eastern end of the ambush site and was responsible for exploding the mine opposite this position. This mine was not to be exploded until the last lorry in the convoy reached it. The explosion of this mine was to be the signal for the opening of the fight... I allowed the first three lorries to pass by my section and as the last lorry reached my position I pressed the button. The mine opposite my position exploded and the lorry was driven into the ditch. However, the other lorries in the convoy were not at this time in contact with the mined positions and all of them halted at the sound of the explosion. All IRA sections opened fire at the agreed signal. Fighting continued for about 1 ½ hours but were unable to silence the enemy fire and the signal to break off the engagement was given...”<sup>85</sup>”**

By the summer of 1921, the pressure had increased on the IRA to such an extent that it was difficult for them to operate as they once had. Seán Moylan recalled that at this time his Active Service Unit was being “harried from pillar to post” and that “the net was irrevocably closing on the base of those who were regarded as the main core of the resistance”<sup>86</sup>. The British were employing large numbers of troops to conduct vast sweeps of the countryside in order to catch the columns and in one example, local Volunteer Bernard Moynihan was “shot dead by British forces while cutting hay at Kilcorney, on 1st July 1921”<sup>87</sup>. While the British had limited success overall in these ‘sweeps’, lack of ammunition was also beginning to have a significant impact on IRA operations<sup>88</sup>.



IRA suspects under guard in Bandon. Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

The war had been taking a major toll and some were eager to find a way to end it. The general election of May 1921 had once again seen Sinn Féin dominate, returning, unopposed, 124 of 128 candidates in the south of the country<sup>89</sup>. That summer General Macready, commander of British troops in Ireland, wrote: "There are, of course, one or two wild people about who still hold the absurd idea that if you go on killing long enough peace will ensue. I do not believe it for one moment, but I do believe that the more people that are killed, the more difficult will be the final solution..."<sup>90</sup>. Ultimately Prime Minister Lloyd George made the decision to negotiate. A key intermediary in the discussions was South African leader Jan Smuts, who corresponded with de Valera about a prospective cessation of the fighting so that discussions could take place<sup>91</sup>. On 9 July the terms of a truce were signed, and came into affect on 11 July<sup>92</sup>. The agreement that followed would see the country- and Co. Cork- descend into Civil War.



- <sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 1530: Christopher O'Connell, Section Leader, Brigade Colonel, Cork Third Brigade, Vice Officer Commanding, Castletownbere Battalion, Cork Fifth Brigade, 6-7.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Witness Statement 794: Patrick O'Sullivan, Member of Ballyvourney (Co. Cork) Company Irish Volunteers, 1917 -, Vice Officer Commanding Ballyvourney Battalion, 1920, 3.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., 3-4.
- <sup>5</sup> Ó hÉalaithe Dónal (ed.) 2014. *Memoirs of an Old Warrior: Jamie Moynihan's Fight for Irish Freedom 1916-1923*. Mercier Press: Cork, 93-4.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., 94; Witness Statement 793: Michael O'Sullivan, Dispatch Rider, Kilnamartyra Company (Co. Cork) Easter, 1916; Battalion Engineer Officer 8th (Ballyvourney) Battalion, Cork Brigade, 3-4.
- <sup>7</sup> Ó hÉalaithe, Donal, Op. Cit., 91
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., 349
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Hart, Peter 2009. 'Introduction' in Brian Ó Conchubhair (ed.) *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story 1916-21*. Mercier: Dublin, 17-18.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 18.
- <sup>12</sup> Ó hÉalaithe, Donal, Op. Cit., 17
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., 359
- <sup>14</sup> Hopkinson, Michael 2004. *The Irish War of Independence*. Gill & Macmillan: Dublin, 88.
- <sup>15</sup> Military Services Pension Collection, MA/MSPC/RO/58. Cork 4 Brigade, 1st Battalion, Military Archives Ireland.
- <sup>16</sup> Hart, Peter 1993. 'Class, Community and the Irish Republican Army in Cork, 1917-1923' in Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttimer (eds.) *Cork History & Society*, 963- 985. Geography Publications: Dublin, 971-2.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 971.
- <sup>18</sup> Hart 2009, Op. Cit., 20.
- <sup>19</sup> O' Sullivan, M. and O' Sullivan, T. 2014 'Ordinary People Extraordinary Lives - the lives of Ted, Dan and Ellen O' Sullivan Millíní Bantry and Catherine (Katty/Ga) Daly O' Sullivan', 69. Unpublished.
- <sup>20</sup> Military Service Pensions Collection MA/MSPC/CMB/1. Clonakilty District Council, 2nd Battalion Cork 3 Brigade Area, Military Archives Ireland.
- <sup>21</sup> O' Sullivan, M. and O' Sullivan, T. Op. Cit., 45-47
- <sup>22</sup> Witness Statement 1681. Mollie Cunningham, President, Macroom District Council, Cumann na mBan, 3-4.
- <sup>23</sup> Ó hÉalaithe, Donal, Op. Cit. 42
- <sup>24</sup> Pers. Comm., Máiréid McCarthy
- <sup>25</sup> Cottrell, Peter 2006. *The Anglo-Irish War: The Troubles of 1913-1922*. Osprey Publishing: Oxford, 88-9.
- <sup>26</sup> Hart 1998, Op. Cit., 63.
- <sup>27</sup> O' Sullivan, M. and O' Sullivan, T. Op. Cit., 59
- <sup>28</sup> Townshend Charles 2013. *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence*. Allen Lane The Penguin Press: London, 108.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Witness Statement 1421: Michael Leahy, Commandant 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, Vice-Brigadier, Cork No. 1 Brigade, 16-17.
- <sup>31</sup> Townshend Op. Cit., 109.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 115.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Grob-Fitzgibbon, Benjamin 2007. *Turning Points of The Irish Revolution: The British Government, Intelligence, and the Cost of Indifference, 1912-1921*. Palgrave MacMillan: New Hampshire, 172.
- <sup>36</sup> Lalor, Brian (ed.) 2003 *The Encyclopedia of Ireland*, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 666.
- <sup>37</sup> Cork City 1916, "Tomás Mac Curtain." Available at <http://corkcity1916.ie/2016/01/28/tomas-maccurtain/>. Accessed 29 September 2016.
- <sup>38</sup> Tobin, Fergal 2013. *The Irish Revolution: An Illustrated History 1912-1925*. Gill & Macmillan: Dublin, 173.
- <sup>39</sup> Connolly, S.J. 1998. *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 47.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 32.
- <sup>41</sup> Foster. Roy F. 1988. *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*. Allen Land The Penguin Press: London, 497.
- <sup>42</sup> Townshend, Op. Cit., 119-25.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 143-8.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 150.
- <sup>45</sup> Hart 1998, Op. Cit., 85-6.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., 86.
- <sup>47</sup> Elliot-Bateman Michael, Ellis John and Bowden Tom 1978. *Revolt to Revolution: Studies in the 19th and 20th Century European Experience*. Manchester University Press: Manchester, 225.
- <sup>48</sup> UCD Centenaries Website "MacSwiney, Terence James" by Patrick Maume. Available at <http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp->

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content/uploads/2015/04/MacSwiney-Terence\_James.pdf. Accessed 1 October 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> UCD Centenaries Website "Terence MacSwiney: Triumph of Blood Sacrifice" by Cathal Billings. Available at <http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Terence-Macswiney.pdf>. Accessed 1 October 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Maume, Op. Cit.

<sup>53</sup> The New York Herald 31 August 1920.

<sup>54</sup> Maume, Op. Cit.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Pers. Comm. Deirdre Sheehan, 13/07/16

<sup>57</sup> O'Reilly, Terence (ed.) 2009. *Our Struggle for Independence: Eye-witness accounts from the pages of An Cosantóir*. Mercier Press: Cork, 66-69.

<sup>58</sup> Ó Conchubhair, Brian (ed.) 2009. *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story 1916-21*. Mercier: Dublin, 135-8.

<sup>59</sup> Witness Statement 1234: Jack Hennessy, Adjutant Ballineen Company Irish Vol's. Co. Cork; Section Leader Brigade Column, 5-6.

<sup>60</sup> Hart, Op. Cit., 86.

<sup>61</sup> White Gerry and O'Shea Brendan 2006. *The Burning of Cork*. Mercier Press: Cork.

<sup>62</sup> Witness Statement 1449: Patrick J. Whelan, Vice Commandant, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, 44-7.

<sup>63</sup> Witness Statement 1720: John Manning, Member of Donoughmore Battalion, Flying Column, Cork 1 Brigade, I.R.A., 22.

<sup>64</sup> Witness Statement 2616: Daniel McCarthy, Section Commander, Rylane Company, Donoughmore Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Hopkinson, Op. Cit., 128.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Witness Statement 443: Frank Neville, Quartermaster Knockavilla Company, 1st (Bandon) Battalion; Assistant Quartermaster, 3rd (West Cork) Brigade, 12-13.

<sup>68</sup> Ó Conchubhair, Op. Cit., 236-40; O'Neill Tom 2006. *The Battle of Clonmult*. Nonsuch Press: Dublin.

<sup>69</sup> Witness Statement 1467: Patrick J. Higgins, Captain, Aghada Company, 4th Battalion, Cork 1 Brigade, Battalion Quartermaster, 6.

<sup>70</sup> Witness Statement 793: Michael O'Sullivan, Dispatch Rider, Kilnamartyra Company (Co. Cork) Easter, 1916, Battalion Engineer Officer 8th (Ballyvourney) Battalion, Cork Brigade, 12-13.

<sup>71</sup> Ballingearry & Inchigeela Historical Society Website: 'Activities of the Ballingearry IRA 1920-1921' available at

[www.ballingearryhs.com/journal1998/activitiesira2021.html](http://www.ballingearryhs.com/journal1998/activitiesira2021.html). Accessed 1 October 2016.

<sup>72</sup> Borgonovo, John 2010. 'The Guerilla Infrastructure: IRA Special Services in the Cork Number One Brigade, 1917-1921', in *The Irish Sword: The Journal of the Military History Society of Ireland*, Volume 27, No. 108, 205-216, 214.

<sup>73</sup> Military Pension Application MSP34REF27648 for Edward Moloney, Knockraha Company, Military Archives Ireland.

<sup>74</sup> The Irish Revolution Website: 'Spike Island 1916, 'Aud' and War of Independence Commemoration Weekend' available at [http://theirishrevolution.ie/spike-island-open-weekend-attract-crowds-1916/#.V\\_DiQpMr\\_U](http://theirishrevolution.ie/spike-island-open-weekend-attract-crowds-1916/#.V_DiQpMr_U). Accessed 1 October 2016.

<sup>75</sup> Witness Statement 1424: Michael J. Burke, Captain, Cobh Company, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, 22-3.

<sup>76</sup> Hopkinson, Op. Cit., 127.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Barry, Tom 1989. *Guerilla Days in Ireland*. Anvil: Dublin, 102.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>81</sup> Witness Statement 1771: Florence Begley, Member of Irish Volunteers and Irish Republican Army, Co. Cork, 2.

<sup>82</sup> Hopkinson, Op. Cit., 127.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>84</sup> Witness Statement 1291: John (Jack) O'Keeffe, Member of Rathcoole Company IRA Co. Cork, 1919-, 7.

<sup>85</sup> Witness Statement 1339: Sean Healy, Member of Brigade Column, Cork 2 Brigade IRA. Brigade Engineer, Cork 4 Brigade, 16-17.

<sup>86</sup> Hopkinson, Op. Cit., 129.

<sup>87</sup> Ó hÉalaithe, Donal, Op. Cit. 359

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 214-5.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

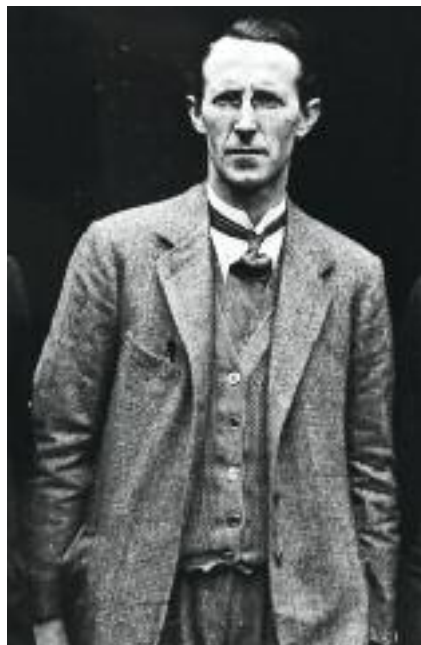
## Chapter 6

### The Civil War and Cork - A County Divided



**In the story of the Civil War in Cork - indeed the story of the Civil War in Ireland as a whole - two figures loom large. Both had played major roles during the War of Independence, and both were destined not to live through the conflict that raged between 1922 and 1923. One was a son of Cork who had spent most of the War of Independence outside the county, while the other was a native of Limerick who became synonymous with the struggle within it. Their names were Michael Collins and Liam Lynch.**

Liam Lynch was born in Barnagurraha, Anglesboro, Co. Limerick in 1893<sup>1</sup>. In 1910 he moved to Mitchelstown, where he became a hardware store apprentice and eventually became active in the Gaelic League, Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish Volunteers<sup>2</sup>. He moved to Fermoy in 1915, and though he was not personally involved in the events of the 1916 Rising, he did witness the Kent family being led through the town<sup>3</sup>. In the aftermath Liam Lynch rose to prominence in the Fermoy Volunteers, and during the War of Independence became a notable figure, particularly with his involvement in incidents like the capture of Mallow Barracks and of Brigadier-General Lucas. He went on to become the commanding officer of Cork No. 2 Brigade, and later the 1st Southern Division of the IRA<sup>4</sup>. Lynch was opposed to the Treaty, and became Chief of Staff of the irregular forces, even though like many of his compatriots in Cork he wanted to avoid conflict. However, once committed he was determined to see the fight through, and became the major symbol of the continued resistance of the irregulars even after they had been subjected to severe reverses in the conflict. He was mortally wounded in the Knockmealdown Mountains on 10th April 1923, with his death generally regarded as being a major contributor towards the conclusion of the Civil War<sup>5</sup>. Liam Lynch is buried in Kilcrumper Cemetery in Fermoy; his graveside remains an important site of memory, commemorated on an annual basis.



**Liam Lynch.**

Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.



**Michael Collins.**

Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

Michael Collins was born at Woodfield, Sam's Cross near Clonakilty in 1890, where his birthplace can still be visited<sup>6</sup>. He later lived in Clonakilty, where a museum, in the ownership of Cork County Council and called 'Michael Collins House' now explores his life alongside the stories of Tadhg An Astna and Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. Collins emigrated to London in 1906, where he worked first in a post office and later a stockbroking firm<sup>7</sup>. While there he became involved in the GAA and Gaelic League, and was sworn into the IRB in 1909<sup>8</sup>. He was reportedly introduced to the movement by Seán Hurley, a relative through marriage, also from West Cork, who would become the only Cork Volunteer to die in the Dublin fighting during the Easter Rising<sup>9</sup>. Collins also returned to Ireland in 1916, and served as Aide-de-camp, or personal assistant, to Joseph Plunkett in the GPO during the Rising, and was interned in Frongoch, Wales, until December<sup>10</sup>.

After his release his star continued to rise, and he became Adjutant-General of the Irish Volunteers in March 1918, when he began to build his soon to be famed intelligence network<sup>11</sup>, which would witness some key figures such as the Spy in the Castle, David Neligan.

Michael Collins was elected to the First Dáil in December 1918, becoming Minister for Home Affairs and in April 1919, Minister for Finance<sup>12</sup>. Collins is best remembered for coordinating the military and intelligence campaign conducted by the IRA during the War of Independence, particularly in Dublin, where he founded the Squad. He led the Irish delegation to the Treaty negotiations with Arthur Griffith in late 1921, and supported the agreement that resulted, viewing it as a stepping-stone to achieving a 32-county Republic<sup>13</sup>. In the Provisional Government he became Chairman and Minister for Finance, and at the outbreak of the Civil War was the first Commander-in-Chief of the new National Army<sup>14</sup>. He oversaw the successful prosecution of the conventional phase of the war, and in August 1922 visited Cork, as is understood, apparently in an effort to seek a settlement to the conflict<sup>15</sup>. He was killed in action at an ambush in Béal na mBláth on 22 August.

The clothes that both Liam Lynch and Michael Collins were wearing on the days they died were preserved. Perhaps fittingly, they can now be viewed together in the military galleries of the National Museum of Ireland in Collins Barracks, Dublin.

The Irish Civil War erupted as a direct result of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The delegation of negotiators led by Collins and Arthur Griffith (the founder of Sinn Féin) were involved in

protracted and often fraught discussions that concluded on 6 December 1921, when the delegates signed a Treaty that established the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth<sup>16</sup>. Many of those who had fought during the War of Independence were deeply unhappy with the Treaty, as it failed to achieve the Republic they had sought, an independent all-island Republic. The status of the North of Ireland and particularly the prospect of a requirement for an Oath of Allegiance to the Crown were sticking points<sup>17</sup>. Consequently, the Treaty was hotly debated by the Dáil, who eventually ratified it on 7 January 1922 by a vote of 64 to 57<sup>18</sup>. Many, including Eamon de Valera, were unwilling to accept the result.

The Treaty created a major divide in both Sinn Féin and the IRA, as former comrades fundamentally disagreed with each other on the correct course of action. The Free State's National Army was formed in January, as mechanisms began to be put in place for running the new state. However, in March 1922 the IRA executive repudiated the authority of the Dáil to dissolve the Republic, with the Free State in its place, and that April Rory O'Connor took control of the Four Courts with anti-Treaty forces<sup>19</sup>.



**British troops began to leave Ireland as a result of the Treaty. Here a cavalryman prepares to depart from Dublin.** Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.





**Men joining up with the newly created Irish National Army.**

Image courtesy National Library of Ireland.

The Cork IRA were strongly opposed to the Treaty, though a majority of the county's Cumann na mBan branches did support it<sup>20</sup>. Despite their views, many among the county's IRA leadership sought to avoid conflict, though preparations were also being made for all potential future eventualities. Perhaps the most striking example of this was the taking of the ordnance steamer *Upnor* in April 1922.

As the British proceeded with the withdrawal of their forces from Ireland, they decided to ship out a large number of weapons from Haulbowline. Cork No.1 Brigade became aware of the proposed transportation, and were determined to take the opportunity to seize the shipment in order to increase their weapon supply. On 2 April they stole an Admiralty ensign and commandeered the deep-water tug *Viking* with a boarding party to set off after the *Upnor* once she had sailed<sup>21</sup>. Daniel O'Donovan was one of the IRA men who pursued the *Upnor*, and he recalled what happened once they caught her:

**“ When within hailing distance of the *Upnor*, we hoisted the Harbour Master's flag, and one of the Cobh 'Seamen' waved a large envelope, at the same time, shouting through a megaphone, "Message from the Admiralty". The Harbour Master's flag and the large envelope had been supplied by our man in Haulbowline... A boat, manned by four men, was immediately lowered from the *Upnor* and was rowed to our boat... to collect the message...<sup>22</sup> ”**

At gunpoint, the disguised IRA men forced the detachment from the *Upnor* to row them back to the vessel, which they boarded and captured. From there, the *Upnor* was taken to Ballycotton, where dozens of vehicles were lined up to receive the bounty of weapons. O'Donovan again:

“...The hatches were now opened up, and three gangs operated in a chain from the hatches to the lorries, loading about one thousand rifles, one thousand Webley revolvers (.45), one thousand Webley & Scott .55 pistols, one hundred thousand rounds of .303 ammunition, some thousand rounds of revolver ammunition, a large stock of hand and rifle grenades, fifty Lewis guns, six Maxim guns and a large number of mines. Each lorry, as loaded, was dispatched to a different portion of the brigade area - the last one being dispatched at 10 a.m.”<sup>23</sup>

Neither was the *Upnor* the only incident to occur in Cork during the uncertain months following the Treaty. On 27 April three British army officers and their driver were seized in Macroom and taken to the headquarters of 7th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade in Macroom Castle<sup>24</sup>. Two of the officers had been suspected of killing Republican prisoners, and, despite the Truce, the local IRA were out for revenge<sup>25</sup>. British troops under Bernard Law Montgomery – the later victor of El Alamein during World War Two – moved into Macroom to search for the soldiers, but despite a tense stand-off, withdrew. The abducted officers and driver had been executed, but the Truce held<sup>26</sup>. Meanwhile, in the Bandon Valley at the end of April, ten Protestants were assassinated over the course of three nights, known as the Dunmanway Killings, causing many to flee, and requiring Tom Hales to threaten the execution of any IRA volunteers involved in further attacks<sup>27</sup>.

From a public perspective, the majority of Cork’s population appeared in favour of the Treaty. When de Valera held a meeting on Grand Parade, he got little in the way of public support, despite a strong showing from the IRA<sup>28</sup>. In contrast, Michael Collins attracted a crowd of nearly 50,000 people when he arrived on 13 March 1922<sup>29</sup>.

Despite the tensions with the departing British and between the pro and anti-Treaty sides, efforts were made to avoid a descent into Civil War, and many veterans of the War of Independence in Cork sought to avoid conflict. In advance of the 16 June 1922 General Election, Collins and de Valera agreed a pact for the selection of both pro and anti-Treaty candidates within the party<sup>30</sup>. Sinn Féin eventually won 94 of the 124 seats, the majority of them going to pro-Treaty candidates<sup>31</sup>. However, the accommodation between the sides was not to last, and ultimately broke down. Then, when Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson was assassinated in London on 22 June 1922 the British – suspecting the anti-Treaty IRA of responsibility – demanded a response from the Free State Government. Under increasing pressure to take action, on 28 June 1922 National Army troops opened fire on the IRA in the Four Courts, initiating the Battle of Dublin and the Irish Civil War<sup>32</sup>.



**The Four Courts ablaze following the opening action of the Irish Civil War.** Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

The early weeks of the Irish Civil War were characterised by conventional warfare. The fighting in Dublin lasted only a matter of days before focus shifted to the rest of the country. The initial lack of coordination and reluctance to commit to the conflict hampered the efforts of the anti-Treaty irregulars, as the National Army were able to concentrate on reducing their territory one stronghold at a time<sup>33</sup>. When war finally came, the Cork IRA were reluctant to enter it<sup>34</sup>. According to Florrie Begley "We had no heart in the Civil War... When the attack on the Four Courts was over the fight should have stopped"<sup>35</sup>. After the fighting in Dublin petered out, the war in the rest of the country was dictated by which barracks were occupied by either pro and anti-Treaty forces<sup>36</sup>. In this respect, Munster, and Cork as part of it, became a stronghold of the anti-Treaty irregulars - The Munster Republic.

In Cork, the last pro-Treaty post was taken in Skibbereen in early July after a three-day confrontation<sup>37</sup>. Anti-Treaty strategy sought to preserve a line to defend the province, and the bulk of the Cork IRA's fighting strength was sent to Limerick and Waterford, where they became engaged in the ultimately unsuccessful efforts in those locations. Jamie Manghan from Ballyvourney was one of those sent to Limerick, and he recalled that after the hard fighting there the men "were completely demoralised"<sup>38</sup>. It soon became only a matter of time before a Free State offensive was launched in Cork. In August 1922 an *Irish Independent* journalist travelled to the city to see what life was like under the irregulars:

## Days Of Waiting And Fearing. Life In Isolated City. Cork Under Irregulars.

“After a 48 hours’ journey I have reached Cork. It was no easy task. The B and I boat from the North Wall to Liverpool was crowded, mostly with Cork people, men and women who were trying to get home by this the only available means. You heard that unmistakable Cork accent in every part of the boat. Some of them had been stranded “since the trouble broke out in Dublin”... Practically all on board were Cork people. They were there from all parts of the county. Returning home, they knew nothing of the conditions prevailing in the city. They had heard rumours, truths, half-truths, untruths. They eagerly looked forward to their arrival... [On the approach to Cork] Two hulks were sunk in the channel to obstruct passage. On one there is no sign of life. On the other two men armed with rifles and clad in trench coats, caps and leggings keep lonely vigil. It is the first sign of war - the first irregular outpost.<sup>39</sup>”



With the fighting in Dublin over, focus switched to Munster, with many of the Cork IRA deploying to Waterford and Limerick. Here a captured IRA Volunteer is escorted to the rear by a National Army soldier. Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.



**National Army troops aboard the *Arvonian* as she makes for Passage West and the decisive phase of the Civil War in Cork. Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.**

The irregulars in Cork were aware that it was likely the Free State would seek to attack from the sea. In order to combat this, mines were laid at a range of potential landing places, and it was said the upper harbour was mined up as far as Passage West<sup>40</sup>. Though they tried to cover potential landing areas, the IRA were very thinly spread. General Emmet Dalton was the man charged with carrying out the National Army landings. He set out aboard the *Arvonian* on 7 August 1922, intending to land some 500 men in Passage West<sup>41</sup>. Two other ships headed for Union Hall and Youghal, carrying 180 and 200 men respectively<sup>42</sup>. The Royal Navy, still present in Cork Harbour, provided information to Dalton on the location of the mines, though he still had to threaten to shoot the ship's captain to make him sail through the potential obstacles to their target<sup>43</sup>. When the troops eventually came ashore at Passage, their initial landing was virtually unopposed. Tom Crofts recalled that the anti-Treaty men in Passage "had been line fighting for weeks and they had been brought back there without sleep. There was very little opposition to the Free State... the bulk of the men were in Kilmallock [Limerick] and they were our best men"<sup>44</sup>. Commandant O'Friel of the National Army landing force remembered that "when the ship was tied up I took the party of twenty picked men from the company under my command and we landed behind Dock Terrace. We captured the mill and the Police Barracks and scouted the Glenbrook side of the village. Whilst our party did this, General Tom Ennis and party did likewise at the Cork end of Passage"<sup>45</sup>. The Free State troops were ashore, and within only a few miles of Cork city. As they advanced towards their objective, the irregulars rushed to block their path, which would lead to intense fighting in Rochestown and Douglas.

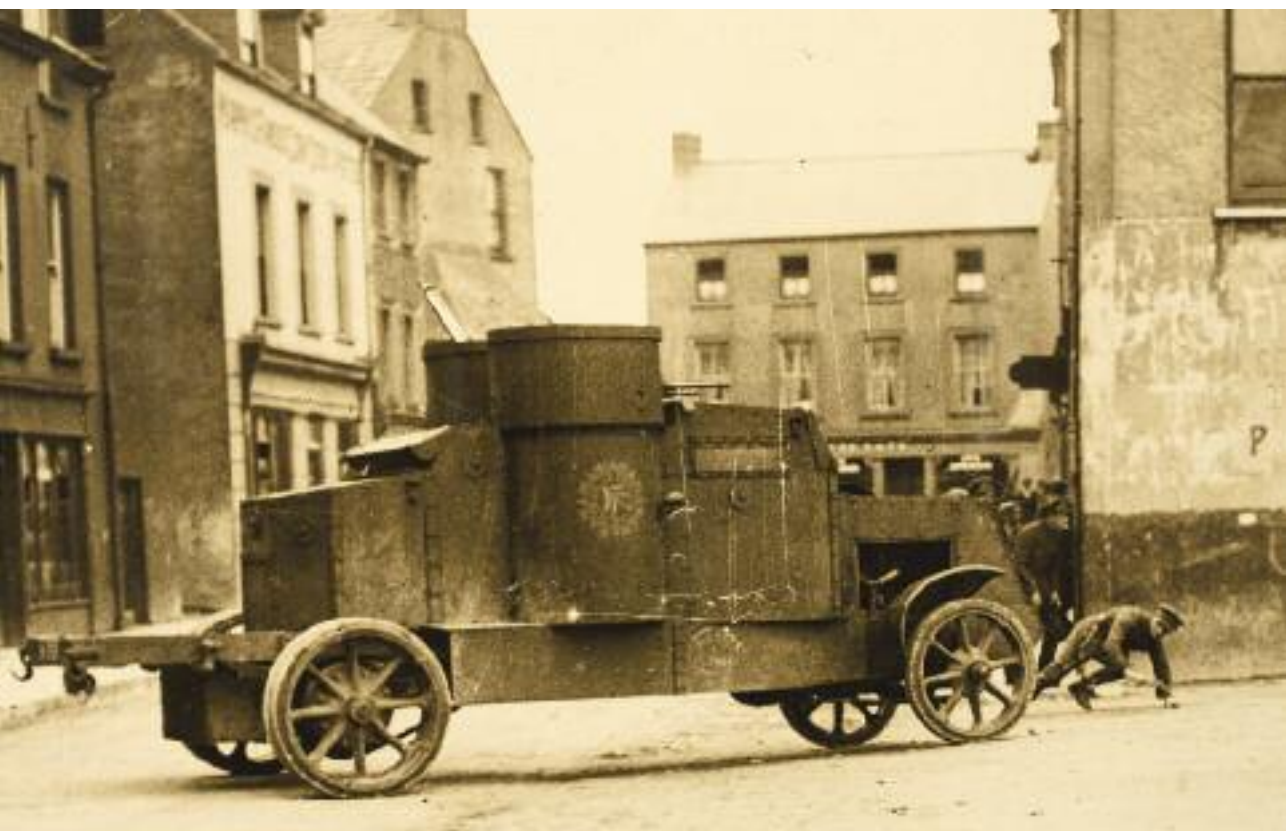


The fighting of the Civil War receives little attention when compared with the War of Independence, but as historian Gabriel Doherty has noted, the three days fighting at Rochestown and Douglas was a larger confrontation than any that had taken place in the county between 1919 and 1921<sup>46</sup>. The irregular force at Rochestown and Douglas was principally made up of men who had come back from the fighting in Limerick and Waterford<sup>47</sup>. The battle had commenced in earnest when the anti-Treaty forces blew the Rochestown railway bridge to deny the National Army rail access to the city<sup>48</sup>. The IRA then occupied the high ground around Rochestown and Douglas, dominating the road to Cork<sup>49</sup>. The IRA controlled a series of strong points at locations such as the Capuchin Monastery, at a nearby crossroads and at the O'Grady house in Monfieldstown<sup>50</sup>. Intensive fighting erupted along the line on 8 August. IRA reinforcements were rushed to the scene. Mick Murphy, who had been in Waterford, was told to come back: "I commandeered a train... and we brought the train back to Cork... we threw our crowd in front of the Staters but we couldn't stem them"<sup>51</sup>. The fighting continued on 9 August along a two-mile line at Rochestown, Monfieldstown and Oldcourt, occasionally becoming hand-to-hand<sup>52</sup>. In one incident a National Army soldier managed to sneak up on an anti-Treaty machine-gunner without being spotted, but his automatic-pistol jammed when he tried to fire<sup>53</sup>. Unperturbed, he launched himself at his adversary with his bare hands, grabbing the barrel of the machine-gun and trying to force it away from him. He received a burst of fire to his groin, but somehow managed to survive his wound<sup>54</sup>. Eventually the National Army managed to break through towards Cork. The three days of fighting following the landing had led to the deaths of between seventeen and twenty-five men, with between thirty and sixty wounded<sup>55</sup>.



**National Army  
machine-gunners on  
the deck of the  
*Arvonie* in Cork.**

Image courtesy National  
Library of Ireland.



**A National Army armoured car supports Free State troops during the fighting in Passage West.**

*Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.*

Once the Free State forces had broken through the Rochestown-Douglas line, the fate of the city was sealed. Republican forces retreated out of Cork, and towns around the county quickly began to fall. Buttevant and Fermoy were evacuated, and Macroom, Bantry, Clonakilty, Inchigeelagh and Kinsale were all taken<sup>56</sup>. The evidence of this Republican withdrawal can still be seen in parts of the county, for example at Charles Fort, Kinsale, where retreating irregulars burned the barrack buildings prior to departing.

The IRA were aware that they could no longer provide conventional military responses to National Army moves. As Sean O'Faolain remembered, "it left us under no illusions as to the army's [IRA] capacity to form another line of battle, and... there was nothing left for the majority of them to do but to scatter, go into hiding..."<sup>57</sup>. Though the Free State had effectively taken the county, they were now spread out in isolated posts, and were extremely vulnerable as the Civil War entered its next phase, that of guerilla war<sup>58</sup>. Disrupting lines of communication became a key aspect of the fighting. For example, in North Cork, the Ten-Arch railway viaduct near Mallow was blown on 9 August and another bridge near Rathduff on 9 September, while the buildings at Mallow railway station were burned on 29 October<sup>59</sup>.

Emmet Dalton was one of those who was extremely worried about the IRA moving to a guerrilla campaign in Cork:

“ They [the IRA] have now adopted a type of warfare, of which they have years of experience. They now operate over territory which they know. They are now better armed and better trained than they were against the British. In short, they have placed me and my troops in the same position as the British were a little over a year ago<sup>60</sup> ”



IRA prisoners from the Battle for Cork being escorted through the streets by National Army troops. Image courtesy National Library of Ireland.



Emmet Dalton masterminded the National Army landings in Cork and was also travelling with Michael Collins when he was shot. He married Alice Shannon in Cork during the Civil War.

Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

Despite Dalton's fears, the ability of the anti-Treaty forces to coordinate their actions were extremely limited, and indeed many felt that the war should be brought to an end<sup>61</sup>. Nonetheless, the conflict dragged on. Ballyvourney was taken and re-taken by both sides on a number of occasions, while the Republicans attacked Bantry on 30 August, and used their armoured car, the *River Lee* (which had also seen action in the fighting at Rochestown-Douglas) in an assault on Macroom on 2 September<sup>62</sup>. In October, Tom Barry led raids on Ballineen and Enniskean<sup>63</sup>. The fighting became characterised by smaller actions, with men dying in ones and twos.

The Free State government responded to this new phase of the war with internment and the introduction of the death penalty for those found in possession of arms in September 1922<sup>64</sup>. Ultimately thousands were interned and dozens executed. However, of all the events to occur in Cork during the Civil War, the one that has reverberated most intensely through the history of the island was the killing of Michael Collins at Béal na mBláth on 22 August. Emmet Dalton was with Collins on the day he died, and remembered his final minutes, after their fateful convoy had left Bandon.

“ It was not about a quarter past seven, and the light was failing. We were speeding along the open road on our way to Macroom. Our motor cyclist scout was about 50 yards in front of the Crossley tender, which we followed at the same interval in the touring car. Close behind us came the armoured car.

We had just reached a part of the road which was commanded by hills on all sides. The road itself was flat and open. On the right we were flanked by steep hills; on the left there was a small two-foot bank of earth skirting the road. Beyond this there was a marshy field bounded by a small stream, with another steep hill beyond it.

About half-way up this hill there was a road running parallel to the one we were on, but screened from view by a wall and a mass of trees and bushes. We had just turned a wide corner on the road when a sudden and heavy fusillade of machine-gun and rifle fire swept the road in front of us and behind us, shattering the wind-screen of our car. I shouted to the driver “Drive like hell!” But the Commander-in-Chief, placing his hand on the man’s shoulder, said: “Stop! Jump out and we’ll fight them!”

We leaped from the car and took what cover we could behind the little mud bank on the left-hand side of the road. It seemed that the greatest volume of fire was coming from the concealed roadway on our left-hand side. The armoured car now backed up the road and opened a heavy machine-gun fire at the hidden ambushers.

General Collins and I were lying within arm’s length of each other. Another officer who had been on the back of the armoured car, together with our two drivers, was several yards further down the road to my right.

General Collins and I, with the officer who was near us, opened a rapid fire on our seldom visible enemies. About fifty or sixty yards further down the road, and round a bend, we could hear that our machine-gunners and riflemen were also heavily engaged. We continued this fire-fight for about 30 minutes without suffering any casualties, when a lull in the enemy’s attack became noticeable. General Collins now jumped to his feet and walked over behind the armoured car, obviously to obtain a better view of the enemy’s position.

He remained there firing occasional shots and using the car as cover. Suddenly I

heard him shout, "there they are, running up the road!" I immediately opened fire upon two figures that came in view on the opposite road.

When I next turned round the Commander-in-Chief had left the car position, and had run about fifteen yards back up the road. Here he dropped into the prone firing position, and opened up on our retreating enemies. A few minutes elapsed when Commandant O'Connell came running up the road under fire. He dropped into position beside me, and said: "they have retreated from in front of us, and the obstacle is removed... Where's the Big Fella?"

I said: "He's all right. He's gone a few yards up the road... Hark! I hear him firing away!" Next moment I caught a faint cry: "Emmet, I'm hit!"

The two of us rushed to the spot with a dreadful fear clutching our hearts. We found our beloved Chief and friend lying motionless in a firing position, firmly gripping his rifle, across which his head was resting.

There was a fearful gaping wound at the base of his skull behind the right ear. We immediately saw that General Collins was almost beyond human aid. He could not speak to us.

The enemy must have seen that something had occurred to cause a sudden cessation of our fire, because they intensified their own. O'Connell now knelt beside the dying but still conscious Chief, whose eyes were wide open and normal, and he whispered into the ear of the fast-sinking man the words of the Act of Contrition. For this he was rewarded by a slight pressure of the hand.

Meanwhile I knelt beside them both and kept up bursts of rapid fire, which I continued whilst O'Connell dragged the Chief across the road and behind the armoured car. Then with my heart torn with sorrow and despair, I ran to the Chief's side. Very gently I raised his head on my knee and tried to bandage his wound, but owing to the awful size of it, this proved very difficult.

I had not completed my grievous task when the big eyes quietly closes, and the cold pallor of death overspread the General's face. How can I describe the feelings that were mine at that bleak hour, kneeling in the mud of a country road not twelve miles from Clonakilty, with the still bleeding head of the Idol of Ireland resting on my arms?<sup>65</sup> ”



A volley is fired at Béal na mBláth on the first anniversary of the death of Michael Collins.

Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.



The death of Michael Collins is regarded as one of the most notable in Irish history. His legacy is an international one, with many later referencing him with respect to the development of modern guerilla warfare. However, as alluded to above, his death did not bring the Civil War to a conclusion. It was only following the death of Liam Lynch that a ceasefire was finally called for, on 30 April 1923, with the IRA irregulars ordered to dump arms the following day<sup>66</sup>. A few weeks later on May 24th 1923, the official end of the Civil War in Ireland, Éamon de Valera announced:

“Soldiers of the Republic. Legion of the Rearguard: The Republic can no longer be defended successfully by your arms. Further sacrifice of life would now be in vain and the continuance of the struggle in arms unwise in the national interest and prejudicial to the future of our cause. Military victory must be allowed to rest for the moment with those who have destroyed the Republic<sup>67</sup>”

The political legacy of the Irish Civil War can still be seen in the Ireland of today, yet the physical details of the conflict are much less known to Irish people than those of either the 1916 Rising or the War of Independence. The bitterness it caused and the painfulness of its memory means that we are left with far fewer accounts from the participants, though in recent years the work of historians such as Dr. John Borgonovo has done much to once again shed light on the extraordinary story of the fight for Cork in 1922 and 1923.



The body of Michael Collins is taken from the Pro-Cathedral in Dublin. Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

The conclusion of the Civil War in 1923 was the last formal fighting that the county of Cork has witnessed, and the intervening century has been the most peaceful in the region's history. However, 1923 was far from the final episode in the county's story with respect to independence.

The terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty saw the Royal Navy retain control of Berehaven, Queenstown (Cobh) and Haulbowline in Cork (as well as Lough Swilly and Rathmullen in Donegal), and these became known as the Treaty Ports<sup>68</sup>. They were returned to the Irish State in 1938. A ceremony held at Spike Island in 2013 to mark the 75th anniversary of the handover had in attendance Michael Kelly, the last surviving member of the Irish Army to have marched into the ports on the day they were handed back<sup>69</sup>.

There were many more milestones ahead that have had major impacts on the nation, such as the passage of the 1937 Constitution and the Republic of Ireland Act of 1948, which saw Ireland officially leave the Commonwealth and become a Republic on 18 April 1949. However, none of these events have had as fundamental an impact on the history of the people and county of Cork as those between 1913 and 1923, Ireland's revolutionary decade. The legacies of those years are still felt by everyone living in Cork. More than that, the physical landscapes of this nation defining-era continue to surround us, ready to be identified, explored, interpreted and understood.

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<sup>1</sup> Murphy, William 2015. "Lynch, William Fanaghan (Liam)", UCD Centenaries Website. Available at [http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Lynch-William\\_Fanaghan.pdf](http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Lynch-William_Fanaghan.pdf). Accessed 20 September 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Connolly, SJ (ed.) 1999 *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 332.

<sup>5</sup> Murphy, Op. Cit.

<sup>6</sup> Hopkinson, M.A. 2015 "Collins, Michael", UCD Centenaries Website. Available at <http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Collins-Michael.pdf>. Accessed 20 September 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Connolly, Op. Cit., 102.

<sup>8</sup> Hopkinson 2015, Op. Cit.

<sup>9</sup> Cork County Council. *The Centenary of 1916 in the County of Cork*, available at <http://www.corkcoco.ie/co/pdf/609494828.pdf>. Accessed 3 October 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Hopkinson 2015, Op. Cit.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Connolly, Op. Cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Hopkinson 2015, Op. Cit.

<sup>16</sup> Connolly, Op. Cit., 15.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Connolly, Op. Cit., 265.

<sup>20</sup> Borgonovo, John 2012. *The Battle for Cork July-August 1922*. Mercier Press, Cork. Kindle Ebook version, Chapter 1, The Growing Split, Paragraphs 4, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Introduction, Paragraph 5.

<sup>22</sup> Witness Statement 1480: Daniel O'Donovan, O/C, Operations, Cork 1 Brigade, IRA, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>24</sup> Borgonovo, Op. Cit., Chapter 2, The Macroom Disappearances, Paragraph 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Paragraph 2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Paragraph 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., Chapter 2, Growing Anarchy, Paragraph 6.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Chapter 1, Gauging Public Opinion, Paragraph 1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Paragraph 2.

<sup>30</sup> Gallagher, Michael 1981 "The Pact General Election

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of 1922", *Irish Historical Studies* 21:84, 404-421, 405-6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 413, 415.

<sup>32</sup> Connolly, Op. Cit., 265.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Hopkinson, Michael 2004. *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War*. Gill & MacMillan, Dublin, 162.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Irish Independent 10 August 1922.

<sup>40</sup> Hopkinson 2004, Op. Cit., 163.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 163-4.

<sup>45</sup> Neeson, Eoin 1989. *The Civil War 1922-23*. Poolbeg, Dublin, 225.

<sup>46</sup> Borgonovo, Op. Cit., Foreword, Paragraph 4.

<sup>47</sup> Hopkinson 2004, Op. Cit., 164.

<sup>48</sup> Neeson, Op. Cit., 226.

<sup>49</sup> Borgonovo, Op. Cit., Chapter 6, The Battle of Douglas, Paragraph 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., Paragraph 4; Neeson, Op. Cit., 226.

<sup>51</sup> Hopkinson 2004, Op. Cit., 164.

<sup>52</sup> Borgonovo, Op. Cit., Chapter 7, The Fighting Resumes, Paragraph 1.

<sup>53</sup> Neeson, Op. Cit., 227.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Borgonovo, Op. Cit., Chapter 7, Casualties, Paragraph 4.

<sup>56</sup> Hopkinson 2004, Op. Cit., 164.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Crowley, Seamus 2011 "War on the Railway- North Cork 1922-1923" in *Mallow Field Club Journal* 29, 83-97, 83, 85-6.

<sup>60</sup> Hopkinson 2004, Op. Cit., 174.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 174-5.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Connolly, Op. Cit., 265.

<sup>65</sup> Freeman's Journal 22 August 1923.

<sup>66</sup> Connolly, Op. Cit., 265.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas E. Hachey, Thomas, E. 1996. *The Irish Experience: A Concise History*, M.E. Sharpe, London, 170-1

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 550.

<sup>69</sup> Irish Examiner 11 July 2013.

## Chapter 7

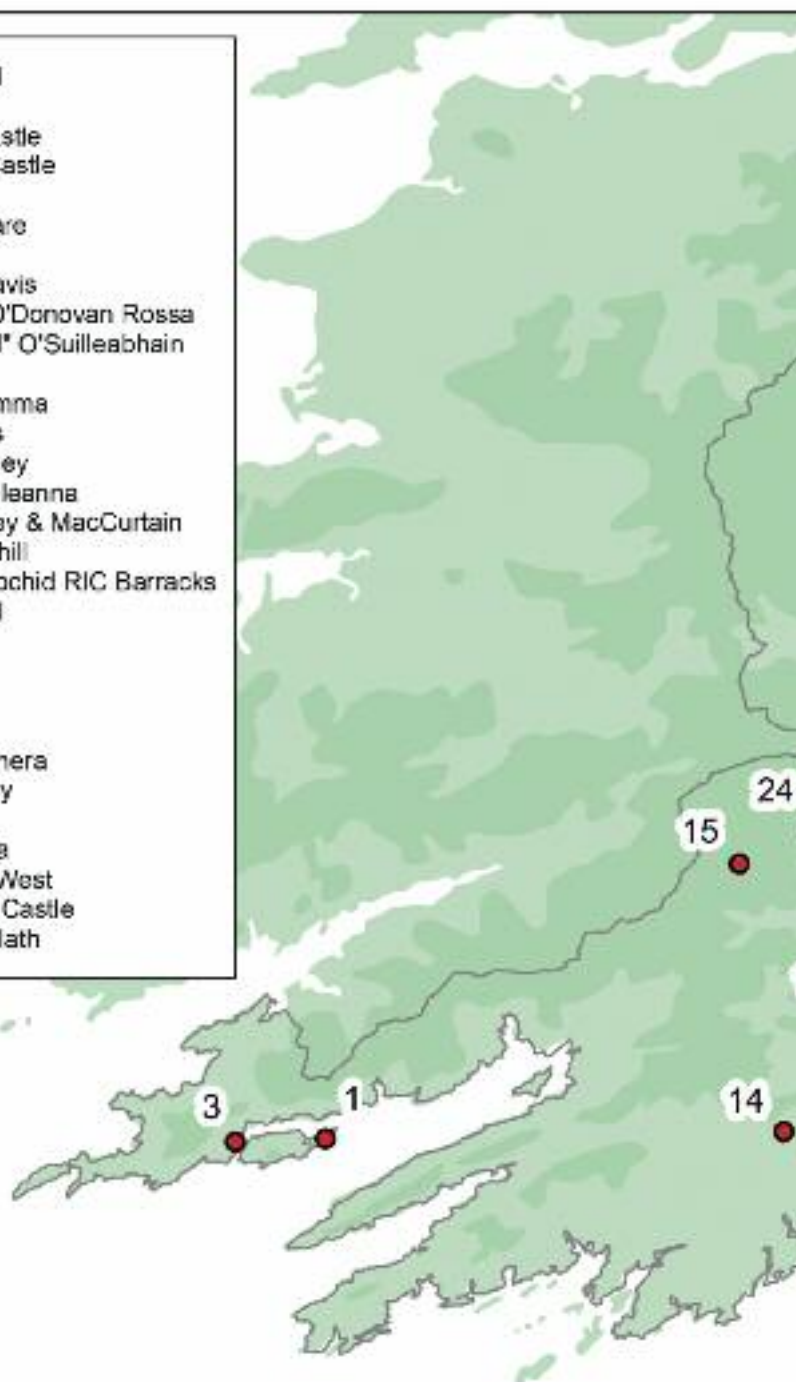
### 30 Featured Sites



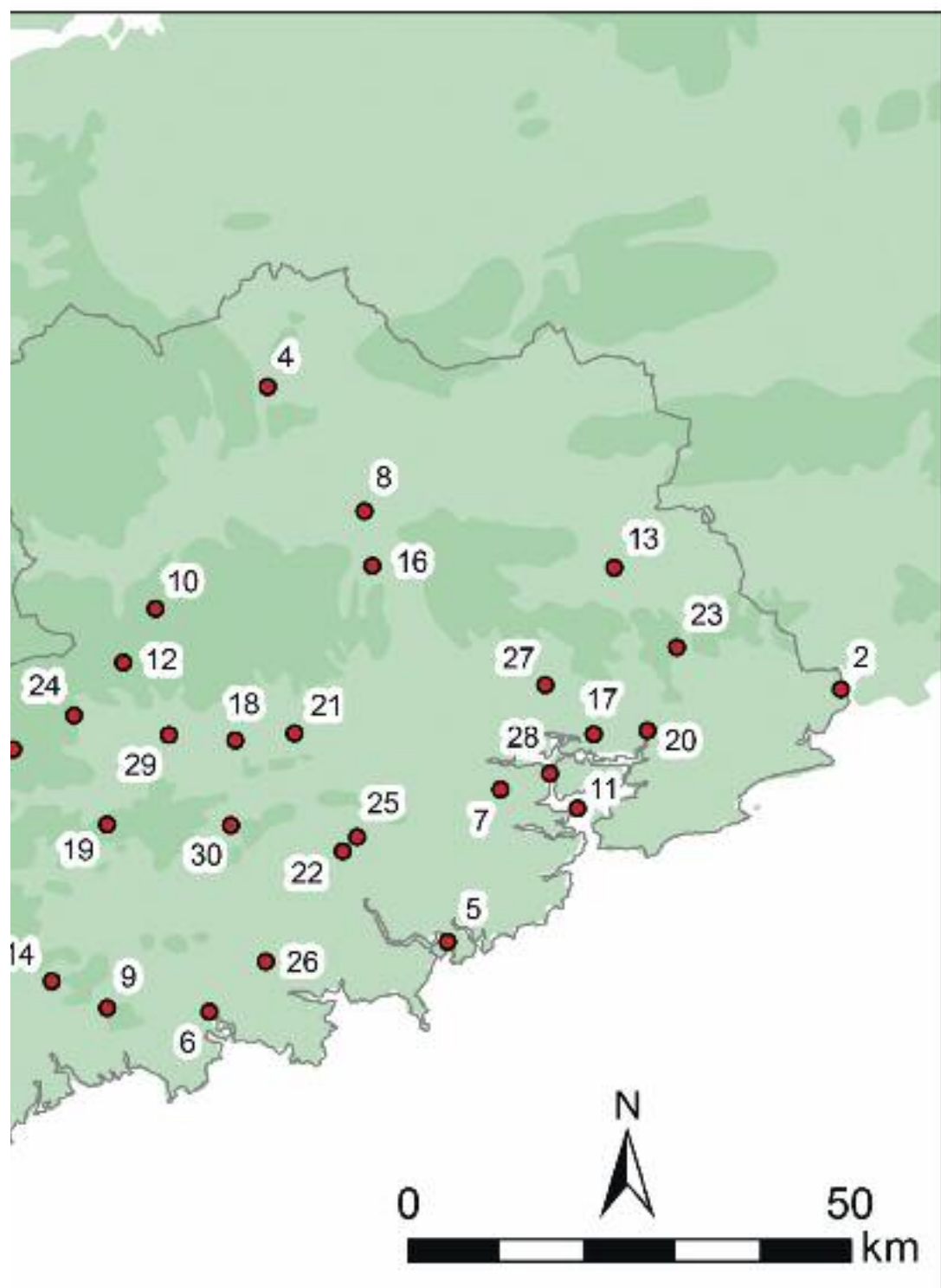
**The story of Cork and its role in many of Ireland's most pivotal events is a fascinating one, making it very hard to do justice by selecting a sum of only thirty sites in representation. However, in learning of Cork's role in what was Ireland's Cause, there were unquestionably some key moments in the county that were truly of national importance and it is hoped that the following thirty examples, documenting both people and places, give the reader a good overview of Cork's influence in Ireland's fight for freedom.**

The examples selected, as one can see from the accompanying map, give a great geographical account of the county's role and a timeline has also been provided detailing the main moments in chronological order. The Chapter begins with Bere Island, when the Vikings visited Cork's shores well over 1,000 years ago.

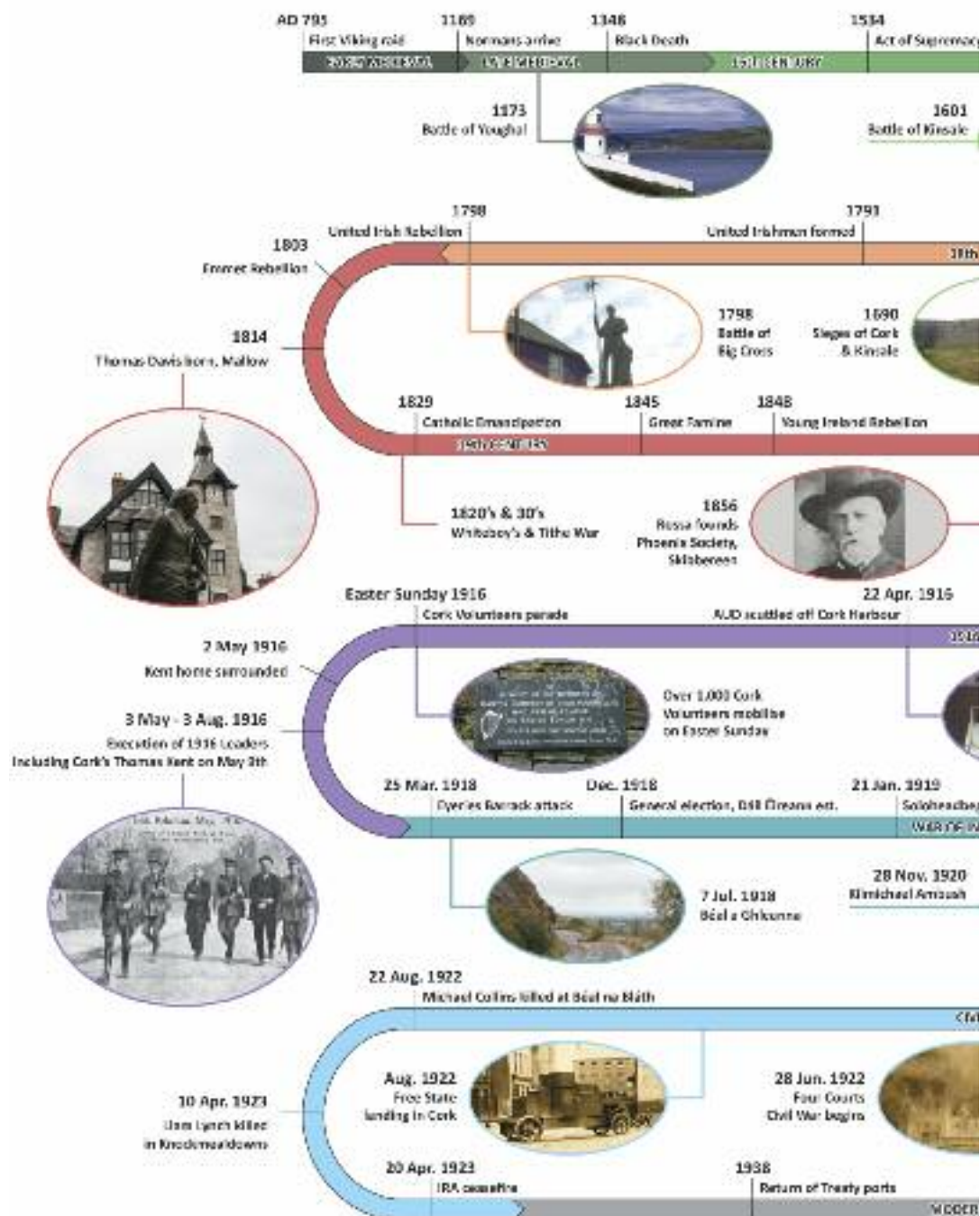
- Site 1 - Bore Island
- Site 2 - Youghal
- Site 3 - Dunboy Castle
- Site 4 - Liscarroll Castle
- Site 5 - Kinsale
- Site 6 - Astna Square
- Site 7 - Carr's Hill
- Site 8 - Thomas Davis
- Site 9 - Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa
- Site 10 - "The Bard" O'Suilleabhain
- Site 11 - The Aud
- Site 12 - Carriganimma
- Site 13 - The Kents
- Site 14 - Sean Hurley
- Site 15 - Beal A Ghleanna
- Site 16 - MacSwiney & MacCurtain
- Site 17 - Carrigtwohill
- Site 18 - Carrigadrochid RIC Barracks
- Site 19 - Kilmichael
- Site 20 - Middleton
- Site 21 - Dripsey
- Site 22 - Upton
- Site 23 - Clonmult
- Site 24 - Coolnacahera
- Site 25 - Crossbarry
- Site 26 - Clogagh
- Site 27 - Knockraha
- Site 28 - Passage West
- Site 29 - Macroom Castle
- Site 30 - Beal na Blath

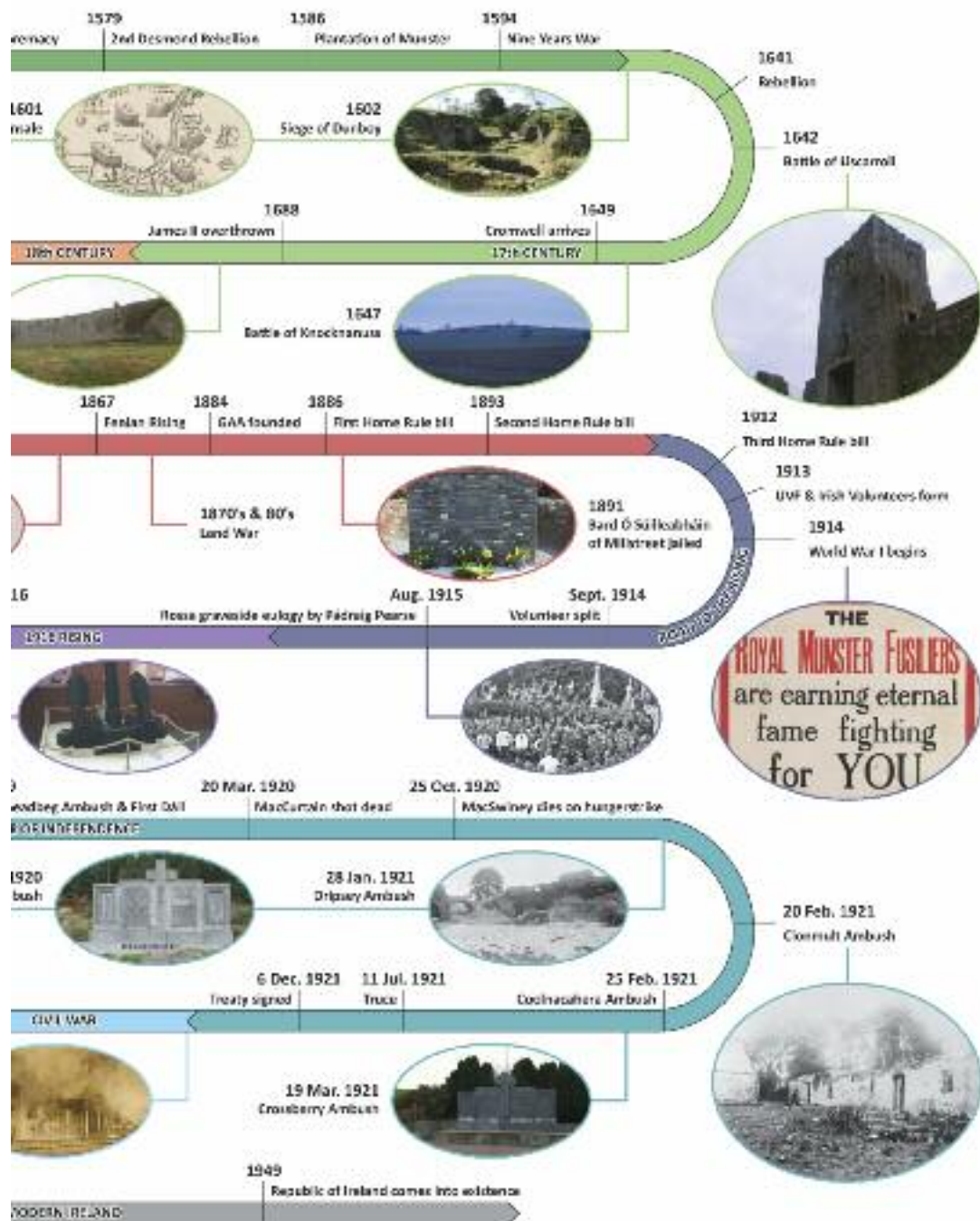






# Heritage Centenary Sites of Rebel County Cork Timeline







## 1 Bere Island

Bere Island is home to perhaps Cork's best-preserved military landscape, with the majority of features associated with the presence of the Royal Navy on the island, which stretched from the Napoleonic Wars through to the handover of the Treaty Ports in 1938. Since that date the island's military associations have continued with the Irish Defence Forces. During this period, Bere has witnessed many historic events, from the capture of what is now the world's oldest surviving French naval vessel to the First World War presence off her shores of US vessels that would later be among those attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. During the War of Independence, the island was used to intern IRA volunteers. Today the remains of Martello Towers and later fortifications such as Lonehort Battery dominated the landscape. However, the Royal Navy were far from the first to recognise the opportunities which Bere Island provided. Many centuries earlier, another famed group of seafarers identified what the island had to offer.



Bere Island. Lonehort Harbour and the possible Viking breakwater in centre.



The Viking presence on Bere Island was identified in 1995, when the Department of Archaeology at UCC and the Institute of Irish Studies at Queens University, Belfast conducted an excavation and underwater survey at Lonehort Harbour<sup>1</sup>. The name 'Lonehort' is thought to be of Norse origin, and the team hoped to investigate if there was any evidence for a Viking presence. The underwater survey identified a large artificial breakwater of possible Viking date at the harbour mouth, created by dumping a large mound of stones on the seabed<sup>2</sup>. Beyond this were the remains of a stone jetty which ran out from the beach, and which was associated with a 'naust', an artificial boat shelter of Scandinavian origin used to repair or store boats<sup>3</sup>. The shelter was excavated, revealing that it would have been able to accommodate a coastal boat with a beam of just over 3m<sup>4</sup>. The site at Lonehort may have originally been surrounded by an earthen enclosure<sup>5</sup>.

The breakwater and naust remain visible for visitors to the island today. The Viking presence demonstrates the importance of Bantry Bay and Berehaven for both trade and military activity, something that was likely identified in prehistoric times.

<sup>1</sup> Breen, Colin 1995. "1995:022 Lonehort Harbour, Ardnaragh East, Bere Island". Available at [www.excavations.ie/report/1995/Cork/0001864/](http://www.excavations.ie/report/1995/Cork/0001864/). Accessed 4 October 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



## 2 Youghal

Youghal bore witness to one of the most significant medieval naval engagements ever to take place along the Irish coast, when in 1173 an Anglo-Norman fleet was attacked there by Hiberno-Norse ships from Cork, in a clash which ended in Norman victory. The Normans had been returning down the Blackwater with plunder from a raid when they were set upon by Gilbert Mac Turger and his Hiberno-Norse fleet in the bay<sup>1</sup>. The action was described by Gerald of Wales:

“...a naval battle began, with one side attacking fiercely with stones and axes, while the others put up a vigorous resistance with arrows and metal bolts, of which they had a plentiful supply. At last the men of Cork were beaten, and their leader Gilbert Mac Turger was killed by a sturdy youth, by name Philip of Wales.”<sup>2</sup>



The waters around Youghal, which witnessed the Anglo-Norman and Hiberno-Norse naval battle.



### 3 Dunboy Castle & Kinsale

Dunboy Castle is, along with Kinsale, Cork's main site associated with the seismic struggle known as the Nine Years War, which resulted in the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland. The dramatic account of the siege of Dunboy, which detail the close quarter fighting and desperate efforts of some of the garrison to avoid death by threatening to blow up the castle with their enemies within, are among the most compelling of the period. The site today consists of the ground floor of the rectangular tower and the remains of the outer bawn walls, along with some of the 1602 and later defences<sup>1</sup>. The site was excavated over the course of a number of seasons between 1967 and 1973 by Dr. E.M. Fahy of UCC and by Dr Eric Klingelhofer in 1989. Among the finds were remains of the fighting, including lead bullets, cannonballs and perhaps most poignantly some fragmentary human remains<sup>2</sup>.



Memorial Plaques on Dunboy Castle.





At Kinsale, archaeological works undertaken since 2001 by the Kinsale Battlefield Project have confirmed the locations of many of the main English siege encampments, and produced physical archaeological evidence for the siege in the form of objects such as lead bullets. It is now estimated that the main 1601 English siege camp, located in the townland of Camphill, may have been of a similar scale to the contemporary walled town of Derry. Visitors to the town can see a number of sites that played contemporary roles in the siege, with both Desmond Castle and St. Multose Church being occupied by Spanish forces during 1601. Charles Fort and James Fort, which currently dominate the harbour, were constructed following the 1601 battle, and themselves saw action during the Williamite actions in the town during 1690. A commemorative stone chair is also located at the Millwater Ford, the traditional site of the battle.



**The Siege of Dunboy  
(Pacata Hibernia 1633)**

<sup>1</sup> Archaeological Inventory of County Cork. Volume 1: West Cork. Available via National Monuments Service Historic Environment Viewer at <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>.

Accessed 6 October 2016.

<sup>1</sup> Fahy, Dr. E. M. 1973. "1973:008 Dunboy". Available at [www.excavations.ie/report/1973/Cork/0000144/](http://www.excavations.ie/report/1973/Cork/0000144/). Accessed 6 October 2016.

## 4 Liscarroll Castle

During the wars that engulfed Ireland between 1641 and 1653 a large number of battles and sieges took place in Cork. Among the battlefields around the county from this period are Cloghlea/Manning Ford (1643), Knocknanuss (1647), Macroom (1650) and Knockbrack (1651). One of the biggest and one of the best-preserved of these battlefield landscapes dates to 1642, and is centred on Liscarroll Castle. The castle itself is among the most impressive in Cork, consisting of a central gate tower with enclosing walls and circular flanking towers at each corner<sup>1</sup>.

Having taken King John's Castle in Limerick, the Confederate Army of Munster under General Garret Barry moved to invest Liscarroll in 1642<sup>2</sup>. After a brief artillery barrage (impact scars on the walls of the castle may relate to this or a later attack in the 1640s) the garrison surrendered, and soon afterwards the Royal army under Murrough O'Brien, Baron Inchiquin, arrived to give battle<sup>3</sup>. The Confederates, numbering some 6-7,000 men, greatly outnumbered their foe, but were less well equipped. The rival armies drew up in the fields and valley to the west of the castle, where the majority of fighting took place. One of Inchiquin's men described the fight:

“ the enemy stood ready in three great bodies...to receive us, and whilst our men were putting into order they plyed us very hard with their artillery... having raised new batteries purposely to salute us with better advantage... [they] had raised several works and fortifications, not only for their Ordinance but for their men... my Lord [Inchiquin] gave the command of the foot, himself with great courage and resolution...charged with his own Troop upon the Enemies Horse, of whom Oliver Stephenson's Troop had the Van, whom my Lord slew with his owne hands... but withal by a mistake in the wheeling off, of the first ranke...the rest of my Lords Troop fell into disorder, and had left his Lordship engaged amongst the enemies if Captain Jephson and Bridges... not speedily rallied them, and charged home and through, in so much as they began to shew the great speed their horses were of.

The foot on both sides were at a very great height of contestation, and performed singularly well, until the Rebels [Confederates] perceived their horse about to leave them behind, and thought running, then fighting the better exercise, in an instant they took them to flight, and we to the chase, which we continued for the space of two mile.<sup>4</sup>”



Liscarroll Castle





As with many contemporary accounts, this description of events written by Richard Gething is highly partisan and needs to be treated with caution. However, the Confederates were forced into the retreat, surrendering both the field and Liscarroll Castle to Inchiquin's forces. The Confederates made for boggy ground in the vicinity of Kilbolane to escape pursuing cavalry, which helped to reduce their casualties. It is likely that losses at Liscarroll were not as severe as at some other 17th century Irish battles, although it is probable that a number of hundred men lost their lives in the fields around the village<sup>5</sup>.

Memory of the battle remains vivid in the area, and an early-medieval ringfort situated near what formed part of the Confederate line is still known as 'battle fort', where some of the slain are reputed to be buried. Though the Battle of Liscarroll had immediate repercussions for Confederate fortunes in Cork, events would see the war swing back and forth for more than a decade, as death and destruction was visited on thousands of people across the island.



**ABOVE:** Liscarroll Castle - possible impact scars on castle.

**BELOW:** The Liscarroll battlefield.



<sup>1</sup> Archaeological Inventory of County Cork, Volume 4: North Cork. Accessed via National Monuments Service Historic Environment Viewer. Available at <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>. Accessed 6 October 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Cronin, John 2010. *Report on the Battlefield of Liscarroll, 1642*. Unpublished client report for the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local

Government by Eneclann Ltd & Rubicon Heritage Services Ltd., 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>4</sup> Gething, Richard 1642. *Digitus dei, or, A miraculous victory gained by the English, upon the rebels in Munster* (London, 1642), 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> Cronin, Op. Cit., 11.

## 5 Kinsale

The Williamite attack on Kinsale in 1690 is considerably less well known than the events of the 1601 siege and battle of Kinsale. However, as an archaeological landscape it is one of the best preserved of all the Williamite/Jacobite sites on the island of Ireland. Following the surrender of Cork, the multi-national Williamite force under the Earl of Marlborough and Ferdinand Willem of Württemberg marched on Kinsale. Their opponent there was Sir Edward Scott, the Jacobite Governor of the town. Having failed to burn Kinsale prior to the arrival of the Williamites, the action subsequently centred on the two star-shaped fortifications built in the 17th century to defend the harbour- James Fort and Charles Fort.

The largely earthen James Fort was garrisoned by some 450 Jacobites, and this became the Williamite's first target. Shortly after their arrival in early October 1690 they made preparations to send an 800 man assault force across the Bandon River and take it. After heavy fighting, the Jacobites were driven from the outer defences, and an accidental gunpowder explosion sealed their fate. Today the scene of this action is well preserved. The survival of archaeological material relating to the event was confirmed during excavations in 1998 and 2003 by Mary O'Donnell of the Archaeological Services Unit at UCC, which revealed some military finds and burning layers potentially associated with the engagement<sup>1</sup>.



Charles Fort's interior. The buildings were burned in 1922 during the Civil War.



Following the taking of James Fort, the Williamite forces were in a position to fully focus on the main Jacobite position at Charles Fort. This stone fortress was a significantly tougher proposition, but had a fatal weakness, in that it was dominated by high-ground on the landward side. The Williamites took advantage of this to construct a series of approach trenches and batteries, and by 15 October had broken down a portion of the outer wall. With his c. 1500 men heavily outnumbered, Scott surrendered on terms and he and his troops were allowed to march for Limerick, bringing to an end the last major conventional engagement between two formal military forces in Co. Cork.

Charles Fort today is one of the county's premier tourist attractions. Its importance as a 1690 siege site is also in part based on the fact that the English commander Marlborough is considered by many to be the greatest General in British military history. Of greater significance is the fact that many of the areas where the trenches and approaches were placed- particularly those of the Danes, which proved decisive in breaching the Fort's defences- likely still survive beneath the pasture on the nearby high-ground, awaiting exploration someday to the future.



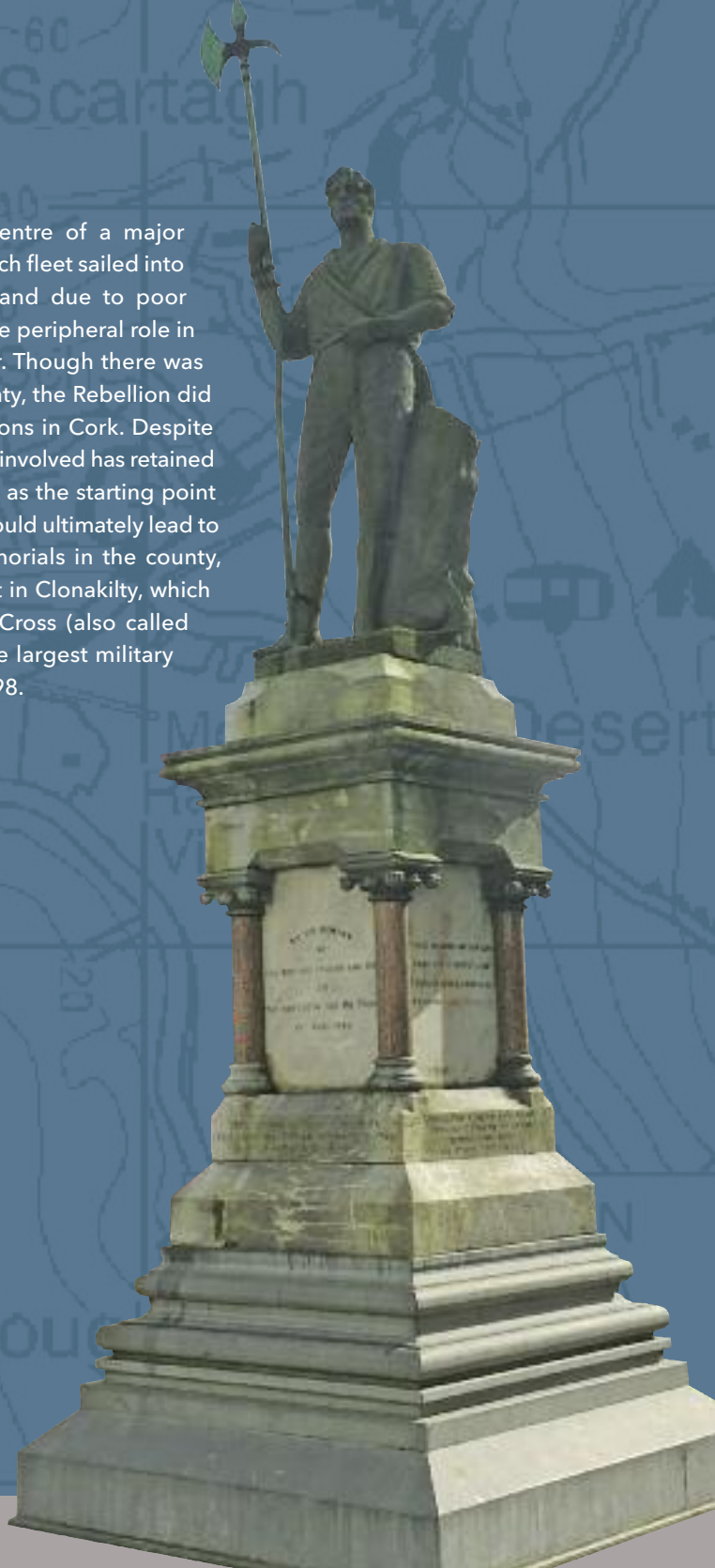
**The imposing defences of Charles Fort as viewed from the outside; these were the walls the Williamites were seeking to breach.**

<sup>1</sup> O'Donnell, Mary 1998. "1998:082 James Fort". Available at [www.excavations.ie/report/1998/Cork/0003255/](http://www.excavations.ie/report/1998/Cork/0003255/). Accessed 6 October 2016; O'Donnell, Mary

2003 "2003:325 James Fort, Old-Fort". Available at [www.excavations.ie/report/2003/Cork/0009635/](http://www.excavations.ie/report/2003/Cork/0009635/). Accessed 6 October 2016.

## 6 Astna Square

Though Cork had been at the centre of a major invasion scare in 1796, when a French fleet sailed into Bantry Bay but were unable to land due to poor weather, it played a somewhat more peripheral role in the 1798 Rebellion two years later. Though there was United Irishman activity in the county, the Rebellion did not lead to any major military actions in Cork. Despite this, the memory of those who were involved has retained importance, as 1798 was regarded as the starting point in the revolutionary struggle that would ultimately lead to independence. Of the 1798 memorials in the county, perhaps the most significant is that in Clonakilty, which remembers the Battle of the Big Cross (also called Shannonvale or Ballinascarthy), the largest military engagement in Munster during 1798.



Astna Square; 1798 Memorial in Clonakilty.





The Battle of the Big Cross occurred when a detachment of the Westmeath Militia were confronted on the road between Clonakilty and Bandon by a party of United Irishmen. Accounts as to what actually occurred vary, but ultimately the Militia, joined by the Caithness Legion, became engaged with the rebels. In the fighting that followed, the actions of one man, called Tadhg an Astna, stood out. Tadhg was reportedly shot and killed while in the act of seizing the bridle of the Militia commander's horse<sup>1</sup>. His story has since passed into legend, and remains something that is regularly commemorated in the area. The square in which the 1798 memorial stands was renamed Astna Square in his honour.

The memorial in Clonakilty was commissioned in 1898 as part of the centenary commemorations of the event. Nationalists from around the county came to the town for the unveiling of the foundation stone in 1899, part of a major occasion which sought not only to remember the risings of 1798, 1848 and 1867, but also aimed to tie current efforts to the legacy of the past. The prominence of the statue – something which it retains to this day – was intended to make a major political statement. It continues to serve as an opportunity to remember not only the locality's links with 1798, but also how those connections were commemorated and developed by the generations who followed.



**Astna Square; The memorial remains a centre of public life in the town today, as this art installation demonstrates.**

<sup>1</sup> Bennett, George 1862. *The History of Bandon*. Henry and Coghlan Printers and Publishers, Cork, 357-8.



## 7 Carr's Hill

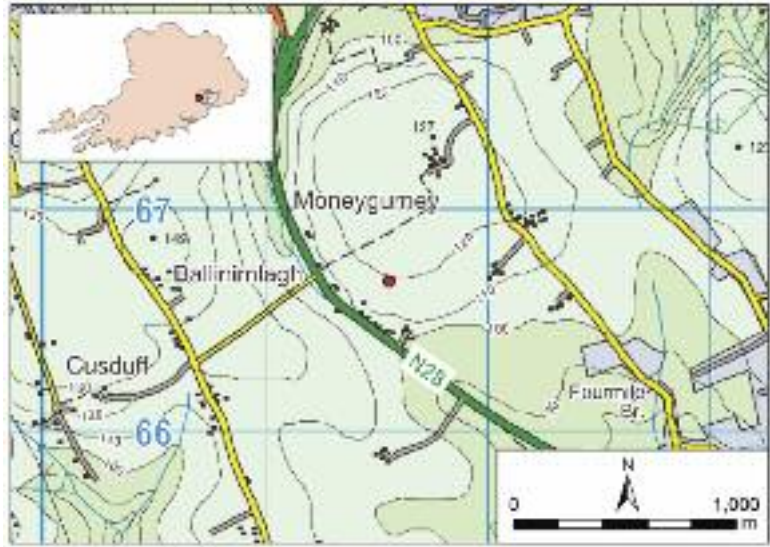
It is impossible to divorce the revolutionary movement of the later 19th and early 20th centuries from the cataclysm that befell the island between 1845-52, when the Great Famine descended. In the disaster a million people lost their lives and more than a million others emigrated. Large parts of Cork were particularly badly affected, and witnessing the distress of the poor had a lasting impact on many future revolutionaries, such as Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa.

There is a large number of Famine graveyards scattered throughout Cork, but the largest and yet one of the least well-known is that of All Saints Cemetery, Carr's Hill, situated off the N28 Carrigaline-Cork road – a five and a half acre site, wherein it is believed that up to 30,000 famine victims are buried.

During the Famine, the existing public utilities and infrastructure became overwhelmed with the sheer scale of death that occurred. St. Joseph's Cemetery in Cork City was already close to capacity and Fr. Matthew was seeking a further location to serve as a resting place for the victims. To this end, the Carr family provided this land in an effort to provide additional burial space<sup>1</sup>. Famine conditions got so bad that from February to June alone in 1847, 2,260 famine victims were buried at the site. Given the devastation that occurred throughout the country that year, 1847 is remembered in Irish history as 'Black 47'.

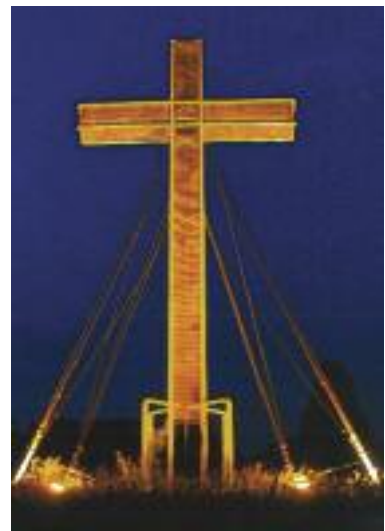


The original entrance to the Cork District Cemetery, Carr's Hill. Image courtesy of Pat Gunn.



Known locally as the 'The Paupers Graveyard', the site is marked by a tall metalwork lattice cross erected in 1958. The cross was placed at the site to remember the dead and was constructed largely thanks to the efforts of Mr. Sorenson, a Cork taxi driver. During the 150th anniversary commemorations of the Famine in 1997, the Cork Remembrance Committee unveiled a new plaque at the site, "in memory of the thousands of Cork people who died during The Great Famine and are buried here." It was unveiled by the then US Ambassador to Ireland, Jean Kennedy Smith.

Memorial unveiled  
by Ambassador  
Jean Kennedy-  
Smith at Carr's Hill



The memorial cross on site has  
been illuminated at intervals over  
the past 50 years, and  
continuously since the summer of  
2011, thanks to Airticity and the  
remarkable work of the Cork  
Famine Group.

Image courtesy of Pat Gunn.

<sup>1</sup> O'Flaherty, Enda & Shiels, Damian 2013. *Carr's Hill*.  
Cork Heritage Asset Report on behalf of Cork County  
Council.

## 8 Thomas Davis Birthplace

Thomas Davis was born on 24 October 1814 at 72 Main Street in Mallow, a street that has since been named Thomas Davis Street in his honour<sup>1</sup>. His father, who had been a physician with a commission in the army, died a month before Thomas's birth. In 1818 his mother took the decision to move the family to Dublin, settling first in Warrington Place and later in Lower Baggot Street<sup>2</sup>. It was in the capital that Thomas was educated, graduating from Trinity College in 1836, and being called to the bar in 1838<sup>3</sup>.

Davis joined the Repeal Association in 1841, but ultimately split with Daniel O'Connell on the issue of non-denominational education<sup>4</sup>. In 1842 he founded the Nation newspaper along with John Blake Dillon and Charles Gavan Duffy, which soon became noted for writings promoting political and cultural Irish nationalism<sup>5</sup>. Among the most lasting of Davis's efforts from the period is the famed *A Nation Once Again*, and his writings had a major political influence. Thomas Davis and others who shared his views became known as the Young Irelanders, a group that ultimately led the failed 1848 Rebellion. Davis himself was not among those who set out on the road towards that rising, as he died from scarlet fever at the age of just 31 in 1845<sup>6</sup>. He is buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin.



The Thomas Davis Statue, Mallow.





Thomas Davis is well remembered in both Cork and Dublin. Aside from the plaque marking his birth-place on Thomas Davis Street, a statue of him was unveiled by President Higgins in the town in 2014. This was part of the important commemorations in Mallow to honour the bicentenary of Thomas Davis' birth, which also saw the release of a wonderful commemorative journal on Thomas Davis by the Mallow Development Partnership.

Among the many other tributes to Davis's Cork origins to be found are in the name of Davis College in Mallow, and at Fort Davis, formerly Fort Carlisle, one the Cork Harbour Forts. Additionally, one of Dublin's best known statues is the depiction of Davis on College Green.



**Thomas Davis  
Plaque at his home  
in Mallow.**



**Michael J O Neill, Mallow, and  
Christian Dupont, Boston College,  
visiting the home of Thomas  
Davis on 7 July 2016.**

<sup>1</sup> Mulvey, Helen 2003 *Thomas Davis & Ireland: A Biographical Study*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 25; Lalor, Brian (ed.) 2003 *The Encyclopedia of*

*Ireland*, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 272.

<sup>4</sup> Mulvey, Op. Cit., 84; Lalor, Op. Cit.

<sup>5</sup> Lalor, Op. Cit.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

## 9 Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa

Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa is one of Cork's best-known and most influential revolutionaries. Born in the Reenascreena/Rosscarbery part of West Cork in 1831, he was deeply influenced by the Great Famine, a period which saw the death of his father while working on a public works scheme constructing a new road in Rowry Glen<sup>1</sup>. Rossa dedicated significant time to the assistance of the poor in Cork in the years that followed, for example through his work in distributing meal to the inhabitants of Cape Clear and Sherkin in the 1860s<sup>2</sup>.

Rossa moved to Skibbereen, where he became a shopkeeper. It was there that he established the Phoenix National and Literary Society in 1856, and in 1858 he became a member of the newly formed Irish Republican Brotherhood<sup>3</sup>. Dedicated to the establishment of a republic through the use of physical force, Rossa was arrested in 1865 for his activities, and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was paroled in 1871 but was exiled from Ireland, and so went to New York where he continued his Fenian activities. In 1874 he authored a most influential publication entitled 'My Years in English Jails', which amongst many things, documented Ireland's Cause, from 700 years prior.

“ The English interest was always able to persuade Rome that the Irish were bad Catholics, and that they required reformation... Seven hundred years ago an English King, making such a representation to the Pope of Rome, received from him authority to possess Ireland for the purpose of improving the morals of its people, and during these seven hundred years have the Irish people been waging a fierce fight against the efforts England has been making to 'improve' them off the face of the land.<sup>4</sup> ”



The metal casket in which O'Donovan Rossa's body was brought home from the USA.





O'Donovan Rossa remained active for many years and he was a central figure in the direction of the controversial Fenian dynamite campaign in Britain during the 1880s<sup>5</sup>. When he died in 1915, his body was shipped back to Ireland for burial in Glasnevin Cemetery. The funeral was one of the most significant events in the lead up to the 1916 Easter Rising, as it was at Rossa's graveside that Pádraig Pearse delivered his most famous oration.

The commemoration of Rossa's funeral was the first event in the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme. He is remembered throughout the country, with his name used variously on bridges, streets and for sporting organisations. The building where he worked at the time of the founding of the Phoenix Society survives in the town of Skibbereen. However, perhaps the most significant object relating to him in Cork is the steel casket that was used to transport his remains across the Atlantic for his burial. Fully restored in 2015, it is now on display in Reenascreena, beside the local memorial to the village's most famous son.



The building in which Rossa worked in Skibbereen when he established the Phoenix Society.

<sup>1</sup> O'Donovan Rossa, Jeremiah 1898. *Rossa's Recollections 1838 to 1898*. O'Donovan Rossa, New York, 118.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>4</sup> O'Donovan Rossa, Jeremiah, 1967 edn. *My Years in English Jails*, Anvil Books, Tralee, 17

<sup>5</sup> Lalor, Brian (ed.) 2003 *The Encyclopedia of Ireland*, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 813.

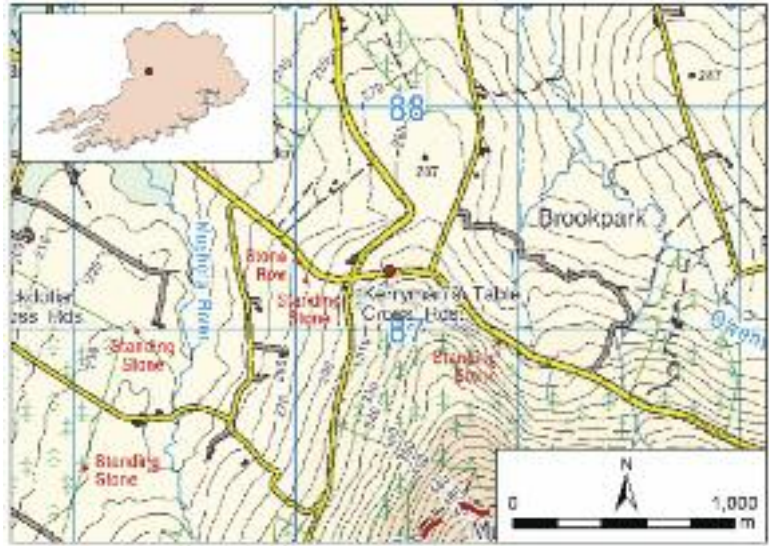
## 10 "The Bard" Ó Súilleabháin

From the late 18th century onwards agrarian protest became a major movement, something that would continue until well into the 20th century. The early groups were often given monikers such as the 'Whiteboys', 'Rightboys' and 'Rockites', and were not averse to violently pursuing their aims. Among the early grievances were issues with the enclosure of commonage, the encroachment of livestock on tillage land and particularly the payment of the tithe tax<sup>1</sup>.

As the 19th century developed the desire for change in how tenants were treated led to the creation of the Land League in 1879, which sought to halt rent abuses<sup>2</sup>. The Land War of this period brought techniques such as ostracization tactics – so successfully employed against one land agent, Charles Cunningham Boycott, that it gave a new word to the English language. Among those who became involved in the battle for improved tenant rights were Thomas Kent and his brothers, who would serve prison time for their activities.



The Bard O Suilleabhain Memorial.



One of the best-known figures in Cork associated with land agitation was Seán Riobaird O Súilleabháin, who was born in Kilcorney, near Millstreet, in 1852. During the Land War he became a major activist in the North Cork area, causing the authorities to flood Millstreet with police in an effort to bring his efforts to a halt<sup>3</sup>. Eventually O Súilleabháin was brought to trial and in 1891 sentenced to 24 years hard labour, leaving his wife Ellen to raise their six children alone until his release in 1906<sup>4</sup>. His life is the subject of a book by Barry Keane, *The Bard: Seán Riobaird O Súilleabháin* published by the Aubane Historical Society, and in August, 2016, a memorial plaque to the Bard was unveiled near The Kerryman's Table at Mushera<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Lalor, Brian (ed.) 2003 *The Encyclopedia of Ireland*, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 591.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>3</sup> Keane, Barry 2012 *The Bard: Seán Riobaird O Súilleabháin*, Aubane Historical Society, Cork.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Millstreet.ie, "Wonderfully Impressive Tribute to "The Bard" at Mushera on Sunday", available at [www.millstreet.ie/blog/2016/08/15/wonderfully-impressive-tribute-to-the-bard-at-mushera-on-sunday](http://www.millstreet.ie/blog/2016/08/15/wonderfully-impressive-tribute-to-the-bard-at-mushera-on-sunday). Accessed 7 October 2016.



## 11 The AUD

The early 20th century was a time of change, both around the world and particularly here in Ireland. With the establishment of the Irish Volunteers in 1913 and with an ever-growing desire to achieve Irish Independence, plans were being developed to further the cause of Ireland. One of the main plans in this regard, which had been months in preparation both at home and abroad in U.S.A. and Germany, was to secure a significant quantity of arms for the Irish Volunteers. This brings us to the story of the *AUD*.

The vessel that has become known to history as the *AUD* was actually a German ship, the *Libau* (itself originally a British vessel), which disguised itself as the Norwegian *AUD* in order to supply arms to the Irish Volunteers. After much planning and an intricate route, she set sail for Ireland from Lübeck, Germany, under the command of Karl Spindler on 9 April 1916, bound for Kerry<sup>1</sup>.

Deciding on the best location for the arms to be landed had been the mission of Diarmuid Lynch of Tracton, who had been sent to Kerry by Pádraig Pearse for that reason. As a result, Fenit was deemed the most suitable spot, and it was for there the *AUD* steamed<sup>2</sup>.



Model of the *AUD* in Cork Public Museum. (Bjørn Christian Tørrissen)



The movements of the Volunteers in Cork on Easter Sunday 1916 were carried out in order to receive the expected arms shipment from the *AUD*, this being approximately 20,000 rifles and over a million rounds of ammunition. The Cork City Company and Bandon Battalion marched for Macroom through Kilmurry, and by early in the afternoon around 1,000 men had assembled at eight locations; Macroom, Inchigeela, Kealkill, Carriganimma, Millstreet, Bweeng, Barley Hill and Lauragh<sup>3</sup>. This series of positions were selected so the Cork Volunteers could receive their arms and also cover the main road and rail routes into Kerry. However, unbeknownst to many of the Volunteers, the plan had misfired.

On 21 April 1916 Roger Casement had landed at Banna Strand from a German U-Boat in order to rendezvous with the *AUD*, but was captured not long afterwards. Meanwhile the *AUD* was herself intercepted off the Kerry coast by the Royal Navy, and was soon being taken under escort to Queenstown Cobh in Cork Harbour. With the plan a failure, the Cork Volunteers had little option but to disperse. Meanwhile, the *AUD*'s commander Karl Spindler decided to destroy his vessel rather than allow her to be captured by the British. As they approached the harbour, he scuttled her:



The *AUD* Anchor on display in Cobh Heritage Centre.

“The *Aud* shivered from stem to stern, beams and splinters flew in the air, followed by a cloud of dirty grey smoke, and flames burst forth from the saloon, the charthouse, the ventilators and the forecastle.”<sup>4</sup>



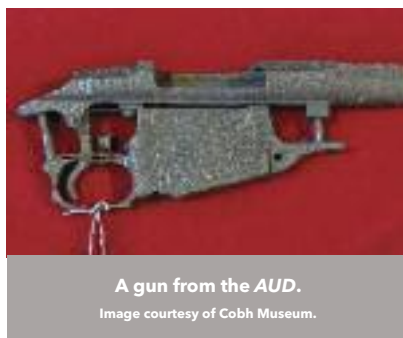
Today the AUD still rests outside Cork Harbour where she sank to the sea bottom in 1916. Spindler and his crew, immediately after scuttling the ship, were detained on Spike Island, and Spike Island was therefore the only Irish soil that the crew set foot on in 1916. The Captain of the AUD, Karl Spindler, later wrote a book about the AUD and his involvement, translated into English and titled "The Mystery of the Casement Ship", which in itself is a wonderful read and also provides details of some of the time spent on Spike Island. Captain Karl Spindler noted:

**“On our arrival there [Spike Island] we were put in separate rooms which were heavily barred, and double sentries were posted at the doors. The view from the windows was barred by several high walls. A Clergyman visited us in our cells which, with the exception of roughly-made tables and iron bedsteads, contained no furniture. I had a feeling that our execution was to take place inside these walls, and that the clergyman had come to prepare us for our end.”<sup>5</sup>**

Captain Spindler went on to lead a fascinating life and his comments on the Irish efforts, and in particular the role of Sir Roger Casement are worthy of mention:

**“Roger Casement was sentenced to be hanged. On August 3 the sentence was carried out. The brilliant defence which Casement made had been of no avail. He died every inch a man, and with the consciousness that the idea for which he had worked and suffered would sink deeper in the hearts of the Irish and bring them nearer to freedom.”<sup>6</sup>**

Cork Harbour's connections with the AUD, were commemorated in 2016, when the stockless anchor from the AUD, which had been salvaged and conserved thanks to voluntary efforts in Cork and Kerry, and indeed the support of Cork County Council and the National Museum, was placed on display in Cobh Heritage Centre. Many further events regarding the AUD took place around the county, with notable commemorations also held on Spike Island and Camden Fort Meagher.



<sup>1</sup> Irish Shipwrecks Wreck List. Available at [www.irishshipwrecks.com/shipwrecks.php?wreck\\_ref=510](http://www.irishshipwrecks.com/shipwrecks.php?wreck_ref=510). Accessed 8 October 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Witness Statement 4: Diarmuid Lynch, Part 1, The IRB, Some Recollections and Comments, 7.

<sup>3</sup> O'Donoghue, Florence 1966a. 'The Irish Volunteers in Cork 1913-1916' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 1966, Volume 71, Nos. 213-214,

41-48, 44-5.

<sup>4</sup> Captain Karl Spindler *The Mystery of the Casement Ship* quoted in Ellis, Peter Berekford 2008. *Eyewitness to Irish History*, John Wiley and Sons: London, 207.

<sup>5</sup> Spindler, Karl, 1965. *The Mystery of the Casement Ship*, Anvil, Tralee, 134

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Op Cit. 141

On 24 April 2016 Carriganima Community Development recreated the march and assembly of Volunteers from Ballyourney, Kilnamartyra, Ballinagree and Clondrohid, as well as Carriganimma itself, to commemorate the location's important role as one of the concentration points for the Cork Volunteers on Easter Sunday 1916. A few months prior to Easter 1916, the village had briefly played host to Pádraig Pearse, who was in the locality as part of a drive to increase membership into the Volunteer movement. Having spoken at an Aeridheacht held at Millstreet on 22 August 1915, Pearse stopped off in Carriganimma on the way to Cork. There Pearse chatted with locals and asked if they would join the movement, an appeal which appears to have had an effect on a number of them<sup>1</sup>.

Carriganimma was one of the locations where the Cork Volunteers were to concentrate as part of the operations to receive weapons from the Aud, a plan which misfired when the Aud was captured by the Royal Navy. One of the men who set out on the march to Carriganimma that day was James Murphy from Clondrohid, who later explained his experiences of the day:

“The orders for Easter Sunday, 1916, came to us from Macroom. They were to the effect that the company was to march to Carriganimma and be there at 10 a.m on Easter Sunday morning. We were to bring all arms, equipment and rations for three days. We had no definite knowledge of the purpose of the parade, but we knew from the preparations being made that it was something more than a normal mobilisation, and we did not expect to come back that night.

We mobilised at Clondrohid. The Kilnamartyra Company joined us there and we marched to Carriganimma. We were the first to arrive there. A little later the Macroom, Kilmurray and Ballinagree Companies arrived...

The arms we had were- one old type rifle and 10 rounds .303, one miniature rifle and 100 rounds, 16 double barrel shotguns with 20 rounds for each. We also had some slugs and some No. 4 cartridges and 10 lbs of gelignite. Some of the shotguns were the property of the members of the company and some were on loan from local farmers. None had been purchased.

Peader O'Hourihan passed us at the priest's house on our way into Carriganimma on a motor cycle. He was going west. When we were in Carriganimma, Seán Nolan came along in uniform and told me that the exercises were off.

When all the companies had been assembled, exercises were carried out on a hill nearby, and it was later- after dark - when Micheál Lynch came on a motor-cycle with the official message that the parade was cancelled and that we were to return to our own areas. We marched back and dispersed at Clondrohid.<sup>2</sup>”



The dispersal of the Volunteers brought to a close their main activities during Easter Week, but for many of those involved the War of Independence would see a resurgence of their activities in support of an Irish Republic - for which the assembly at Carriganimma was only a beginning.



Carriganimma Memorial.



Centenary Commemorations in Carriganimma on April 24 2016.

<sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 74: Paud O'Donoghue, Carriganimma Company Irish Volunteers, 1915-1916, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Witness Statement 1633: James Murphy, O/C, Macroom Battalion, Cork 1 Brigade, IRA.

Cork's biggest confrontation of the 1916 Rising occurred at Bawnard House, the home of the Kent family near Castlelyons in Co. Cork. The Kents were a family who had been extremely active during the Land War of the 19th century, with a number of the Kent brothers serving jail sentences for their activities in 1889 and 1890<sup>1</sup>. In the lead up to 1916, Thomas Kent, who in his younger days had spent time in Boston, U.S.A., was a commandant in the Galtee Battalion of Volunteers. In the aftermath of the Easter Rising, it was the night of 1 May before the Kents felt that it might be safe to return to their home. In the early hours of the morning the Kent brothers Thomas, David, William, Richard and their mother awoke to discover that the building had been surrounded by the authorities. The Kents decided to fight it out. William later remembered:

“The police fired a volley to which we replied and a fierce conflict began. We were armed with three shot guns and a rifle. The fight lasted about three hours. Head Constable Rowe was shot dead, while other members of the RIC were wounded. David was also badly wounded, having lost two fingers and received a gaping wound in his side. Military reinforcements arrived and when the last shot was fired from the house we had no alternative but to surrender. Our ammunition was exhausted. The house was wrecked. Not a pane of glass was left unbroken. The interior was tattooed with marks of rifle bullets...”<sup>2</sup>



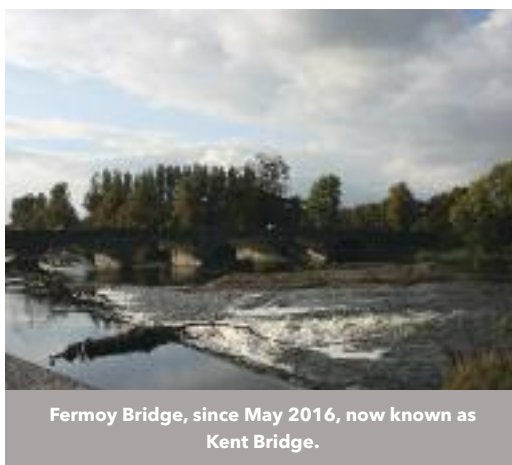
The Kent Homestead - Bawnard House, Castlelyons.





Following the surrender, Richard, who was a noted athlete, attempted to escape by jumping a nearby hedge, but was shot down and mortally wounded. The rest of the Kents' lives were spared thanks to the intercession of a British officer, who prevented them from being summarily shot<sup>3</sup>. The surrounding forces were so enraged as one of their number, Constable Rowe, had been killed in the attack on Bawnard House. As a result of his death, Thomas Kent was convicted of murder and executed by firing squad at Victoria Barracks (now Collins Barracks), Cork, on 9 May 1916. He was the only Patriot to be executed in Ireland, but outside of Dublin, for his role in the Easter Rising. His brother William, who was also to be executed had his sentence commuted to prison. Shortly after his release, in 1917 he became the Chairman of Cork County Council, and served on the Council for many years thereafter.

In 1966, Cork's main train station was renamed Kent Station in honour of Thomas. Though Bawnard House remains a private home and is not accessible to visitors, the bridge in Fermoy, across which the Kents were marched following their capture, was renamed in Thomas Kent's honour in 2016. Thomas's body was disinterred from Collins Barracks and reburied at a State Funeral at the Church of St. Nicholas in Castlelyons, on September 18, 2015, where his graveside can be seen. A State Ceremonial Event was also held for Thomas Kent on the centenary of his execution on May 9, 2016.



Fermoy Bridge, since May 2016, now known as Kent Bridge.



The Kent Family is synonymous with Cork's role in Ireland's fight for freedom; wholly conveyed by the reply that the family gave at Bawnard House, when asked to surrender: 'We are soldiers of the Irish Republic and there is no surrender'<sup>4</sup>. 'The Kent brothers and their 81 year old mother had defended their home. They took a stand, decided they wouldn't surrender; in doing so they had participated in the Easter Rising'<sup>5</sup>.

Not known to many, Thomas Kent was also a wonderful Poet. Included here is one of his poems, entitled 'Under Which Flag', featured in Meda Ryan's fascinating publication titled '16 Lives - Thomas Kent'.



The Kent Grave.

“ The day has dawned for Irishmen to show once more by deed  
That Eirin only holds their love, for her alone they'll bleed.  
That not one drop of patriot's blood in England's cause we'll shed  
We swear that now on Heaven's sight, we pledge it to our dead.  
The Dead who died for Ireland boys, on scaffolds England reared  
The Dead whose blood makes every glen and mountain side revered.  
The thousands that the Saxon slew by Famine, fire and blade  
Hark! How their memory calls on you, "Will you their murderers aid!"  
And will you fight beneath that rag of Famine, crime and greed  
Or rally round your own green flag and serve your Country's need?  
If you be men of Irish race then answer with this cry  
For Eire only and her flag we'll arm and fight and die.<sup>6</sup> ”

<sup>1</sup> Power, P.J. 2013. 'The Kents and Their Fight for Freedom' in Brian Ó Conchubhair (ed.) *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story 1916-21*, 106-112. Mercier: Dublin, 106-7.

<sup>2</sup> Witness Statement 75: William Kent, Fight at Bawnard House, May 2nd 1916, 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ryan, Meda, 2016. *16 Lives: Thomas Kent*, O'Brien Press, Dublin, 287

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, Op. Cit. 18

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Op. Cit. 150-1

## 14 Seán Hurley, Drinagh

Seán Hurley, is another Corkman, synonymous with Cork's involvement in 1916. Seán was born in Moulagow, Drinagh in 1887, the youngest child of John Daniel Hurley and Catherine Walsh<sup>1</sup>. Educated in Drinagh and Clonakilty, he emigrated to London where in 1905 he was working in the post office<sup>2</sup>. While there he met Michael Collins, who became a lifelong friend, and a relative through marriage when Seán Collins, Michael's brother, married his sister Catherine<sup>3</sup>.

While in London Seán became a member of the Gaelic League and also joined Geraldines' GAA Club<sup>4</sup>. He was working in Harrod's of London and engaged to Gaelic Leaguer Kathleen O'Brien when he made the decision to travel back to Ireland to participate with other members of the IRB - including Collins - in the events to come<sup>5</sup>.



Drinagh Village.



During the Easter Rising Hurley formed part of Ned Daly's Four Courts garrison and initially manned a barricade near Father Mathew Hall<sup>6</sup>. When the Volunteers were pushed back on the Friday of Easter Week, Seán took up a new position at a barricade, where he was mortally wounded on the afternoon of Saturday 29 April<sup>7</sup>. He was given the last rites by Father Augustine Hayden before dying in Richmond Hospital - the only Cork Volunteer to die in the Dublin fighting during Easter Week<sup>8</sup>.

Seán's family in Drinagh only found out that he had been killed in June, when Father Hayden wrote to his mother to let her know that her son's final words were "Tell my mother I died for Ireland"<sup>9</sup>. His memory continues to be preserved in his native village, where in 1966 a memorial was unveiled in a ceremony attended by three veterans of the Four Courts garrison, including Mrs. Emily Ledwith (formerly Nurse Eliot), who had held him after he had been shot during the Rising<sup>10</sup>. A huge commemorative day was also held in Drinagh on May 1st, 2016, organized by a local group, to commemorate the centenary of Seán's passing.



<sup>1</sup> Cumann Staire Sheáin Uí Mhuirthile 2016. *Commemoration of Seán Ó Mhuirthile, 1 May 2016*, Cork, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.; O'Donoghue, Florence 1966a. 'The Irish Volunteers in Cork 1913-1916' in *Journal of the Cork*

*Historical and Archaeological Society* 1966, Volume 71, Nos. 213-214, 41-48, 47.

<sup>6</sup> O'Donoghue, Op. Cit.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Cumann Staire Sheáin Uí Mhuirthile 2016, Op. Cit., 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



## 15 Béal a'Ghleanna

Although the War of Independence is generally regarded as having started with the Soloheadbeg Ambush in Co. Tipperary on 21 January 1919, coinciding with the day of the First Dáil, there was significant activity among Irish Volunteers in counties such as Cork in the preceding months and indeed in the two years following the 1916 Rising. The majority of this activity related to efforts by the Volunteers to capture stores of arms, and usually involved the targeting of the Royal Irish Constabulary. For example, in St. Patrick's Day 1918, a number of Volunteers had successfully forced their way into the RIC Barracks in Eyeries, making off with a number of weapons<sup>1</sup>.

A few days later, Volunteers in Ballyvourney had been less successful when they made a similar attempt, but this setback failed to deter them. On 7 July they tried again. The Volunteers disguised themselves and took up position behind a rock in Béal a'Ghleanna, on a mountain road between Ballingearry and Ballyvourney. They knew that two RIC constables would soon be making their way back along the road, and had determined to capture them and seize their weapons<sup>2</sup>, knowing that through their actions they 'were about to begin another phase in the long fight for the freedom of our country'<sup>3</sup>. Béal a'Ghleanna is indeed believed by many as having been the first armed attack, with shots fired, of the Irish War of Independence<sup>4</sup>.



Béal a'Ghleanna Pass.



At Béal a'Ghleanna, when the police came along, the Volunteers leapt from their hiding place and attacked. One of them was Jamie Moynihan:

“...I was to be the first person on the road, to catch and hold the horse...As soon as the grey horse and side-car came into line, I jumped out onto the road and caught the horse by the head... Lynch and the policeman were struggling fiercely and eventually the RIC man pulled the mask off Lynch’s face. Dan Thady and Liam Twomey came out of a little gap on the southern side. One of them fired a shot and hit the young policeman through the neck. At this stage, Johnny Lynch was getting the better of the RIC man and pulled him off the sidecar and on the road, rifle, cushion and all... We disarmed the two RIC Officers. The captured booty consisted of two Magazine Lee-Metford Carbine high-powered rifles, two slings of .303 with fifty rounds in each, two belts with batons, two spiked helmets and two notebooks... These two rifles that we captured at Béal a'Ghleanna were the first rifles acquired by the 8th Battalion in the fight for freedom and were later used in all the major ambushes in the battalion area. The success of this ambush acted as a great boost to the Volunteer movement in West Muskerry, because now they see that positive action was being taken.”<sup>6</sup>





**Béal a'Ghleanna Memorial.**

The RIC constable, shot in the attack, survived his wounds, later applying for compensation, but the escalation in tensions that the Béal a'Ghleanna attack represents is important in understanding the beginning of what became the War of Independence. Jamie Moynihan, who was Officer in Command at the Béal a'Ghleanna ambush, was a household figure from Cork, particularly during the War of Independence and he was indeed 'the commanding officer (OC) of the group of Volunteers who carried out the last armed attack of the War of Independence, at Céim Carraige, Carriganimma, on the day of the Truce, 11 July 1921'<sup>6</sup>. From Béal a'Ghleanna to Céim Carraige, Jamie had spent every single day on the run, 1,101 days. Jamie Moynihan later entered into politics and had '42 years of unbroken service on Cork County Council from 1928 until his death'<sup>7</sup>. Today visitors to Béal a'Ghleanna can view a memorial to the incident, which was unveiled at the site by Taoiseach Jack Lynch on St. Patrick's Day, 1970.

<sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 1530: Christopher O'Connell, Section Leader, Brigade Colonel, Cork Third Brigade, Vice Officer Commanding, Castletownbere Battalion, Cork Fifth Brigade, 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Ó hÉalaithe Dónal (ed.) 2014. *Memoirs of an Old*

*Warrior: Jamie Moynihan's Fight for Irish Freedom 1916-1923*. Mercier Press: Cork, 93-4

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Op. Cit. 94

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Op. Cit. 11

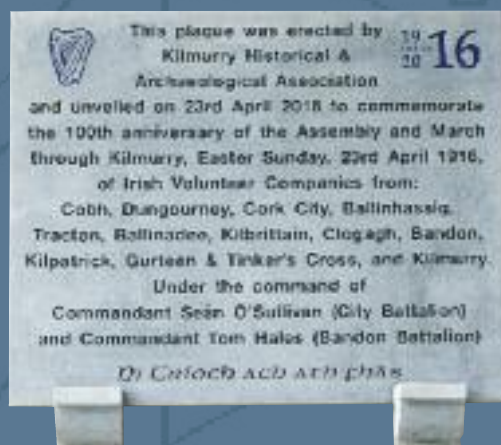
<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Op. Cit. 13

## Terence McSwiney & Tomás MacCurtain 16

There are few figures more central to the revolutionary decade in Cork than Terence McSwiney and Tomás MacCurtain. They both played major roles in the organisation of the Irish Volunteers in the county, and were central to events in Cork during 1916, and indeed the War of Independence. Tragically, both would also be remembered as short-lived Lord Mayors of Cork, with one's life ending when he was gunned-down in his home, while the other succumbed to the effects of hunger-strike.

Tomás MacCurtain was a native of Ballyknockane near Mourneabbey in County Cork. A prominent member of the Gaelic League, he later joined Sinn Féin and the IRB, and during the 1916 Rising commanded the City Battalion of Volunteers<sup>1</sup>. With the coming of the War of Independence he served as a Brigadier in the IRA, and was elected Lord Mayor in January 1920. As attacks on the RIC had escalated, some members of the force decided to take action into their own hands. In a retaliatory act, on 20 March, a number of RIC men disguised themselves as civilians and burst into MacCurtain's Blackpool home, shooting him dead in front of his family on his 36th birthday<sup>2</sup>. In the words of Fionnuala MacCurtain, in her publication 'Remember it's for Ireland', 'though his life was cut brutally short, he was a remarkable man who left a legacy that should be treasured'<sup>3</sup>.

Tomás MacCurtain was succeeded as Lord Mayor by Terence McSwiney, whose family had originally come from Kilmurry. Terence's father had emigrated to Australia in 1885 leaving his mother to raise him and his seven siblings<sup>4</sup>. In 1899 he had co-founded the Celtic Literary Society and began to write plays laced with strong political meaning, such as the political manifesto in verse *The Music of Freedom* that he published in 1907<sup>5</sup>. A member of the Gaelic League, he was a leading organiser of the Irish Volunteers in Cork during 1916, and in the years that followed was arrested a number of times for his activities<sup>6</sup>. As Lord Mayor, he was arrested in August 1920 and charged with sedition, being sentenced to two years imprisonment. At his hearing he stated "I shall be free, alive or dead, within the month"<sup>7</sup>. Going on Hunger Strike in Brixton Prison, his plight garnered huge international sympathy for his situation and for the cause of Irish Republicanism. After 74 days, Terence McSwiney passed away on 25 October 1920<sup>8</sup>.



The 1916 Commemorative Plaque, located on the wall of Kilmurry Independence Museum.



Both Lord Mayors are today remembered throughout the city and county, both in placenames and with memorials. MacSwiney is remembered in the Kilmurry Independence Museum, which was officially opened by Uachtarán Michael D. Higgins on 21st August, 2016. A plaque commemorates the location where MacCurtain was gunned down in the city, and he is also remembered in his native Ballyknockane, Mourneabbey.



Mourneabbey Memorial.

<sup>1</sup> Lalor, Brian (ed.) 2003 The Encyclopedia of Ireland, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 666.

<sup>2</sup> Cork City 1916, "Tomás Mac Curtain." Available at <http://corkcity1916.ie/2016/01/28/tomas-maccurtain/>. Accessed 29 September 2016.

<sup>3</sup> MacCurtain, Fionnuala, 2006. Remember it's for Ireland. Mercier, Cork, 12

<sup>4</sup> UCD Centenaries Website "MacSwiney, Terence James" by Patrick Maume. Available at [http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-](http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/MacSwiney-Terence_James.pdf)

[content/uploads/2015/04/MacSwiney-Terence\\_James.pdf](http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/MacSwiney-Terence_James.pdf). Accessed 1 October 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> UCD Centenaries Website "Terence MacSwiney: Triumph of Blood Sacrifice" by Cathal Billings. Available at <http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Terence-Macswiney.pdf>. Accessed 1 October 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Maume, Op. Cit.



Though the War of Independence had started in 1919, and July 1918 if one accounts for Béal a'Ghleanna, it was a series of attempted attacks in Cork in early 1920 that many regarded as indicating the conflict was entering a new and more violent phase. The most successful of these was undertaken on 2 January 1920, when the IRA attacked Carrigtwohill RIC Barracks, an operation that marked the first time that a semi-fortified police station had been captured<sup>1</sup>. One of those who participated in the attack was Michael Burke from Cobh:

“late in the year 1919 the Brigade decided that a barracks should be attacked in East Cork, and the 4th Battalion staff selected Carrigtwohill RIC barracks for an attack... The attacking party was composed of Volunteers from Cobh and Midleton... We arrived in Carrigtwohill about 10 p.m., where the guns we brought were distributed among the Cobh men. In Carrigtwohill I met Michael Leahy, the Battalion O/C, who instructed me to select a man with a revolver and go through the village to the schoolhouse, where I was to pick up two men from the Midleton Company armed with revolvers. The party of four of us were then to go on to the main street and, on the firing of the first shots by our main attacking party, we were to shoot any RIC who might be on the street when the attack on the barracks opened... I got in touch with the two Midleton men in the schoolhouse, as instructed by the O/C, Michael Leahy, and informed the other Volunteers there to proceed to a haóyrick at the rear of the barracks... When our attack opened with rifles and shotguns I made for the hayrick at the rear of the barracks, guided by a local man who said he knew the place well. We got to a position behind the barracks and proceeded to cross an iron gate when we were fired on from the barrack windows. To add to our misfortune, some of the Volunteers on the hayrick mistook us for RIC trying to escape and fired on us. We got out of this to a position behind the pillars of a gate on a field. After some time we proceeded to within two houses of the barracks, where I was instructed to go down to the crossroads at the end of the street to see how things were and to report back. This I did.

Meanwhile, the attack was in full swing, the RIC replying with heavy rifle fire and grenades. They continually kept sending up Verey lights to summon assistance. After an hour or so of this, John Moore... set off his gelignite in holes bored in the gable end of the barrack wall. Several Volunteers entered the barrack through the breach and forced the garrison of eight or ten to surrender. I entered the barracks by the front door, which was opened by our men who had blasted their way in. I saw the RIC facing the wall of the day-room with their hands up... I was instructed to... bring up the motor van... The captured arms and ammunition were put into it and taken away by some of our men. In the village street Michael Leahy had lined up the Volunteers, and, having brought them to attention, all sang a verse of the National Anthem.<sup>2</sup>”





Attacks on, and the abandonment of, RIC Barracks were a key part of IRA strategy, particularly in the early stages of the War of Independence. For every successful effort like that at Carrigtwohill, there were many that didn't succeed, though cumulatively the actions often forced the civil power from the countryside. Though the RIC Station at Carrigtwohill does not survive, one that does is that at Carrigadrohid. The barracks there was constructed around 1830 and marked the continuing importance of this crossing point of the River Lee<sup>1</sup>. The nearby castle had been the scene of Bishop MacEgan's death, hanged in front of the garrison while Parliamentary forces sought to force its surrender in 1650<sup>2</sup>.



Carrigadrohid RIC Barracks.

In June 1920, the IRA decided to take the RIC Barracks, in a dramatic and sustained action that continued across a number of hours. One of the participants in that attack was Charles Brown, who left a detailed account of the attempt:

“ In early June it was decided to eliminate the enemy post at Carrigadrohid. This barracks was now garrisoned by about fifteen men of the RIC, which force had been recently augmented by the inclusion of English recruits, known as Black and Tans. It commanded an important bridge over the River Lee and was adjacent to the main Cork-Macroom road. It was a strongly fortified two storied building but was a few feet lower than the building on its immediate right, which was the village Post Office, and it was felt that this fact provided the key to its capture.

Plans were accordingly put in train and on the night of June 9th a force of about twenty-five men invested the building, while ten men entered the Post Office building next door, broke a hole through its roof and then through the roof of the barracks and with the aid of petrol and paraffin oil set it ablaze. With the first sound of a sledge hammer on the roof the enemy opened fire, which was returned by our men, and while the blaze grew larger, taking in the greater portion of the barrack roof, the garrison below retreated to the ground floor where from behind steel shutters and sandbags they kept up a steady fire.

An effort was made by the attackers from their position on the roof of the Post Office to blow a breach in the gable wall of the barracks; the gables of both buildings were separated from each other by about two feet, the intervening space being filled with barbed wire, but the guncotton being used for this purpose slipped from its position and fell through the barbed wire to the ground.

A few tins of petrol were thrown through a hole in the burning roof and these exploded in the room below sending flames through the top windows but still the fire did not take hold of the ground floor where the garrison had taken refuge and the night wore slowly on with the intermittent crack of rifles and the flames leaping over the Verrey lights which were used by the defendants to summon assistance. The attack had started about 11 p.m. and these lights were being sent up continuously and though plainly seen at Macroom, five miles away, brought no assistance from the garrison stationed there. Provision had been made against this possibility and the road between was sealed off by a strong force of Volunteers under S. O'Connor, Captain, 'B' Company. Other roads were held by the men of the other Companies of the Battalion acting under their O.Cs.

Around 3 a.m., oil supplies having been exhausted, it was evident that the attack would not attain its objective and instructions were issued by the Battalion O.C., who was in charge of the operation, to disperse. Word was accordingly sent to the various road blocks and in the light of the approaching dawn the IRA forces silently returned to their homes.

The barracks were evacuated later on this day, the building being roofless, and that night it was completely demolished by our forces. Within a week, however, the enemy occupied O' Donoghue's, a demesne house nearby, with a larger force and this he strongly fortified. He held this position intact until the Truce.<sup>3</sup> ”



## 19 Kilmichael

There are few ambushes that took place anywhere in Ireland during the War of Independence which rival Kilmichael for fame. As 1920 progressed, the pressure that British forces, now including para-military units such as the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, led ever increasing numbers of Volunteers to go 'on the run.' By the summer and autumn, what became known as Flying Columns or Active Service Units began to be created, representing full-time operational IRA units. One of them was the Column of Cork No. 3 Brigade, which on 28 November 1920 lay ambush at Kilmichael. One of their number was Timothy Keohane:

“Early on the morning of November 28th 1920, the column was paraded by the O/C (Tom Barry), who told us that we were going to attack a convoy of Auxiliaries at Kilmichael on the Macroom-Dunmanway road. The site selected for the ambush was on a straight stretch between two right-angled turns about 1 ½ miles south of Kilmichael. We reached this position about 7.30 a.m. and immediately set about building a protection wall of loose stones at the Macroom side (west) of a high rock just north of the road. A few stones were also placed on the fence at the eastern end of the straight within which the convoy was to be ambushed. All sections were then moved into their positions. I was with Pat Deasy on a high rock at the northern side of the road and within a short distance, about 150 yards, of the command post at the eastern end where the O/C (Tom Barry) had 3 riflemen. Mick McCarthy 9Vice O/C Dunmanway Battn.) was with a party of 4 just underneath our position on the rock and behind the wall of stones which had been erected as cover. There were also 5 or 6 others just to the west of our position and slightly to the rear. There was another section of about 10 men at the western end of the position and also north of the road, while about midway in the straight and south of the road was a section of five or six men. This latter section were behind some rocks about 50 yards from the road. The remainder of the column were north of the ambush position at the western end...

About 4 p.m our scouts to the west reported the approach of an enemy convoy. Our orders were to allow the leading lorry to pass our position, to be dealt with by the party at the command post at the eastern end. The first lorry then drove past us and fire was opened on it by the section to the east at Tom Barry's post. We then opened fire on the second lorry, as did the other sections north of the road. The Auxiliaries, who survived the opening burst, jumped from the lorries and took what cover they could behind rocks at the north side. The enemy party in the leading lorry was disposed of in about five or six minutes, but the survivors from the second lorry continued to fight for about 20/30 minutes.<sup>1</sup>”





In Tom Barry's 1949 publication 'Guerrilla Days in Ireland', he notes that after a while into the fighting at Kilmichael, the Auxiliaries shouted 'We Surrender'. However, according to Tom Barry, suddenly the 'Auxiliaries were firing again with revolvers'<sup>2</sup>, killing Volunteers in the column in this process and Tom Barry immediately gave the order 'Rapid fire and do not stop until I tell you'<sup>3</sup>. Of the 18 Auxiliaries, 16 died on the road, one was severely wounded and another initially escaped but was subsequently captured and shot. The Column lost two men killed outright and a third mortally wounded.

The Kilmichael ambush is representative of the escalation in the conflict through late 1920 and 1921 that saw a number of violent confrontations throughout the county. Today the site is marked by the Kilmichael Memorial that was erected in 1966, and has recently been developed by the Kilmichael-Crossbarry Commemoration Committee.



<sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 1295: Timothy Keohane, Member of Column, Cork 3 Brigade, Second Lieutenant, Timoleague Company, 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> Barry, Tom, 1968 Edn. *Guerrilla Days in Ireland*. Anvil Books, Tralee, 45-6

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



## 20 Midleton

By late 1920, though there had been a number of unofficial reprisals against both civilians and suspected IRA Volunteers by the RIC and military, none had official sanction. All that changed after the events on the Main Street of Midleton on 29 December 1920. That was the evening when men of the 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, attacked and mortally wounded three RIC men in a close quarter ambush. One of those present was Dan Cashman:

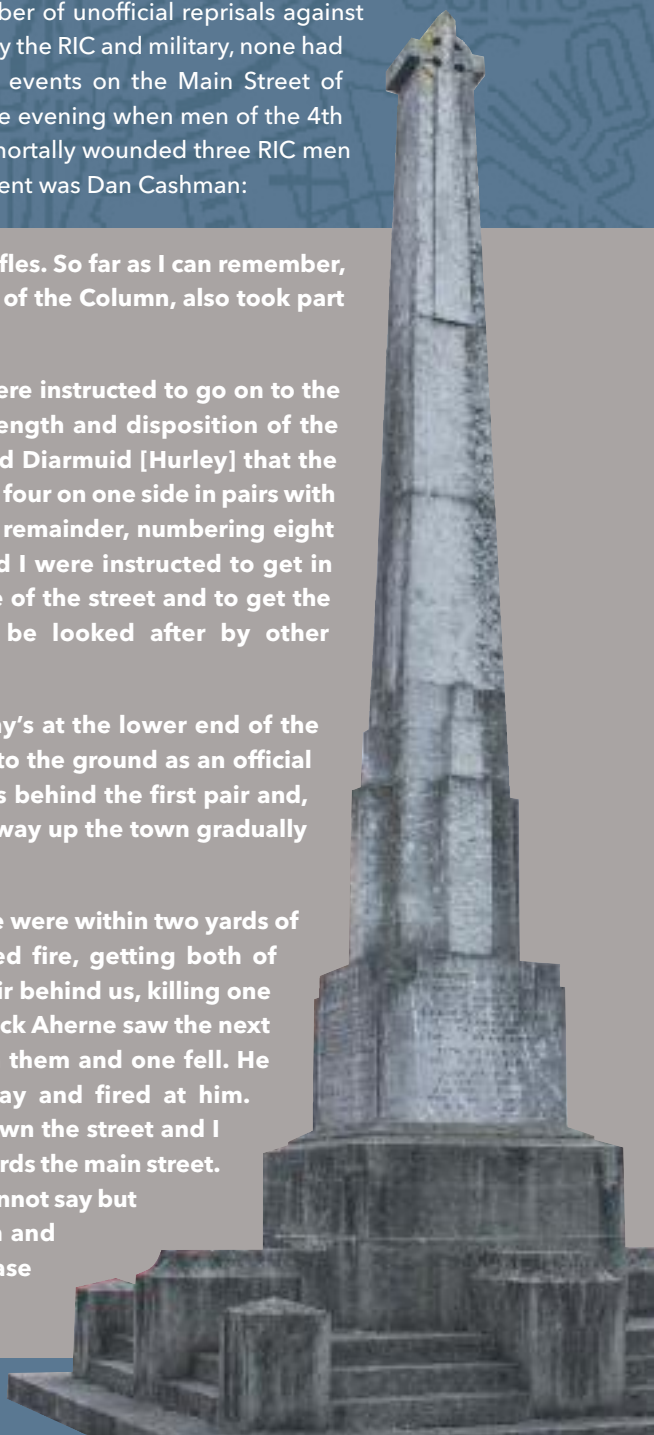
“...We were armed with revolvers and rifles. So far as I can remember, some Midleton men, not regular members of the Column, also took part in the action which followed.

Paddy Whelan and one other Volunteer were instructed to go on to the Main Street and report back as to the strength and disposition of the Black and Tan patrol. They did so, and told Diarmuid [Hurley] that the patrol operated on either side of the street, four on one side in pairs with the same distance between each pair; the remainder, numbering eight to ten, on the other side. Jack Aherne and I were instructed to get in between the two pairs on the eastern side of the street and to get the leading pair: the pair behind were to be looked after by other Volunteers.

We got into the doorway of Paul McCarthy's at the lower end of the town (this house was subsequently razed to the ground as an official reprisal) and slipped in about fifteen yards behind the first pair and, pretending to be inebriated, we sang our way up the town gradually getting nearer our objective.

At Charles [now Connolly] Street corner we were within two yards of the two Tans and we immediately opened fire, getting both of them... Jack Aherne then turned on the pair behind us, killing one and capturing the other. Turning quickly Jack Aherne saw the next two Tans close behind; he opened fire on them and one fell. He followed up the other who had run away and fired at him. Meanwhile, shooting broke out up and down the street and I saw a Tan at Church Lane corner firing towards the main street. As he ran I fired on him with what result I cannot say but I was hit in the chest by a bullet from him and was providentially saved by a cigarette case which I carried in my breast pocket.<sup>1</sup>”

Memorial to the IRA men of 'B' Company in Midleton.



# MIDLETON AMBUSH

## 29 December 1920

### Timeline

- 16 IRA Volunteers assemble in the one-ends off Charles Street (near Cannon St.).

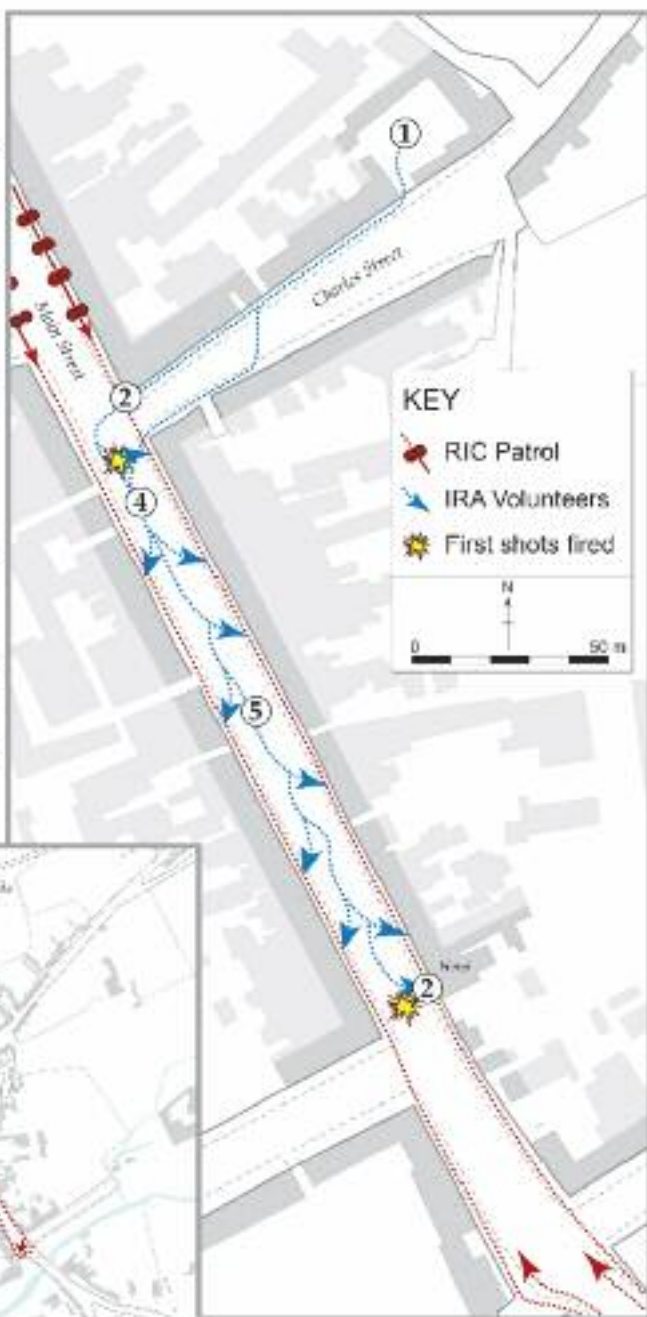
- Volunteers Bobby Whelan and Jack Malone move to observe patrol from the corner of Charles Street and Middleton Arms Hotel.

- RIC Patrol leaves Constabulary Barracks. They walk in pairs, six paces apart, 4 paces on right and 2 paces on west side of Main Street.

- Volunteers move into position to shoot moving patrol, some pretending to be drunk.

- On the patrol's return, the IRA attack when it is between the Middleton Arms and Charles Street.

In the close range engagement, three of the patrol are mortally wounded. The IRA escaped with one man wounded.



Middleton Ambush - timeline of events.



As a result of the Midleton Ambush, Brigadier-General Higginson ordered that the homes of a number of suspected IRA sympathisers be destroyed, which was duly carried out, in what became the first official British military reprisal of the conflict. Pathé filmed the aftermath of this destruction in the town- footage that still survives. It is possible based on the accounts that survive to visually portray the events as they occurred during the Midleton Ambush, which has been attempted in the accompanying map. This is something that is possible for many of Cork's War of Independence sites.

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<sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 1523: Daniel Cashman, Member of 'B' Company, 4th Battn., and member of East Cork Flying Column, 7-9.

As the War of Independence intensified, it was inevitable that the IRA would meet with reverses. One of the most notable came on 28 January 1921, when members of 6th Battalion of Cork No. 1 Brigade lay in ambush position at Godfrey's Cross on the road between Coachford and Dripsey. As was common in ambush situations, they had been in position for many hours awaiting the enemy, but unfortunately for the Volunteers, their position had been given away. As they waited, the alerted British began to close in. Michael Mullane's account of the event provides detail not only on what occurred, but also on the level of preparation that often went into an ambush:

“When we reached the selected position in the vicinity of Dripsey on the main Cork-Macroom road, we were instructed to dig a trench on the side of a hill about 30 yards from the road and overlooking same. We were also to prepare a tree for the blocking of the road at the right moment, by sawing it practically the whole way through and tying it with a rope to ensure that it did not fall before the proper time. When all this work had been completed, it was about 5. A.m. on January 28th 1921.

At this stage, about a dozen members of my party were ordered to proceed to a point about one mile to the east (Ballincollig) side of the ambush site and to prepare a tree for roadblocking at that point. This roadblock was not to be set up until the enemy party had passed on to the west and were under fire at the main position... The road-blocking party now moved off to the east as the column arrived to take up their positions. With about six other members of my party, I fell in with the column. We were armed with shotguns. We took up our position on the eastern flank of the main body. On the approach of the leading enemy lorry, I was detailed to cut the rope which was holding the tree to block the road.

Everybody was in position about 6 a.m. and we remained there throughout the day until about 4 p.m. At this stage the battalion O/C (Jack O'Leary) was thinking of withdrawing from the position. He moved along the line to our flank (eastern) and was instructing me to ensure that the tree for the roadblock was knocked before we withdrew, in case it would fall on anybody later. Before he had completed his instructions to me, he glanced to the east and observed some soldiers advancing towards us in a field to the east. As it was now obvious that the enemy were aware of our position, orders to withdraw were given. All men in the main position moved up the hill to our rear and away from the road. As we withdrew, we came under fire from an enemy party which had come in on our rear. We were now forced to move back in haste towards the main road. Having reached the road, we travelled under cover of the fence for about 100 yards in a westerly direction, where we entered a laneway leading north. We moved along this laneway under cover, and after travelling about 40/50 yards we lost contact with the enemy. The majority of the ambush party withdrew towards Coachford and on to Rylane. I took cover in a furze brake near Coachford and remained there until darkness set in, when I moved across country to my home area.<sup>1</sup>”





A number of IRA men were wounded and captured, and five of them were sentenced to death. It transpired that the IRA's position had been given away by a local woman, Mary Lindsay. In an effort to prevent the execution of their comrades, the IRA took Mrs. Lindsay and her chauffeur captive, threatening to shoot them if the Volunteers were put to death. When the five were executed on 28 February, the IRA reciprocated, killing their two captives in turn<sup>2</sup>. Today a memorial is located near the site of the fateful engagement.



**Dripsey Ambush plaque.**

Image courtesy of Doug Lucey.



**The Dripsey Ambush Memorial.**

<sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 1689: Michael Mullane, Officer Commanding, Inniscarra Company, Donoughmore Battalion, Cork 1 Brigade, 8-10.

<sup>2</sup> Witness Statement 2616: Daniel McCarthy, Section Commander, Rylane Company, Donoughmore Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, 8.



The early months of 1921 were witnessing a number of intensive actions in Cork, and victories continued to be interspersed with defeats. On 11 February the IRA targeted a train carrying British troops at Drishanebeg, near Millstreet, in an action that inflicted five casualties on the enemy<sup>1</sup>.

On the face of things, the idea of attacking the military while aboard train appeared a good one, and so it was determined to execute a similar plan on the Cork to Bandon line at Upton on 15 February<sup>2</sup>. However, rather than being concentrated in a single carriage as they had been at Drishanebeg, at Upton the soldiers were scattered through the train. When the train stopped at Upton Station the Volunteers opened fire, but the military responded fiercely. Two of the IRA were killed and three others wounded within moments, while Charlie Hurley, the Officer Commanding was also downed. Six civilians also died before the orders were given to withdraw<sup>3</sup>.

“LET ERIN REMEMBER”  
LÁTHAIR LUÍOCHÁN  
DRISEAN BEAG  
11 - 2 - 1921  
SITE OF  
DRISHANEPEG AMBUSH.

Drishanebeg Train Ambush Plaque. Image courtesy of Noreen Meaney.

Tim Herlihy was one of the Volunteers asked to care for the wounded from Upton. His statement demonstrates how the IRA relied on a network of Volunteers, Cumann na mBan, civilians and safe-houses to operate:

“Two of the wounded in Upton ambush, Jack Hartnett and Danny O’Mahoney, were brought to Bebee Ford’s, Ballinphellic. I helped to guard them. On Dick Barrett’s instructions I went to town for a doctor. Dr. Dundon refused to travel out to them with me but Dr. Hegarty came gladly. When I explained the nature of their wounds he advised an ambulance for hospital. We went to the Fire Station. Yes, one man would drive but he advised me our only hope of getting through would be early next morning. I went out with Dr. Hegarty who did his best for the wounded but said a hospital was necessary as both men would have a serious operation. Next morning, about 6 a.m., I directed the ambulance to Bebee Ford’s for the wounded, and my sister, who had been helping Bebee Ford nurse them, went back in the ambulance to the South Infirmary where the 2nd Battalion took over responsibility for their safety.

Dick Barrett asked me to safeguard Brigade Comdt. Charley Hurley, also wounded at Upton and then staying at Timothy Sullivan’s house, Cloughdough. The Sullivans, Tome Kelleher and I shifted Charley by night in a horse and trap (he was wounded in the head as well as having a badly sprained ankle) to various safe houses, eventually to Mahoneys, Windsor, where he remained some days guarded by ‘B’ Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Cork Brigade. Seán Buckley and I brought Charley to my own house, then down to Bebee Ford’s where I parted with them.<sup>4</sup>”



Upton Train Station.



**Upton Train Station Memorial.**

Although the train no longer runs through Upton, the station house where the action took place survives, and a memorial is located at the site in memory of the Volunteers who died there.

<sup>1</sup> Hopkinson, Michael 2004. *The Irish War of Independence*. Gill & Macmillan: Dublin 128.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Witness Statement 443: Frank Neville, Quartermaster Knockavilla Company, 1st (Bandon) Battalion; Assistant

Quartermaster, 3rd (West Cork) Brigade, 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> Witness Statement 810: Tim Herlihy and Seven Others, Members of 3rd Battalion, 1st Cork Brigade, 1920.

## 23 Clonmult

On 20 February 1921 the IRA suffered their greatest single defeat, in terms of lives lost, during the War of Independence. That was the day that members of the 4th Battalion Cork No.1 Brigade Column were surrounded in the farmhouse in which they were based, outside the village of Clonmult. Jack O'Connell was one of those inside:

“The mid-day meal had been served to the column at Clonmult. Packing up operations were practically completed. Sentries had unfortunately been withdrawn. Two members of the column had gone to the well to fill some water bottles. These two men had not got their rifles with them, but they did carry revolvers. The column was waiting for the local guides to lead it to the next company area, in its journey to the new location. The time was now approximately 4 p.m. One of the men happened, by chance, to look out through one of the front windows and saw some British soldiers crawling past the gateway at the far side of the boreen. Almost immediately afterwards, fire was opened up on the house from practically all sides.

Although I had been but a week with the column in Clonmult, I had been placed in charge by Diarmuid Hurley before he left, a little over an hour previously. I held a hurried council of war with three other members, and it was decided to make a sortie out. The reserve of ammunition was distributed, and also the grenades, and the column started to sing “The Soldiers’ Song”.

I led the sortie, carrying a rifle with fixed bayonet, and dashed, through a hail of enemy bullets, across the yard to a gateway. I turned up to the right, and was fired on by two soldiers from the corner of a field bordering the western side of the haggard. I returned the fire, wounding one; the other ran back. I turned round to look for my companions who had attempted the sortie with me, and discovered, to my astonishment, that I was alone. I went back down the boreen as far as the small isolated shed, previously referred to, but could not find anybody. From my position here, I could not see the doorway of the house, but, judging from the intensive rifle fire, I judged it would be madness to attempt to rejoin my comrades in the house. I, therefore, decided to try and get through the military cordon and secure some help locally. Circling the small shed, I went down a ‘blind’ boreen; near the end of this boreen, I was fired on by an officer. I fired back at him and stopped his firing. Leaving this boreen, I proceeded up a hill, along high ground over the house, and down behind it. While making this circle, I fired on two soldiers who were running in the direction of a crossroads, but without effect. I also noticed a party of five soldiers converging on the house from the north-west.<sup>1</sup>”

Memorial to Clonmult Ambush in  
Midleton's Holy Rosary Cemetery.

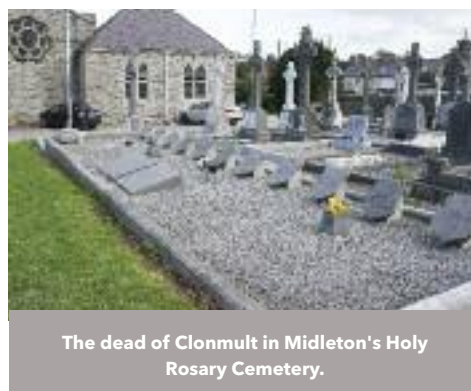






It transpired that of the men who followed O'Connell out the door, the two immediately behind him had been killed immediately. A third had reached a nearby field before he was gunned down, while a fourth was called back into the house<sup>2</sup>. Jack O'Connell was the only man to get away. Those still alive in the house were forced to surrender when it was set ablaze, and a number were allegedly summarily executed. A total of twelve Volunteers were killed at Clonmult, with a further two subsequently executed following trial. Suspecting the position had been given away by an informer, after Clonmult there was little mercy for those suspected of collaborating with the British.

Though the farmhouse in which the Column were located was destroyed during the attack, a memorial today stands on the spot where it once was. Much of the surrounding landscape retains something of the character it had when the events took place.



<sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 1444: Lieutenant Colonel John P. O'Connell, Captain, Cobh Company, 9-10

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 12.



## 24 Coolnacahera (Coolavokig)

Although the early months of 1921 brought some tough defeats for the IRA, there were also notable successes. One of those was the ambush of 25 February 1921 undertaken by Seán O'Hegarty and men of Cork No. 1 Brigade. Patrick O'Sullivan describes the action, that included the deployment of machine-guns by the IRA:

“Our biggest operation took place on this road [Macroom-Ballyvourney] at a place called Coolavokig on the morning of 25th February. The Column had been lying in wait for a number of days, retiring after nightfall to the base at Renaniree. We had hardly settled into our allotted positions this particular morning when at 8 o'clock along came about eight tender loads of Auxiliaries. They had hostages with them too.

Unfortunately they spotted one of our men moving to his position and they scented danger. A couple of them sent up into the rocky hillside to act as scouts were shot dead and immediately the fight was on. All the Auxiliaries dismounted from their tenders as fire was opened on the leading one from one of our Lewis guns. For some reason the other gun wasn't brought into action at all.

We had only 40 men, though Dan Corkery, O/C 7th Battalion, had a party on the opposite side of the road to us to keep the enemy pinned to the road and away from the high ground on his (Corkery's) side. The Auxiliaries had approximately 90, yet so effective was our fire that they retreated into two old cottages alongside the road. At least some of them died and the hostages along with them. To their credit it must be stated that they did not harm the hostages, who came out unscathed from the fight. Dan Corkery's men had the Auxiliaries left in the open under fire while on our side we kept up a fusillade on the windows and doors of the cottages.

Large reinforcements of military from different points came to the rescue and at 12 noon, after four hours' continuous firing, we had to break off the engagement and retire... Some of the reinforcements were engaged in a running fight with us later in the day, about 2 p.m., at Coomraclohy, over three miles from Coolavokig. No harm came to the Column from this encounter.<sup>1</sup> ”



Memorial at the Cúl na Catharach site.

The ambush at Coolnacahera was one of the largest in Cork, and was also notable in that in the aftermath the British employed planes in an effort to spot the IRA's movements. It is today depicted on Ordnance Survey mapping, and a monument is located at the site of the ambush.



An information sign at the ambush site was unveiled on September 11th 2016, and such was the importance of this ambush in the War of Independence, that it is states on the sign 'It is not possible to find words that would do justice to the far reaching influence which the iconic site of the Cúl na Catharach Ambush, as distinct from the actual engagement itself, had, at international level on their success of Ireland's Fight for Freedom... it extended all the way to the British House of Commons where it was the source of information that Lord Birkenhead had when his speech included "The Failure of Our Military Methods" prior to the Truce... Cúl na Catharach is the only official Ambush site recognised by the OSI on their maps and has been studied and held as an exemplar in military academies the world over. The App Culnacatharach can be downloaded for free at <http://culnacatharach.myapp.name> and will guide you through the positions and movements of the battle'.

It is interesting to note that in respect of the Cúl na Catharach event, it was alleged that the Auxiliaries had been tipped off by a spy. Speaking of this informer Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin refers to him as the "unspeakable 'X'" in his book 'Where mountainy men have sown', and notes that in advance of the ambush, "certainly he had been over inquisitive about the names of the people and places while in the column... I pray God that his like may not be there again"<sup>2</sup>.



The information sign unveiled at Cúl na Catharach on September 11th, 2016.

<sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 878: Dr. Patrick O'Sullivan, O/C Kilnamartyra Company, Irish Volunteers, 1914-, O/C 8th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, 1919-, 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> Ó Súilleabháin, Mícheál, 1965. Where mountainy men have sown. Anvil Books, Tralee, 105

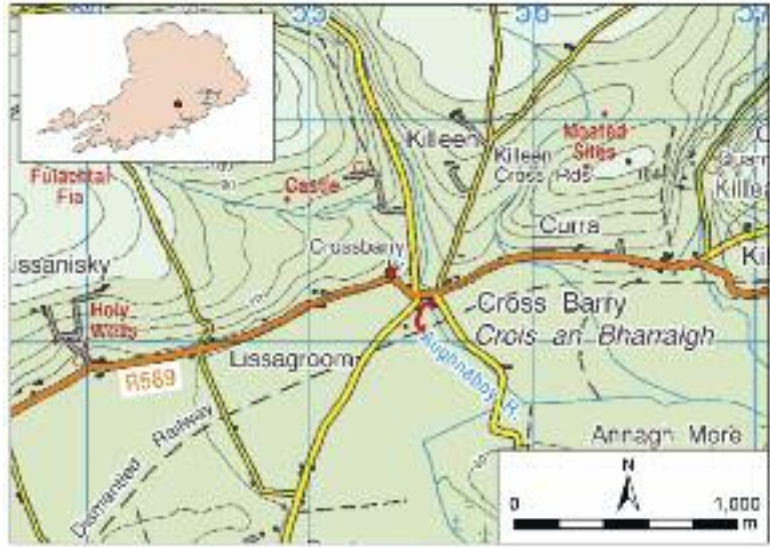
## 25 Crossbarry

The largest engagement of the War of Independence, and the one often regarded as being closest to what might be regarded as a conventional military engagement, occurred at Crossbarry on 19 March 1921. There Tom Barry led over 100 Volunteers into the field in a fight against a superior in number British force which was seeking to track them down. With his men in ambush position, here is how Barry described the commencement of the action:

“About 8 a.m. a long line of lorries were between Crowley’s Section in the centre and O’Connell’s flankers, but many more stretched back along the road. Liam Deasy and I flattened against the ditch as the leading lorry came on, but suddenly it halted and the soldiers started shouting, for unfortunately, despite the strictest orders, a Volunteer had shown himself at a raised barn door and was seen by many of the British. The British started to scramble from their lorries but the order to fire was given and Crowley’s Section opened up at them. Immediately John Lordan’s and Hales’ Sections also attacked the enemy nearest them and away on our flank Christy O’Connell’s men blazed at the enemy on the road below. Begley played martial airs on his warpipes as four of our Sections attacked. Volley after volley was fired mostly at ranges from five to ten yards at those British and they broke and scattered, leaving their dead, a fair amount of arms and their lorries behind them. The survivors had scrambled over the southern ditch of the road and were running panic stricken towards the south.”<sup>1</sup>



Crossbarry Ambush Memorial unveiled in 1966.



This proved to be just the first phase of what would develop into a protracted action, as secondary engagements broke out towards the Column's flank and rear. One of them erupted as British formation moved up through what was known as 'Castlefield':

“...when they [the British] emerged on to the Castlefield, Kelleher's riflemen were waiting for them. Kelleher's Section allowed them to come to within fifty yards of its position before opening fire and knocking over a number of them. The remainder hurriedly retired to cover from where they continued to engage our men. Immediately this action started I sent Jim Murphy (Spud) and eleven riflement to reinforce Kelleher... There were now twenty-six officers and men facing this British Column and our line was extended northwards to counter an anticipated enemy flanking movement.<sup>2</sup>”

Barry successfully exfiltrated his men from Crossbarry, having inflicted at least thirteen casualties on the enemy while losing six dead<sup>3</sup>.

Today, and although difficult to access, the vast majority of the ground over which the fighting at Crossbarry took place remains much as it did in 1921. The farmhouses, boreens and ditches defended by the IRA are largely intact, as are the buildings and fields that played a role in the engagements such as that at 'Castlefield', so called because of a ruinous castle that stands within it. On the periphery of the ambush area is the Crossbarry Memorial, which was erected at the site in 1966, in a ceremony in which Tom Barry himself gave the oration.

<sup>1</sup> Barry, Tom 1989. *Guerilla Days in Ireland*. Anvil: Dublin, 128.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>3</sup> Hopkinson, Michael 2004. *The Irish War of Independence*. Gill & Macmillan: Dublin, 127.



## 26 Clogagh Church And Cemetery

The IRA would have been utterly incapable of maintaining their guerrilla war without the myriad forms of assistance provided by Cumann na mBan. The organisation was especially vital when it came to scouting, intelligence and communications, and also provided important revenue-raising, logistical and medical support to Volunteers. They were also often asked to undertake high-risk missions that were impossible for others to perform. Mary O'Neill of Clogagh (later Mrs. Walsh) was one of them- a Captain in the South Bandon District of Cumann na mBan. She provides an insight into the activities she and other members undertook around Clogagh Church and Cemetery during the War of Independence<sup>1</sup>.



Present day Clogagh Church.



Clogagh Church.



Mary led her branch in undertaking Irish classes, practicing bandaging and being instructed in first aid. Her brothers were active Volunteers, and their home in Clogagh was a hotbed of activity throughout the revolutionary period, being frequently raided. During the course of the conflict she treated Volunteers who had been wounded in engagements such as Kilmichael, but was also asked to play a leading role when Volunteers lost their lives. When Charlie Hurley, the Officer Commanding Cork No. 3 Brigade, was killed in the actions leading up to the Crossbarry ambush, it was Cumann na mBan who were tasked with retrieving his body from the Bandon Morgue. 'Hurley was engaged to Leslie Price and she had the sad duty of driving her fiancée's body by pony and trap through the night to a small cemetery in Clogach"<sup>2</sup>. There Mary and others in Cumann na mBan kept vigil in the church during the night. At dawn the next morning members of the Column arrived for the funeral, playing *Wrap the Green Flag round me Boys* and firing three volleys over his grave before departing. This was not the only time Cumann na mBan were tasked with the retrieval and guarding of remains. Another occasion in which Mary played a leading role was in bringing the body of Con Murphy of the Timoleague Company to Clogagh in 1921. He had been shot and killed having left a nearby meeting:

“ We were not allowed leave the house that morning until the military had removed in a pony and trap the body, which was taken to Kinsale across the country. Old James O'Mahony was also taken in the trap as they thought the dead man was his son. The military were never told who prisoners or dead were. It was customary to return bodies to the workhouse in Bandon after identification.

Word was brought to us to get the body to Clogagh- Timoleague Cumann na mBan girls, and myself were provided with a pony and trap and, to our disappointment, the body had not been returned to Bandon. Travelling at this time was difficult, many roads being cut up. Next I was sent with Mary O'Mahony to secure the body if possible - word came he was in Bandon. We cycled to town, got some men and got the coffin placed in a farm cart with some bran bags loaded around it and the driver and Mary O'Mahony sitting on the load. They travelled a roundabout road and arrived in the evening in Clogagh. Meanwhile, I gave word to our lads, at different points, of our progress.

The funeral, like Charlie Hurley's, was carried out at the dawn of next morning, with many of his companions present. Military honours were accorded. I wish to state that the Workhouse was guarded by military to find out who would claim the bodies, but for a short time that day they were called off to surround Kilbrogan graveyard, as Captain F. Hurley - shot in Bandon Park - was buried that day also. We were told that when the soldiers returned and found the body gone they were furious and threatened to burn down the place. Nobody saw the coffin leaving and the nurses were very good.<sup>3</sup>”



Aside from being the final resting place of Volunteers such as Charlie Hurley, Clogagh allows us to explore the vital, and sometimes overlooked role played by Cumann na mBan during the War of Independence in Cork. Cal McCarthy in his publication 'Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution'; sums this role up well:

“The Irish organization known as Cumann na mBan (Irishwomen’s Council), was a unique and peculiar nationalist group in that its membership consisted entirely of women and girls. On the continent of Europe where nationalism was very much in vogue, no other women’s nationalist group existed, or at least, was even remotely prominent. Cumann na mBan were substantial players in the Irish Revolution and many male revolutionaries subsequently acknowledged that they had contributed much to the Irish Republican Army (IRA)’s war effort. The British establishment, which Cumann na mBan sought to overthrow, also acknowledged the contribution of these female revolutionaries by outlawing the organization, also with several other nationalist organisations in 1919.”<sup>4</sup>



Charlie Hurley Grave.

<sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 556: Mrs. Mary Walsh (O'Neill), Captain, South Bandon Area, Cumann na mBan, 1917-1921.

<sup>2</sup> McCarthy, Cal, 2007. Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution. Collins Press, Cork, 143

<sup>3</sup> Witness Statement 556: Mrs. Mary Walsh (O'Neill), Captain, South Bandon Area, Cumann na mBan, 1917-1921. 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> McCarthy, Cal, 2007. Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution. Collins Press, Cork, 1

The parish of Knockraha was the location of 'E' Company, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade during the War of Independence. As a Company area, it is significant, as the IRA forbade attacks on Crown forces there as part of an intentional strategy to avoid suspicion falling on the locality, so it could be used as a vital logistical base by the Brigade<sup>1</sup>. As a result, Knockraha was utilised for a range of activities associated with supporting guerrilla war. These included roles in bomb production and arms storage, as a flying column training area, as a location of important safe-houses, and as a prison and execution site.

The Knockraha History & Heritage Society has carried out extensive work in recording the local story of the War of Independence, and in highlighting and protecting a number of key buildings. Included among these are 'Liberty Hall', where Martin Corry established the local Volunteer Company in 1917, and 'Sing Sing', the crypt in Kilquane Cemetery, now owned by Cork County Council, which was then used as a Cork No. 1 Brigade prison, and from where a number of individuals were executed. Knockraha was also the site of two bomb production factories, one operated by the Company in an underground workspace constructed in Ballynanelagh, with another in Blossomgrove operated by the Brigade.



Liberty Hall in Knockraha where the local company of Volunteers was founded.

The reasons for the existence of two bomb factories in the area was a result of the efforts of Ned Fitzgerald, one of the Knockraha Company and a trained engineer. Martin Corry, who led the Knockraha Company during the War of Independence, explains:

“Ned Fitz came home on his Christmas holidays to Knockraha and immediately reported to me for duty... I said to him drop over to the factory that was going in Blossomgrove at the time [the Brigade bomb factory] and have a look around there and see if you can find anything to do there. He went over - he came back to me the following day. "Martin", he said, "are you in a hurry with those grenades." "I am" says I, "in an awful hurry with them". 'You're not going to get 'em out of that factory" says he. "The best they'll be able to do outta that", he said, "is about twenty grenades a day, for its wrongly constructed." At the time, the Brigade had supplied me with a four-horse power engine, and a fan, for getting a proper blast in the furnace... "Martin", he said, "will you give me your house". My house at the time consisted of a dug out under Denny Lynch's furze break and there was three or four bunks in it... and I said "you can have it... to work on it." He constructed his own furnace, and after trying with two of the ordinary country fire machines, he couldn't get blast enough out of the two fire machines for to melt the metal. So he went off and he got... two machines for cutting cabbage, with a big, big wheel in 'em and he extended the axle on the wheel of the fire machine, and put a big timber pully on the end of it and had a belt on the timber pully and around the big wheel of the cabbage machine and when he got the two of them going he got blast enough for to run the metal- any amount of it. And he proceeded on that. The result was that a purely local team of lads, they were turning out 45 grenades a night, whilst the Brigade one, as they used to call the one in Blossomgrove was only able to do - the greatest number they were able to reach was 25.<sup>2</sup>”



'Sing Sing' Prison in Kilquane Cemetery, Knockraha.



The creche in Knockraha, formerly the site of the Republican, or 'Sinn Fein' Court.

Martin Corry was a fascinating character and stood steadfast in support of the Irish Cause, at one stage having gone on hunger strike, having been arrested for the alleged raiding of arms from the Joyce family in Roorane. Upon arrest and having been taken to the Bridewell Station in Cork:

“he immediately refused to take any food and went on hunger strike. The day after his arrest Constable D’Arcy of the Glounthaune Barracks came up to the Bridewell Station with Martin’s everyday clothes and boots for him to wear in an identity parade... Martin realized that if he had put on these everyday clothes he would stand out from the other 5 or 6 city people in the identity parade. On receiving the clothes he caught them and threw them with all his might at Constable D’Arcy and in fact, knocked him out the door. He was not then requested to wear these clothes... When the parade was over she [Miss Jagoe] stated that she could not identify from the group before her which person raided the house. After two days, a court sitting was held in the Bridewell where Martin Corry was charged with the attempted raid on Jagoe’s house... During the proceedings, Martin Corry refused to obey any of the court rules such as standing up when he was asked or sitting down when he was asked or taking off his hat to honour the court.

Finally, when the court had considered the matter and that Miss Jagoe was unable to identify Martin, he was acquitted of the charge. This was on a Friday morning and he had eaten no food since the previous Sunday. Among those attending the court was Tommy Cahill of Carbery town, Glounthaune. When the trial was over himself and Martin had a celebration. They went down to the Tivoli Restaurant where Martin had three plates of cakes and nine cups of tea, after which he came home to Glounthaune’.<sup>3</sup>”


The efforts of Ned Fitzgerald, Martin Corry and the Knockraha Company were typical of the type of activities that were vital to sustaining the war effort. The Knockraha History and Heritage Society has become the first in the country to seek to formally archaeologically map their parish’s War of Independence heritage, using a combination of local history sources, online resources, local knowledge and archaeological techniques. It is planned to use this information to inform a War of Independence trail in the Company area, which was supported under Cork County Council’s 1916 Centenary Fund, helping to reveal not only this hidden landscape of conflict but also to serve as an educational tool.

When many historians think of Knockraha and its role during the War of Independence they often think of Sing Sing Prison and ‘the Rea’.



# Key


## Knockraha War of Independence features

 Knockraha sites

 Training area

1 - Flying Column Training Area

2 - Company Training Area

 Bomb Factory

1 - Brigade Bomb Factory

2 - Company Bomb Factory

 Building

1 - 'Liberty Hall'

2 - Fitzgerald's Safe House

3 - McGrath's House, Company Camp

4 - Roche's, where Sean Hegarty stayed

5 - McGrath's of Blossomgrove

6 - Long's Forge

 Dug-out

1 - Ballinbrittigh Ringfort

2 - Rathflode Ringfort and Souterrain


3 - Knockraha East Dugout

 Execution site

1 - Twomey's Sandpit

2 - Ballingohig Bridge

3 - The Rea

 Burial Area

 Prison

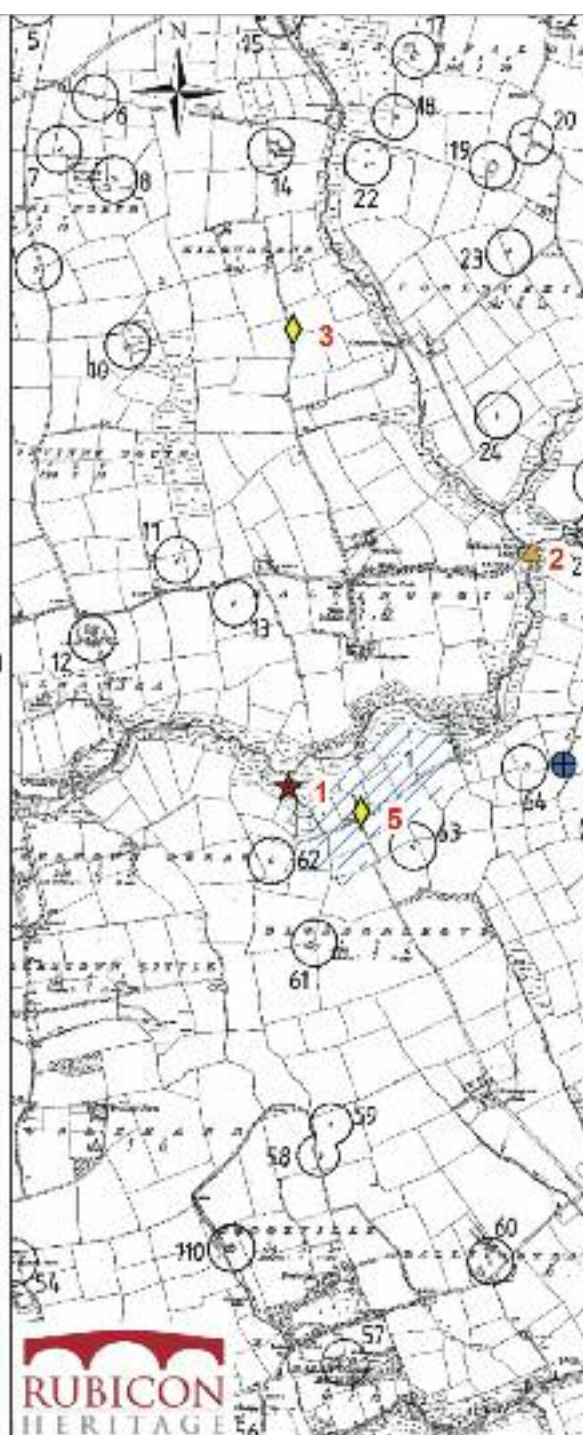
1 - 'Sing Sing'

2 - Carrigreen Prison

 Dumps

1 - Upnor Arms dump

2 - Cast Iron dump for Bomb Factory



The archaeological sites associated with of Knockraha's 'E' Company, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade.





Regarding Sing Sing, it was locally believed that, 'British Authorities would never think that prisoners would be held in a graveyard [and it] made the Brigade's decision to adopt this vault [Sing Sing] as the official prison of the Cork No. 1 Brigade a wise one'<sup>4</sup>.

“As the war intensified prisoners of a more serious nature were being brought to Sing Sing and as such many members of the British forces such as Black and Tans and members of the Cammeron Regiment were held in Sing Sing, many of whom were ultimately executed. Prisoners being brought to Sing Sing would generally be blindfolded so that they would have no idea of where they were or as to what their surroundings were ... So prisoners being taken from Sing Sing who were to be released would first be blindfolded and then walked from the graveyard, possibly to a horse and trap, and taken many miles to another parish to be released. They would not be able to pinpoint at all where they were kept during their captivity.<sup>5</sup>”

Executions, on both sides, remain a dark part of the War of Independence's history, but history nonetheless. Today, Sing Sing Prison can be visited by the public thanks to the Knockraha History and Heritage Society, and has been open during National Heritage Week for many years.

<sup>1</sup> Borgonovo, John 2010. 'The Guerilla Infrastructure: I.R.A. Special Services in the Cork Number One Brigade, 1917-1921' in *Irish Sword* XXVII, No. 108, 205-216, 214.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Corry's account of the Knockraha Bomb

Factory, transcribed courtesy of Jim Fitzgerald.

<sup>3</sup> Knockraha History and Heritage Society, 2016. From Liberty Hall to Sing Sing, 46-7

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Op. Cit. 79

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Op. Cit. 82-3



## Passage West 28

With the coming of Civil War, which started on June 28th, 1922, owing to events at the Four Courts in Dublin, Cork subsequently became part of what was often referred to as the 'Munster Republic.' The Free State National Army forces decided to attack the county by sea, with General Emmet Dalton leading an expedition on 7 August 1922 with the intent to land troops at Passage West, Youghal and Union Hall<sup>1</sup>. The main effort carried 500 men to Passage aboard the *Arvonja*, with 180 bound for Union Hall and 200 for Youghal<sup>2</sup>.



Passage West.

Although the IRA irregulars expected an attempt to land troops on the coast, many of their number were away fighting in Limerick and Waterford, leaving their forces thinly spread. Nonetheless, there were clashes when the National Army came ashore. One of their officers recounted his story of the fight for Passage West:

“ We had to do a good deal of manoeuvres before we could get a landing at Passage, and then when we did pull alongside we were challenged. Fire was opened on us from many points soon after our landing, and parts of the steamer were peppered. A party of troops under Capt. Friel going on the left flank entered the town and rushed it.

Another party under Comdt. Kilcoyne rushed another portion of the town, and a third party advanced along the quays. A heavy engagement took place along there, one irregular being wounded and three taken prisoners. They were all fully armed.

Comdt.-Gen. Ennis was with the party, and advanced along the quays. I went out and searched the whole quayside. I had about seven men with me, and I advanced until I came to a gateway; opposite this was a big wall 40 feet high. When I looked up I saw about 50 heads and as many rifles, There was a shout ‘Put up your hands!’

I thought they were my own men and that they were having a joke, and I asked them what they meant. They said ‘Put up your hands.’ I then said, ‘Is that you, Tom? thinking it was a lad I know; and they asked, ‘Who are you?’ I then saw that they were irregulars. I immediately shouted to my men to rush back. I just took a few steps forward. Immediately there was a volley of shots, and the spot where I stood was ripped up with bullets. Had I taken a step backwards instead of forwards I should have been riddled.

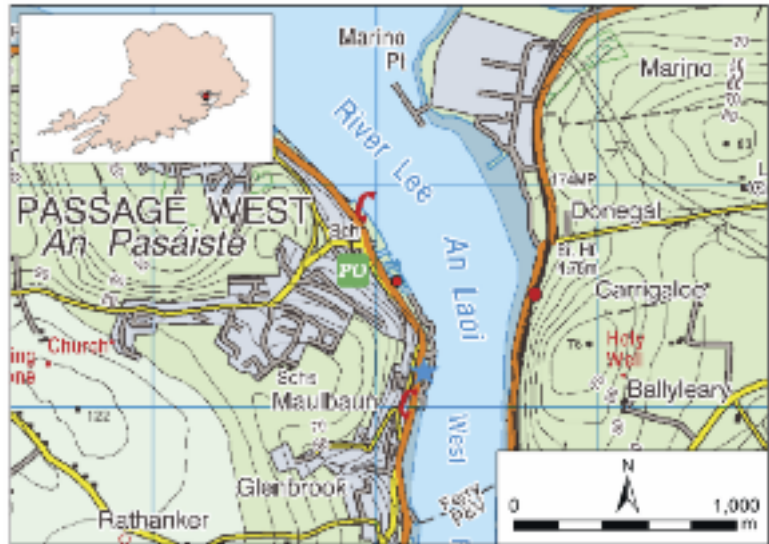
My men first got away, and I took cover under the wall, at the top of which the irregular were. I opened fire on them with my Thompson gun, and there I remained in that position for at least three-quarters of an hour. It was terrible! They were right over me and the bullets were actually grazing my coat and burying themselves in the ground at my feet. The only thing that saved me was the Thompson gun.

After about one hour and a quarter I tried a ruse as the only way of getting away. One of my own men shouted out my name and with the irregulars everywhere around me I then told some of my lads who had got behind the gate opposite to open it and leave it open. They did so. I again opened fire with the Thompson. When they saw the gate open they immediately poured a hail of lead into it from rifles and machine-guns, and just at the moment they ceased and before they had time to reload I dashed across the road and into the fate- that is how I got away... I gave them a good time whilst they were reloading a Lewis gun... but just when I had my men in position they retreated. It was now coming towards morning, and we put our parties and searched the whole town, but we found that all the irregulars had gone away.

We captured two motor cars, a motor cycle and sidecar, about 40 rifles, shotguns, etc., 12 revolvers, and about a dozen prisoners fully armed. We also got a lot of hospital dressings, and three motor boats, which they had left behind.

We got one wounded irregular. He was hit in the head with a Thompson gun bullet, and two others who were wounded were brought away. When Capt. Friel got round at the back we rushed the barracks. The irregulars were taken by surprise, and many of them must have been in bed for they rushed out, only partially dressed and carrying pants in one hand a rifle in the other.<sup>3</sup>”





There was heavy fighting to come in the days that followed, as the IRA formed a defensive line in Rochestown and Douglas to halt the National Army advance on Cork. Indeed, the Battle for Cork that resulted from the landings at Passage West was the largest confrontation in the county during the revolutionary decade<sup>4</sup>. Ultimately, after three days of struggle, the National Army broke through and captured the city. Not long afterwards, the Free State was back in control of the majority of major towns around the county, as the Civil War moved into a new phase- a return to guerrilla war.

<sup>1</sup> Hopkinson, Michael 2004. *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War*. Gill & MacMillan, Dublin, 163-4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The Evening Herald 14 August 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Borgonovo, John 2012. *The Battle for Cork July-August 1922*. Mercier Press, Cork. Kindle Ebook version, Paragraph 4.

## 29 Macroom Castle

Following the battle for Cork, the National Army advance in August 1922 quickly led to the evacuation of many other key towns, such as Buttevant, Fermoy, Macroom, Bantry, Clonakilty, Inchigeelagh and Kinsale<sup>1</sup>. Prior to their departure, the IRA sought to destroy some of the military assets in these localities, such as Charles Fort in Kinsale. Another example of a building burned at this time was Macroom Castle.

Following the Truce, Macroom Castle, which had been used as an Auxiliary base, had been taken over by the 7th Battalion of Cork No. 1 Brigade as their headquarters<sup>2</sup>. Despite the fragile peace, on 27 April 1922 the local IRA had taken captive three British Army officers and their driver and executed them, principally because two of the officers had been suspected of killing Republican prisoners, and the Volunteers wanted revenge<sup>3</sup>. British troops under Bernard Law Montgomery, later a famed Second World War General, moved into the town in force to search for the soldiers, but following a tense standoff withdrew<sup>4</sup>. Nora Cunningham of Cumann na mBan remembered the incident:

“ Sometime in April... three British officers, accompanied by a driver, arrived in Macroom Castle and were, I think, later executed as spies. Following this incident, a strong force of British troops returned to the district and took up positions with a view to attacking the garrison, but they withdrew after about 24 hours. On this occasion, I, with several other members of Cumann na mBan, was 'standing to' to undertake First Aid duty in the event of a fight.<sup>5</sup> ”



Although Macroom Castle no longer stands, some of the buildings associated with the castle still remain on site.



Although Macroom Castle had escaped on this occasion, it was the advance of the National Army towards the town in August that ultimately sealed its fate. The Cork Examiner, reporting favourably on the National Army advance, wrote on 19 August:

“The far-famed Macroom Castle, together with the police barracks and the Courthouse, were burned, and, though the townspeople regretted that the National troops did not arrive a little sooner and save those premises, it is highly probable that the burning was timed to take place before the arrival of the troops, and would have taken place in any event...”<sup>6</sup>”



Macroom Castle as it once stood.  
Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

Macroom Castle was never restored in full following the Civil War, and in the 1960's the remains of the castle were deemed unsafe and subsequently demolished. However, many years prior in 1924, the grounds were offered to the local people for a reasonable price such that the site would benefit the town for generations to come. This offer was made by the highly revered Lady Olive Ardilaun and the site has been treasured since, with a native Yew tree recently planted on the grounds in her honour.

The burning of Macroom Castle, Charles Fort in Kinsale, and other sites, serves as a reminder of the tragic 1922-23 period when the county and country were divided in Civil War.

<sup>1</sup> Hopkinson, Michael 2004. *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War*. Gill & MacMillan, Dublin, 164.

<sup>2</sup> Borgonovo, John 2012. *The Battle for Cork July-August 1922*. Mercier Press, Cork. Kindle Ebook version, Chapter 2, The Macroom Disappearances, Paragraph 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Paragraph 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Paragraph 4.

<sup>5</sup> Witness Statement 1690: Miss Nora Cunningham, Member, Macroom Unit, Cumann na mBan, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Cork Examiner 19 August 1922.



## 30 Béal na mBláth

There is little doubt that the most internationally famous incident to occur in Cork during the revolutionary decade is also one of the most tragic. Today it is one of the best remembered events in Irish history. It occurred on 22 August 1922, when General Michael Collins was shot and killed in action during an ambush at Béal na mBláth.

Michael Collins was born in 1890 at Woodfield, Sam's Cross, where his birthplace can be visited. He later moved to Clonakilty, where a museum is now also dedicated to his memory. This is called Michael Collins House, which is run by Cork County Council and was officially opened on April 23rd 2016. There is also another wonderful Michael Collins Centre on the main road between Clonakilty and Timoleague, which is very much worth the visit.



Michael Collins House was officially opened in April, 2016.

Michael Collins emigrated to London in 1906, where he became active in the GAA and Gaelic League, joining the IRB in 1909<sup>1</sup>. Returning to Ireland for the 1916 Rising, he served in the GPO and was later interned in Frongoch. A member of the First Dáil and a Minister, he is best remembered for his role coordinating the IRA military and intelligence campaign during the War of Independence, particularly in Dublin. He led the Irish delegation that negotiated the Treaty for the creation of the Irish Free State, same having been signed on 6th December, 1921, and shortly afterwards, became Minister for Finance and the first Commander-in-Chief of the National Army<sup>2</sup>. In late August 1922, with the conventional phase of the Civil War coming to a close, it would seem that Collins was in Cork seeking to try and bring the conflict to a close.



Béal na mBláth Ambush Memorial.

The convoy in which Michael Collins made his last journey left the Imperial Hotel in Cork at 6.15 a.m. on 22 August, with a view to visiting Macroom, Bandon, Clonakilty, Rosscarbery and Skibbereen<sup>3</sup>. By a little after 4.30 p.m. they were on their return journey, taking the opportunity to stop in a public house beside Sam's Cross, near Collins' birthplace, and where he met a number of relations<sup>4</sup>. By 6.15 p.m. they were on the road again, headed for Bandon<sup>5</sup>. It was here that the last photograph of Collins was ever taken, outside Lee's Hotel (now, the Munster Arms Hotel, Bandon). Leaving the town, their route back to Cork took them through Béal na mBláth. Emmet Dalton remembered:

**“It was not about a quarter past seven, and the light was failing... We had just turned a wide corner on the road when a sudden and heavy fusillade of machine-gun and rifle fire swept the road in front of us and behind us, shattering the wind-screen of our car. I shouted to the driver - “Drive like hell!” But the Commander-in-Chief, placing his hand on the man's shoulder, said: “Stop! Jump out and we'll fight them!”**”





The fateful decision to stop and fight cost Michael Collins his life. After a protracted exchange of fire, he was hit, possibly by a ricochet, behind the right ear. Without speaking again he died, aged only 31, in Dalton's arms. He was subsequently laid to rest in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. Perhaps more than any other Irish historical figure, much has been written about what Collins might have done or achieved had he survived. The National Army revisited the site of his death on his first anniversary, and by 1924 the Memorial that now dominates the location had been constructed. Today it remains an important place, with an annual oration delivered each year to mark his death.

The events of the Civil War also witnessed the killing of Anti-Treaty Force Leader Liam Lynch on 10th April, 1923, and he too is rightly remembered in an annual commemoration at his graveside in Kilcrumper Cemetery, Fermoy.



<sup>1</sup> Hopkinson, M.A. 2015 "Collins, Michael", UCD Centenaries Website. Available at <http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Collins-Michael.pdf>. Accessed 20 September 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Connolly, SJ (ed.) 1999 *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 332.

<sup>3</sup> Ryan, Meda 1989 *The Day Michael Collins Was Shot*. Poolbeg, Dublin, 65-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>6</sup> Freeman's Journal 22 August 1923.

## Chapter 8

### Landscape Of Memory



**Through much of this book we have concentrated on the spaces and locations that bore witness to major conflict events in the county's history. In almost every instance, these areas have changed from how they appeared at the time these occurred. When we visit these sites now, one of the principal ways we experience them is through the memorials and monuments that have been placed there to remember. In many cases, these memorials - such as those at Crossbarry, or Béal na mBláth - have become so central to our experience of the site that we almost consider them a part of the event which they commemorate. But this 'monumental landscape' placed on the historic environment is a layer of history in its own right. These memorials often tell us as much about the community who erected them as they do about the events they remember. They can capture a moment in time, preserving in stone and metal everything from a sense of kinship to a group's political outlook. Perhaps most significantly, they impart a sense of community value to a particular site, crystallising the memory of events and individuals that people hold most dear.**

Cork's monumental landscape - its landscape of memory - can be seen at a multitude of locations throughout the county. It is a landscape that is constantly evolving and developing, as each generation adds further to it. Typically, major anniversaries are the driving force behind the creation of these memorials, as communities seek to mark important commemorative dates in their locality. Nor is it something restricted to our more recent sites. One of the most striking memorials constructed in recent years was the symbolic stone chair placed at the traditional site of the 1601 Battle of Kinsale. Unveiled as part of the 400th anniversary commemorations, the inspiration behind the memorial is the traditional inauguration chair of the O'Neills in Tullyhogue, Co. Tyrone, smashed by English forces following the defeat. Constructed from stone from each of the four provinces, the empty chair is intended to represent a sense of loss and also the decline in power of the Gaelic order that the defeat is often connected with<sup>1</sup>. Kinsale is not the only 17th century battlefield commemorated in the county. The site of the destruction of the Confederate Army of Munster at Knocknanuss is home to two memorials placed there during the 350th commemorations of that battle in 1997. Castlemagner Historical Society erected a limestone memorial near the hill to remember the 1647 engagement as part of a range of events themed on peace and reconciliation, which representatives of the British Ambassador attended<sup>2</sup>. A second memorial beside the R580 road to the north-west of Knocknanuss specifically remembers Alasdair MacColla Ciotach MacDonnell, the Scottish war leader who died fighting with the Confederates at the battle. Similarly at the site of the 1651 Battle of Knockbrack, the Banteer, Lyre and Districts Community Council with the support of I.R.D.

Duhallow Ltd constructed a memorial in 2002 to identify where an army of approximately 3000 commanded by Lord Broghill (Cromwellian) defeated an army of approximately equal strength, commanded by Lord Muskerry (Irish) amidst great slaughter.

A large number of Cork's memorials, particularly those that remember events from the 18th century onwards, are connected with places or individuals who are linked to the cause of nationalism. For example, the bi-centenary of the 1798 Rebellion in 1998 saw the erection of a plaque in Ballymacoda to the memories of executed United Irishmen Thomas O'Neill, Robert Walsh and Patrick Shanahan together with the planting of an oak tree by local school children as a symbol of peace and liberty<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, in Cobh a plaque was placed on the eastern façade of the town's Heritage Centre to remember the activity of United Irishmen in the town.



**Knockbrack Memorial, erected by the Banteer, Lyre and Districts Community Council.**

In Clonakilty, it is possible to view multiple layers of history through the 1798 memorial landscape, stretching back more than a century. All relate to the nearby 1798 Battle of the Big Cross/Shannonvale. The 100th anniversary of the rising in 1898 was a major event in the town. The Clonakilty Centenary Committee passed a resolution that June to erect a suitable memorial to Commemorate for all time the valiant deeds of the brave men who, nobly fighting, fell at Shannonvale one hundred years ago and decided to raise money to get something built, with many nearby towns such as Skibbereen contributing towards the fund<sup>4</sup>. The foundation stone for the memorial was laid in May 1899, in what was then known as Boyle Square<sup>5</sup>. It was remarked that the memorial was intended to perpetuate the memory

of the patriots who were identified in the insurrection of 1798 and 1803 and the movements of '48 and '67<sup>6</sup>. A special train to the town was laid on to bring nationalists out from the city to attend the foundation stone ceremony, which featured music from the Blackpool, Cork Carpenters' and Bandon brass bands<sup>7</sup>. A key moment of the ceremony witnessed the Vice-President of the Clonakilty Centenary Association read aloud a number of resolutions to the assembled crowd, which capture what the monument meant to those building it:



United Irishman plaque in Cobh Heritage Centre.

- 1. That we renew our undying fealty to the general principles of the men of '98 and their legitimate successors**
- 2. That as the only hope for the redemption of Ireland a Nation, we implore all Irishmen, at home and abroad, strictly to adopt sobriety, unity, patience, perseverance and preparation by all possible means to affect our fixed purpose to redeem our country from Saxon grasp and misrule.**
- 3. We earnestly request all Irishmen to insist that while the brutal, enforced, and robbing Union continues, all Members of Parliament, sitting for Irish constituencies, be compelled to qualify for membership by adopting Ireland's demand for domestic peace, and using continuously, all available and possible means for repealing, or revising, in whole or in part, a fraudulent union which should never have existed, and which has been tolerated too long and too patiently.**
- 4. That we hereby direct our Parliamentary representatives to oppose all military supplies and all naval supplies until the Financial Relations are equitably adjusted.**
- 5. That in our opinion the Maryborough prisoners have been detained quite long enough, and should be unconditionally liberated.**
- 6. That we condemn as cowardly the British tendency to force quarrels for ulterior purposes on feeble and undisciplined nations.**
- 7. That we rejoice in the efforts of the noble band of Irishmen who are striving to make the language of Ireland a living force in the country, and that we commend their movement to all true Irishmen<sup>8</sup>.**



It is apparent from the resolutions read aloud that the memorial's construction had as much to do with the political situation in 1898 as it did with remembering the events of 1798, referencing as they did the union with Britain, political prisoners and the Gaelic League. Fifty years later, in 1948, Clonakilty once again remembered 1798, with a monster commemoration that was heavily advertised:

## **1798 MEMORIAL**

### **CLONAKILTY, BATTLE OF THE BIG CROSS**

### **MONSTER COMMEMORATION**

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 29, 1948**

Military ceremonies at Big Cross at 2.30. Procession of F.C.A. Army, Bands, Public Bodies, etc., leaving for Clonakilty at 3 p.m. Followed by

#### **Oration at '98 Monument, Clonakilty**

by

**TOM BARRY and supporting speakers.**

Outside contingents cordially invited.  
Contact Hon. Sec. immediately

CHURCH-GATE COLLECTION IN CLONAKILTY PARISH,  
SUNDAY, AUGUST 29th.<sup>9</sup>



**The 1798 Memorial in Astna Square, Clonakilty.**

Having now achieved independence, the centrepiece of the event was one of the heroes of the Anglo-Irish War, Tom Barry. The town chose to further accentuate its ties with 1798, with Boyle Square renamed Astna Square after the most famous United Irishman (Tadhg an Astna) associated with event. Unsurprisingly, the 1798 Battle of the Big Cross was again the focal point of the 1998 events around Clonakilty, when on 19 June that year some 1,000 people partook in a commemorative walk from Big Cross to the monument in Astna Square to mark the engagement's anniversary<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, a plaque was unveiled at the old town hall in Clonakilty to identify the spot where the bodies of Tadhg an Astna and other United Irishmen were brought, while Cork County Council unveiled a memorial in Croppy Park to mark the location where their dismembered bodies were dumped<sup>11</sup>. The placenames and

memorials in Clonakilty that relate to 1798 amply demonstrate just how such landscapes of remembrance come to be created, and how they are often repeatedly utilised by subsequent generations.

As with 1798, the recognition of local connections to the 1867 Fenian Rising also led to the construction of memorials to that event. A fine example is the Manchester Martyr memorial cross in Ladysbridge, erected in 1967 to mark the area's association with one of the Martyrs, Michael O'Brien<sup>12</sup>. Some of these 1867 Rising monuments were actually originally constructed as part of the 1898 centenary commemorations for the 1798 Rebellion. This is another demonstration of how efforts were being made that year to identify and associate with all previous nationalist traditions, in ceremonies often charged with political meaning. An example is the original Kilclooney Wood Memorial, marking the location where Fenian Peter O'Neill Crowley was surrounded and killed in 1867. The erection of the Celtic Cross at Kilcooney in May 1898 was again led by Nationalists of the district in a procession that brought in the region of 6,000 people to the site<sup>13</sup>. Bands from across Cork, Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford attended, and as with the 1898 events in Clonakilty, a series of resolutions were read which recalled not only the patriotism of the 1867 and 1798 rebels, but also called for the release of contemporary Irish political prisoners in England<sup>14</sup>. The Kilclooney Memorial was re-dedicated in 1960, when an oration was delivered by J.J. Rice, Sinn Féin TD for South Kerry<sup>15</sup>. The importance of using the monument to assist in communicating current political perspectives was again to the fore, with the speaker being introduced by suggesting that in future when we pass by this memorial let it be a reminder to us to pray for the souls of all those who died for that cause. Let this memorial be also a reminder to us that the cause for which they died has not yet been achieved<sup>16</sup>. In delivering his speech, Mr. Rice noted that he was

**Manchester Martyrs Memorial in Ladysbridge.** Image Courtesy of Martin Millerick.



proud to see the additional inscription on the monument, Re-erected 1960 by his [Peter O'Neill Crowley's] successors in the struggle for Ireland's Freedom, and noted that we have struck bad times in the National movement. Times when the national spirit was low. But there never was a time when there was not someone to pick up the flag and fight for freedom. It will always be so as long as there is a quarter inch of Irish territory under the heel of the foreigner<sup>17</sup>. The story of Kilclooney Wood continues to capture the imagination; in 2013 the Molaige, Sraharla, Kilclooney Historical Group erected a viewing station and monument remembering Peter O'Neill-Crowley at a vantage point overlooking the site.



**Donoughmore Famine Memorial.** Image courtesy of Gerard O'Rourke.

Of course, not all the memorials in Cork are directly tied to rebellion or the nationalist struggle. The many monuments to the Great Famine are an example of this. Examples include the Donoughmore Famine Memorial, the Carr's Hill Famine Memorial and the Abbeystrewry Famine Memorial. Some others remember political individuals, such as the Thomas Davis statue in Davis Street, Mallow and the plaque commemorating the local nationalist politicians of the Bantry Band on the old courthouse in Bantry. But the most striking element of Cork's memorial landscape undoubtedly relates to the 20th century revolutionary-era, and particularly events associated with the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and the Civil War. Unsurprisingly, the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966 saw a wave of memorials placed around the county. Some of these sought to directly associate the events of 1916 with the struggle during the War of Independence. An example is the plaque placed on the wall outside St. Nicholas Church in Castletyons. Erected in December 1966, it commemorates Richard and Thomas Kent who were killed in 1916,

Michael Fitzgerald who died on hunger strike on 17 October 1920, and Arthur Mulcahy who was murdered by British troops on 22 March 1921<sup>18</sup>. In 1966, communities and institutions with connections to the events of the Rising sought to commemorate those links. St. Colman's College in Fermoy erected a plaque to Thomas MacDonagh, one of the executed leaders, who had been a former teacher there<sup>19</sup> and a further commemorative plaque to mark the centenary of 1916 and the Fermoy connection with Thomas MacDonagh, was unveiled on May 20th, 2016. Perhaps the best known of the 1966 dedications was the renaming of Cork's train station, which that year became Kent Station<sup>20</sup>, and the main bridge in Fermoy town was in 2016 named 'Kent Bridge'.



**Unveiling of plaque at St. Colman's College, Fermoy in May, 2016.**



**The 1966 Ceremonies in Lombardstown to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising.**

Image courtesy of Donie O'Sullivan.

Many participants in the events of Easter Week 1916 and the War of Independence were still alive in 1966, and took an active role in commemorations. In April the survivors of the Clonmult and Dungourney IRA unveiled a plaque at Dungourney to mark the point where they had assembled in 1916<sup>21</sup>. At Macroom a plaque was unveiled on the town hall on Easter Sunday 1966 in memory of the Irish Volunteers who paraded under orders in the area fifty years before<sup>22</sup>. Similarly, on 30 April 1966 IRA veteran Liam Deasy delivered the oration at the unveiling of a plaque on the New National School in Drinagh to the memory of Seán Hurley, killed in action during the Rising in Dublin<sup>23</sup>. Meanwhile, at Ballingearry in August 1966 President de Valera unveiled a plaque at Coláiste Na Mumhan, commemorating nine individuals connected with both the college and the Independence movement who died between 1916 and 1921<sup>24</sup>. They include 1916 leaders Thomas MacDonagh and Roger Casement who had provided money to the college, and Peadar Macken who was killed near Boland's Mills during the Rising. Cork Lord Mayors Tomás Mac Curtain and Terence MacSwiney are also among those named.



**Unveiling of plaque to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising in Lombardstown. Image courtesy of Donie O'Sullivan.**



In the century since the Rising a multitude of other memorials have been placed marking specific connections around the county. Skibbereen bears a plaque to Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin, who was born locally, stating that he raised the National Flag over the GPO during Easter Week<sup>25</sup>. Another connection to the Dublin fighting is remembered with a plaque on the wall of the national school in Clonakilty, which commemorates three past pupils who fought in the Rising – Michael Collins in the GPO, Con O'Donovan at the Four Courts, and the aforementioned Seán Hurley who had been mortally wounded on Church Street<sup>26</sup>. In Dromina, North Cork, a most wonderful chair was even commissioned to commemorate the centenary of the Rising, which received an award in the 2016 Muintir na Tíre Pride of Place Competition with Castlelyons having won the overall award for their 1916 commemorative efforts.



A wonderful seat was created in Dromina to commemorate 1916.



Memorial to the Ballinhassig Volunteers of 1916. Image courtesy of JJ Hurley.



**Unveiling of a memorial plaque to the memory of the 1916 Bantry Volunteers, Easter Sunday 2016.** Image courtesy of Angela O'Donovan.

Memorials and places of memory are not always specially constructed monuments. Another major form they take is the graves of those who were involved in historic events, or of those who gave their lives during them. Rochestown College is the burial place of Fathers Albert and Dominic, Capuchin monks in Dublin during Easter Week who provided spiritual assistance to the Rising's leaders before their executions. Also active during the War of Independence, they both died in the United States but their bodies were repatriated and laid to rest in a state funeral in 1958<sup>27</sup>. Executed 1916 leader Thomas Kent was also given a state funeral when his remains were reinterred in St. Nicholas' Church in Castleyons on September 18th, 2015. The graves of those who died during the War of Independence and Civil War are extremely important places of memory for the people of Cork. Among the most notable examples are to be found in the Republican Plot in St. Finbarr's Cemetery, where Tomás Mac Curtain and Terence MacSwiney are buried, and the graves of the men who died in the Clonmult Ambush, interred at the Church of the Holy Rosary cemetery in Midleton.

There are also memorials in Co. Cork to those who fell in Crown service during the Rising. Castlehyde Church of Ireland graveyard contains the remains of both Constable Rowe, killed at Bawnard House in 1916, and Major Percival Havelock Acheson, who was shot by a sentry when he failed to answer a challenge near Fermoy – the Major is also remembered on a memorial in St. Fin Barre's Cathedral<sup>28</sup>.

The 2016 commemorations of the Easter Rising have added another layer to the continually evolving landscape of 1916 memory around the county. Many plaques have been placed to recall the participation of local volunteers in the manoeuvres that occurred in Cork, such as that erected by Bantry Historical Society to the locals who assembled there on Easter Sunday, the plaque in Inchigeela that remembers the men of the Dunmanway, Lyre and Ballinacarriga companies, and the plaque erected by the Lombardstown Community Council to the memory of the volunteers who mobilised at Bweeng. The use of contemplative spaces such as parks and greens as ways of remembering past events has become increasingly popular, and often now form an integral part of how we choose to



**Memorial to Walter Leo Murphy, an image taken by a British soldier before he departed Ireland.** Image courtesy of Imperial War Museum.

commemorate. For example, Rostellan renamed the village green The Thomas Kent Memorial Park, unveiled a memorial stone to the signatories of the Proclamation, and planted an Irish Oak tree as part of their April 2016 commemorations<sup>29</sup>. In Cobh, a monument was erected to the local volunteers of 1916, while a marker was also placed at the point where they gathered to commence their march to the city. The town also created a contemplative space, the Cobh 1916 Memorial Garden, where a monument to the signatories of the proclamation is located.

Cork's most dominant memorial landscape relates to the events of the War of Independence. Memorials associated with the conflict had begun to appear even before the British army had departed the county. Before one British soldier left, he photographed a temporary wooden memorial marking the place at Waterfall where Walter Leo Murphy, 3rd Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade was shot and killed on 27 June 1921<sup>30</sup>. Many of the memorials built in the years following independence have become important archaeological and architectural features in their own right. An example is the simple wrought iron cross in Carrigtwohill which marks the spot where John Ryan and Michael Ahern were cruelly murdered... by British forces on May 15th 1921. The men's memory is also preserved in the group of houses that form Ryan and Ahern Terrace, named in their honour<sup>31</sup>.

Aside from seeing a surge in 1916 memorials, the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising in 1966 was also a time when a number of War of Independence monuments emerged. Two of the best known, those at Kilmichael and Crossbarry, were erected at this date. They had their origins in the work of the Kilmichael and Crossbarry Memorials Committee, which was organised in 1965. IRA veterans Tom Barry and Tom Hales were to the fore in the committee, as were men such as Timothy McCarthy, Chairman of Bandon Town Commissioners<sup>32</sup>. At the initial meetings, Tom Hales noted he was particularly pleased to see many faces of a younger generation present to uphold the ideals and culture for which his generation fought<sup>33</sup>. It had been initially decided to erect a monument in Kilmichael to commemorate for all time the victorious battle fought there and at a subsequent meeting it was soon decided to erect a similar memorial at Crossbarry<sup>34</sup>. They were selected, according to committee member Dr. Ned Barrett, as they represented two complete and indisputable victories for the West Cork



Kilmichael Memorial.

Flying Column and symbolised the victorious stand of the Army of the Republic against the military and police forces of occupation<sup>35</sup>.

The initial task of the Kilmichael and Crossbarry Memorials Committee was to raise funds for design and construction. Contributions came from near and far; as well as donations from Ireland, money came from the United States, Canada, Britain and Northern Ireland<sup>36</sup>. With the monies collected, the Committee advertised competitions for the design and construction of the monuments. Directions were given that the Kilmichael memorial was to be of cut stone, and was not to cost more than £1700<sup>37</sup>. McCarthy & Sons of Copley Street in Cork won a prize of £105 (100 Guineas) for the successful design, which was selected from a total of thirty-one entries<sup>38</sup>. The company went on to make both memorials, something that was a source of great pride to them, and was a fact they advertised when seeking further public monument and cemetery memorial work<sup>39</sup>.

The memorial at Kilmichael was unveiled on 10 July 1966, while that at Crossbarry followed on 13 November of that same year<sup>40</sup>. In the lead up the Kilmichael unveiling, it was confirmed that:

“No special invitations are being issued to either persons or organisations as this will be a Peoples tribute to the three IRA Officers who, on November 28th, 1920, died there fighting and destroying the terrorist force which then stalked our land.”<sup>41</sup>

The Crossbarry Monument was unveiled on 13 November by William Hales, who had fought in the engagement, and the oration was delivered by Tom Barry<sup>42</sup>. Thousands were in attendance, including thirty survivors of the ambush. They were led by the Bandon FCA Pipe Band, while three other bands, the Civil Defence, the Red Cross and numerous IRA and Cumann na mBan veterans also participated. The West Cork FCA rendered military honours. The members of the Kilmichael and Crossbarry Memorials Committee were joined on the platform by relatives of those Volunteers killed in the engagement and representatives such as the Lord Mayor of Cork and the County Engineers. The memorial was blessed and a decade of the Rosary recited before Tom Barry spoke. He outlined the background to the erection of the two memorials, then spoke on the political and military situation in Cork prior to formation of his Column. He next turned to the engagement itself, and the casualties they suffered:

“ We had several wounded, and three of our finest Volunteers lay dead in the field of battle. They were Peter Monahan, Bandon; Con Daly, Ballinascorthy and Jeremiah O’Leary of Leap. To those three is this splendid monument erected and I hope that all who pass by will remember those valiant soldiers and sincere patriots who so bravely fought and gave their lives that Ireland would break the chains of her slavery... Remember, too, that what they died for is not yet fully achieved and, until Ireland is a united republic from sea to sea, those men, and all the others who gave their lives, cannot rest in peace. Give a thought also to the others of the West Cork Brigade who made the supreme sacrifice and died in the towns, on the roadsides and among the rocks on the hillsides. Think, too, of the members of the Irish Republican Army who survived those testing days; of the 300 members of Cumann na mBan, who worked so well; and above all, remember with pride the unorganized men and women of West Cork whose sons had to die for Ireland and whose homes were burned, who left their beds so that exhausted fighting men could rest, who fed the IRA when they themselves had not enough food - a risen people who could not be terrorized or bribed... Pray, too, when you pass by this monument that, should Ireland ever again, in a dark hour, need help, she will be given sons like Monahan, Daly and O’Leary.<sup>43</sup>”



Crossbarry Memorial.





**Memorial to Michael Dineen, killed by British forces during the Musheru Roundup.** Image courtesy of Noreen Meaney.

William Hales said the engagement at Crossbarry had changed the destiny of West Cork and the history of Ireland, and hoped that 32 counties unity would be achieved not by bloodshed but by a new understanding between all Irishmen in Christian charity<sup>44</sup>. Following the speeches a wreath was laid and three volleys fired. The *Last Post* and *Reveille* were sounded while the Tricolour, which had been at half-mast during the ceremony, was raised<sup>45</sup>.

Among the most poignant of the memorials dotted around the Cork countryside are the many connected with the Irish Civil War. They represent both sides of the conflict, including memorials not only to noted Cork leaders like Sean Hales and Liam Lynch but also to the many others who died. They can be found dedicated to those from both sides, at places like Aherla, Ballindangan, Carrigaphooca, Carrigaloe, Castletownroche-Monanimy Cross, Donoughmore, Leemount, Newcestown and Stuake. Historically, memorials can be highly contested monuments, particularly when they become the centre of political controversy. There is perhaps no greater example of this than what is Cork's most famous Civil War memorial, that of Béal na mBláth, where Michael Collins lost his life on 22 August 1922.



**Memorial to the IRA in Newmarket.**

Image courtesy of Lisa O'Donoghue.



Irish Civil War Memorial to Captain Timothy Kennefick. Image courtesy of Doug Lucey.

The first major memorial event at Béal na mBláth occurred on the first anniversary of Collins's death in 1923. A large military parade was held in Cork city, after which a cortege of vehicles carrying senior army officers travelled to the site of the ambush<sup>46</sup>. A cross marked the spot where Collins had fallen, and here a series of wreaths were laid. Included in the party were Emmet Dalton and Sean O'Connell, both of whom had been with Collins on the day of the ambush<sup>47</sup>. Among the formations present were military from Crookstown and members of the Civic Guard from Bandon<sup>48</sup>. A military chaplain blessed the spot where Collins had died and an address was delivered in Irish and English recalling his work for Ireland, after which three volleys were fired at the site<sup>49</sup>.

The memorial that is now synonymous with the site was constructed in 1924, and was built as part of the National Army's efforts to remember their first Chief of Staff. The unveiling took place to mark the second anniversary of Collins's death, and consisted of a military display and large public gathering<sup>50</sup>. President Cosgrave was in attendance, along with members of Dáil Éireann and Senate, National Army officers and General Eoin O'Duffy<sup>51</sup>. Troops from Cork were joined by Civic Guards from around the country. A wooden platform had been constructed above the memorial, decorated with the national flag, while the memorial itself was enveloped in a tri-colour<sup>52</sup>. After an initial blessing, the troops reversed arms, the *Last Post* sounded and three rounds were fired. Then the main address was delivered by Eoin O'Duffy. Among the points he made was the following:

“ They [the army] should ask themselves how they could best do honour to his memory. Certainly not by nursing personal grievances or by saying or discussing what he [Collins] might do or not do under such and such a set of circumstances. That was not the way to try and honour his memory... The best way they could do honour to his memory was to do the work that was at their hand faithfully and well, to have respect for themselves and the uniforms they wore, and to give unqualified loyalty to the State for which he had died... He should remind them also of devotion to the flag. He feared they did not all recognise what the flag means to them. They must respect the flag, first and last and all along the line, because that flag, for which General Collins gave his life, was the flag of the State and the symbol of a soldier's loyalty.<sup>53</sup> ”

As with the majority of memorials, the context at the time of unveiling was an important. O'Duffy's address was aimed directly at the National Army, which only a few months previously had witnessed what is referred to as the Army Mutiny. In the face of post-Civil War demobilisation, some members of the army who had previously served in the IRA sought to safeguard their position, stating that the influence of former British soldiers in the National Army should be stopped and that their own positions be protected, as they believed Collins would have wanted<sup>54</sup>. Events had come to a head in March 1924 when a demand to Government was issued by two senior officers calling for the suspension of demobilisation, thereby threatening the authority of the State. Though the incident had ultimately been diffused, O'Duffy, who was Garda Commissioner, was appointed to head the army as a result<sup>55</sup>. It was in this context that he spoke to the National Army at Béal na mBláth, and it was those events which drove his comments at the site. O'Duffy's association with Béal na mBláth would continue. In the 1930s, as leader of the organisation known as The Blueshirts, he would bring thousands to the location at the time of the commemoration<sup>56</sup>. The atmosphere was so politically charged that the Government sought to ban such public gatherings, and in 1933 O'Duffy's efforts to get to Béal na mBláth were halted by a cordon of Gardaí blocking access<sup>57</sup>. In the decades since the turmoil of the 1930s Béal na mBláth has been a less controversial location. The annual commemoration and oration remains a major event, with a different speaker selected each year; recent orators having included both the Taoiseach and President of Ireland.



**Mass service being held at Béal na mBláth on the first anniversary of the death of Michael Collins. The memorial unveiled the following year was delivered with a message for the National Army troops.**

Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

The history behind the origins and uses of the landscape of memory that carpets County Cork is often just as intriguing as the events that inspired the memorials in the first place. Examining what caused them to be created and how they have been employed by different groups can teach us a great deal about the enduring legacy of past events in our society. However, it is also important to remember that these memorials and monuments are additions to the landscape – though they now often form part of a site’s historic fabric, they do not represent an original component of it. We sometimes forget when visiting places like Crossbarry and Béal na mBláth that the memorials which now dominate were not present in 1921 or 1922. The landscape elements that were, and which did bear witness to these seismic incidents, are often harder to recognise and to protect – features like the walls, roads, fields and buildings of our revolutionary-era landscape. These sites warrant recognition and the following chapter gives much by way of advice and examples, to achieve just that over the coming years.

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<sup>1</sup> Southern Star 12 January 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Cork Examiner 18 August 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Southern Star 24 October 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Southern Star 24 September 1898.

<sup>5</sup> Cork Examiner 8 May 1899.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Cork Examiner 21 August 1948.

<sup>10</sup> Southern Star 4 July 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Entry for 1867 Manchester Memorial at Ladysbridge. Available at [www.buildingsofireland.ie/niah/search.jsp?type=record&county=CO&regno=209077](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/niah/search.jsp?type=record&county=CO&regno=209077) 19. Accessed 3 October 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Southern Star 21 May 1898.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The Kerryman 7 May 1960.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Bateson, Ray 2013. *Memorials of the Easter Rising*, Irish Graves Publications: Dublin, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 60-61.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>25</sup> Pers. Comm. Philip O’ Regan, 17/06/16

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 42, 46.

<sup>29</sup> East Cork Journal: Rostellan Development Association Commemoration of the Centenary of the 1916 Rising. Available at [www.eastcorkjournal.ie/rostellan-development-association-host-1916-centenary-commemoration/](http://www.eastcorkjournal.ie/rostellan-development-association-host-1916-centenary-commemoration/). Accessed 6 September 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Imperial War Museum: Strickland Peter (Major General) Collection. Available at [www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205350618](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205350618). Accessed 6 September 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Carrigwohill Community: Ryan and Ahern. Available at <http://carrigwohillcommunity.ie/history/ryan-and-ahern/>. Accessed 6 September 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Cork Examiner 26 August 1965; Southern Star 4 September 1965.

<sup>33</sup> Southern Star 4 September 1965.

<sup>34</sup> Cork Examiner 14 November 1966.

<sup>35</sup> Cork Examiner 14 November 1966; Southern Star 19 November 1966.

<sup>36</sup> Cork Examiner 8 July 1966; Southern Star 5 March 1966; Cork Examiner 1 February 1966.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Southern Star 19 November 1966.

<sup>40</sup> Bateson, Op. Cit., 61; Southern Star 19 November 1966.

<sup>41</sup> Southern Star 2 July 1966.

<sup>42</sup> Southern Star 19 November 1966.

<sup>43</sup> Southern Star 19 November 1966; Cork Examiner 14 November 1966.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Irish Independent 23 August 1923.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Cork Examiner 23 August 1924.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Lee, J. J. 1989. *Ireland 1912-1985, Politics and Society*,

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 99.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>56</sup> Murphy, Pauline 2016. Historical tensions at Béal na mBláth, West Cork People 5 August 2016. Available at [www.westcorkpeople.ie/features/historical-tensions-at-beal-na-mblath/](http://www.westcorkpeople.ie/features/historical-tensions-at-beal-na-mblath/). Accessed 6 September 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., Irish Independent 28 August 1933.





## Chapter 9

# Researching Your Revolutionary Past

**The physical remains of our revolutionary past are scattered all around us, though they often go unrecognised. It is now possible for communities to identify and locate buildings and landscapes that played a role in the events of 1913-23, recreating an impression of what the period was like in their area. This has been made even easier in recent years with a growth in the number of freely available online resources that can help us uncover our revolutionary past. This section of the book is intended as an aid for those local communities who wish to uncover their own 'archaeology of revolution', concentrating on online tools.**

### Why?

Though having a wider national understanding of the revolutionary period is important, we are naturally drawn towards an interest in local events. We seek to discover something of how this momentous period impacted people living in our own localities- often our own families - a century ago. What did they experience? What were the sights and sounds they encountered? One of the best ways to do this is to gain an understanding of the landscape in which they lived. Though it was a very different environment to the one we now inhabit, many elements of their time still survive, and can be identified.

Gaining an understanding of these buildings and landscapes can also help us to gain an insight into the day-to-day realities for people in the revolutionary period. We can do this by asking a range of questions. Examples might include: What building was the local Volunteer company formed in? What routes did different Volunteer companies take in Cork on Easter Sunday 1916? What buildings did they stop at or stay in? Where was the local RIC Barracks? Where did IRA Volunteers train during the War of Independence? Where were their safe-houses? What did the roads, walls and fields look like at the county's ambush sites, and how have they changed? How did Flying Columns move to and from these ambush sites? By asking, and seeking to answer, questions like these, we can build up a detailed picture of the revolutionary period in our localities, thereby gaining a greater appreciation and understanding of this complex time.

Another reason for trying to identify these sites is to assist with their management. Unlike historic sites from the prehistoric and medieval period, the majority of historic locations from the revolutionary era enjoy no special archaeological protection, as they are deemed too recent. As a result, many of them can be altered or destroyed without having an understanding of their significance. No major work has ever been carried out to identify surviving features of the revolutionary landscape. For example, we do not know the current

condition or status of the RIC Barracks that were such a fundamental part of the IRA campaign in 1919 and 1920, nor do we know how much ambush sites have altered throughout the past century. One way of addressing this is for local communities to be engaged in uncovering this information, thereby helping with their future management.

## How?

The key to unlocking your local revolutionary sites is to use sources that will help you to locate the scene of specific events, be they town buildings or countryside fields and roads. The best starting point is the Bureau of Military History Witness Statements, many of which have been used in the preparation of this book. The Witness Statements are a collection of 1,773 accounts gathered from those who had been involved in the independence movement between 1913 and 1921, gathered between 1947 and 1957. Sealed until 2001, and are now available online in a fully searchable format via the Military Archives. Though there are some gaps, notably a lack of information regarding the Civil War and from leading anti-Treaty participants, the collection is an invaluable one, and includes very many accounts from Cork Volunteers. The first step for any group seeking to identify their local sites should be these statements. The website has a powerful word search function, so you can begin by inputting the name of your local area (bearing in mind variant spellings). The search page is accessible at the link below:

[www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/bmhsearch/search.jsp](http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/bmhsearch/search.jsp)



Searching the statements in this way will immediately bring up a wide range of accounts that refer to events in your area. For example, searching 'Youghal' produces 59 results, 'Bantry' produces 90 results, and 'Charleville' 96 results. Each of these statements will contain what we might term 'locationary evidence', as witnesses refer to specific places of relevance. So, for example, we might be interested in identifying the building or place where a volunteer company formed:

**“ In the Winter of 1914-1915 a Volunteer Company was formed at Barrel's Cross, less than a mile from where I lived and where I live now.<sup>1</sup>”**

or want to identify the location where they drilled:

**“ We drilled in an old slaughter-house in a yard at Dennehy's Cross and, when the weather permitted, in a quarry at Sandy Hill in the Bishopstown area west of the city.<sup>2</sup>”**

From the period of the War of Independence, specific buildings are frequently mentioned. For example, Patrick Whelan went so far as to list some of the most important safe houses that gave the men food and shelter in East Cork:

**“ I have succeeded in recalling the following, although I am sure there are many others whose names escape me:-**

**Hegarty's - Bloomfield, Midleton**

**Murnane's - Coppingerstown**

**Terry O'Brien - near Carrigtwohill**

**Fitzgerald's - Ballinbrittig, Knockraha**

**Canavan's - Knockraha**

**Garde's - Garryvoe**

**Higgins' - Aghada (parents of Paddy Higgins, wounded and captured at Clonmult)**

**Rev. Father Flannery, C.C. - Midleton**

**Aherne's - Ballyrichard (parents of Jack Aherne)<sup>3</sup> (Patrick J. Whelan WS1449, 68-69).”**

The statements can also be used to identify precise buildings where certain events occurred.

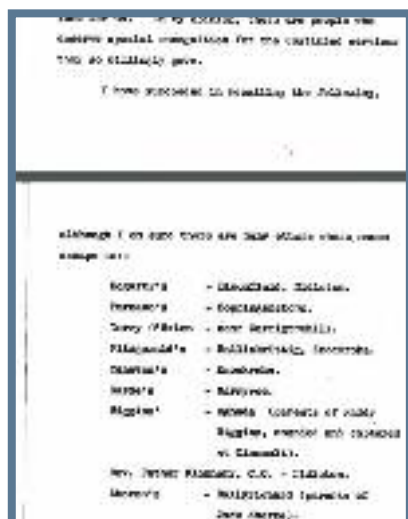
“On January 29th, 1921, strong parties of military arrived in Kingwilliamstown [Ballydesmond] from Tralee. They destroyed two houses as a reprisal, viz. the drapery shop of Tim Vaughan, the grocery shop of Wm. McAuliffe. About a week later they returned and destroyed the post office owned by Tim O’Sullivan.<sup>4</sup>”

Similarly, we can reveal details about the locations, positions and landscape of ambush sites:

“The site selected for the ambush was Blackstone Bridge on the main Cork-Fermoy road, about three miles on the Cork side of Rathcormac... half the column... took up a position behind a stone-faced fence, a field in from the road and in a position overlooking same. The second section...took up a somewhat similar position on the opposite site... it was necessary for four members of this latter section to dig themselves into two shallow trenches...<sup>5</sup>”

Using the witness statements as a starting point, many more locations can be identified by examining work already carried out in your local area on the revolutionary period. Often local historians and local history societies have carried out extensive research on the topic, including interviewing surviving participants. Such work is usually locally published, and available in local libraries. In addition, there is an extensive range of national publications that examine Cork in detail, and which similarly can contain relevant accounts. Another potential source of ‘locationary evidence’ are contemporary newspapers, which can impart key details about local events. Many revolutionary period newspapers are now available online, albeit as part of a subscription service, but can also sometimes be accessed through the library service.

Beyond the witness statements, the Military Archives have many other online resources that can assist in reconstructing your locality’s revolutionary past. Perhaps the most useful are those that relate to the Military Service Pensions Collection. The ‘Pension Applications &



Patrick Whelan's list of East Cork safehouses as they appear in the scan of the original Bureau of Military History statement on the Military Archives website. Courtesy of Military Archives.

Awards' and 'Medal Applications' files can be searched by county and name and the number available online is growing. These applications from Volunteers and their families can contain a large amount of information about an individual's service, and supplement the information gleaned from the witness statements. The 'IRA Membership Series' contains the rosters of a large number of the Cork Volunteer companies, as remembered by their officers, and provides their relative membership and strength at both 11 July 1921 and 1 July 1922. This can help you to uncover both the number of men in your local company and also their names. Similarly, the 'Cumann na mBan Series' and 'Fianna Éireann Series' allows you to conduct the same research for those organisations. In the future, the Brigade Activity Reports for Cork will be available through the 'IRA Brigade Activity Series.' All these pensions collection files are available here:

**[www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection/search-the-collection](http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection/search-the-collection)**

The Military Archives has a number of other online collections, such as the Maps, Plans & Drawings Collection, the Military Archives Image Identification Project, the Irish Army Census Collection 1922 and a digitised keyword searchable archive of the Irish Volunteers/Irish Army magazine *An t-Óglách* from 1918 to 1933. These various collections can each be accessed here:

**[www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections](http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections)**

Once you have identified your local sites of interest, how do you go about pinning them down in the landscape? Again, a number of freely available online resources can assist you. Let's return to the example of the reprisal in Ballydesmond given above. We know that Vaughan's drapery shop, McAuliffe's grocery shop and O'Sullivan's post office were burned. How do we establish where they were? Perhaps the best tool for this is the census data from 1901 and 1911, available at the National Archives website:

**[www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search)**



**Pension Applications search on the Military Archives website.** Courtesy of Military Archives.



**Other online collections available at the Military Archives website.** Courtesy of Military Archives.





The 1901 and 1911 Census search screen on the National Archives of Ireland website. Courtesy of National Archives of Ireland.

Here we can input our known information about the business owners (name and town), which helps us to discover that William McAuliffe, who was 64-years-old in 1911, ran his grocery shop from house 11 in Ballydesmond, and Tim O'Sullivan ran his post office from house 26. This information can help us to locate the buildings within the village based on the assigned house numbers and building descriptions. A similar strategy can be used to try and locate safehouses. For example the Murnane safehouse in Coppingerstown mentioned by Patrick Whelan can also be identified on the 1911 census; it is described as house four, where 60-year-old farmer Patrick Murnane, his family of six and his domestic servant lived. The census describes each building in further detail, providing yet more 'locationary information'.

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.													
FORM A.													
RETURN OF THE MEMBERS OF ONE FAMILY AND THEIR VISITORS, DOMESTIC SERVANTS, &c., who sleep or reside in this house on the night of 2 APRIL, the end of APRIL, 1911.													
NAME AND SEX		RELATION TO HEAD OF FAMILY		BIRTH		AGE		SEX		RELATION TO HEAD OF FAMILY		BIRTH	
1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
1	Patrick	Head	Male	1845	66	1845	66	Male	1845	66	Male	1845	66
2	Mary	Wife	Female	1845	66	1845	66	Female	1845	66	Female	1845	66
3	William	Son	Male	1875	36	1875	36	Male	1875	36	Male	1875	36
4	John	Son	Male	1880	31	1880	31	Male	1880	31	Male	1880	31
5	Elizabeth	Daughter	Female	1885	26	1885	26	Female	1885	26	Female	1885	26
6	Thomas	Son	Male	1890	21	1890	21	Male	1890	21	Male	1890	21
7	James	Son	Male	1895	16	1895	16	Male	1895	16	Male	1895	16
8	Michael	Son	Male	1900	11	1900	11	Male	1900	11	Male	1900	11
9	Elizabeth	Daughter	Female	1905	6	1905	6	Female	1905	6	Female	1905	6
10	Thomas	Son	Male	1910	1	1910	1	Male	1910	1	Male	1910	1

The 1911 Census entry for the Murnanes in Coppingerstown. Courtesy of National Archives of Ireland.

The census can be combined with a third major online source, Ordnance Survey maps, to help us further recreate Cork's revolutionary landscape. We are fortunate that the Ordnance Survey mapped Ireland in the years preceding the revolution. Ordnance Survey Ireland now have these maps freely available to view via their website at [www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie). There they can be combined with an overlay facility that allows us to compare the revolutionary landscape with the landscape as it appears today. The maps can be accessed via the OSI GeoHive portal:



IRA ambush position has been impacted by the M8 motorway, though the original boundaries of the eastern IRA ambush position may well survive under modern forestry plantation.



The landscape of the Blackstone Bridge ambush site as it would have appeared around the time of the ambush, based on the 25 inch mapping. Courtesy of Ordnance Survey Ireland.



Using the GeoHive overlay selection tools, it is possible to compare the War of Independence landscape with that of today, in this case the modern aerial photograph of the site, demonstrating the impact of the M7, but also allowing contemporary landscape features such as field boundaries to be identified. Courtesy of Ordnance Survey Ireland.

Aside from these three main online resources, there are a number of other websites that can aid you in identifying local sites of interest from the revolutionary period. An important one is the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage at [www.buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie). The NIAH have carried out appraisals of a large number of buildings around the county to highlight a representative sample of the region's architectural heritage. The Cork elements are divided into Cork City, East Cork, North Cork and West Cork, and can be accessed here:

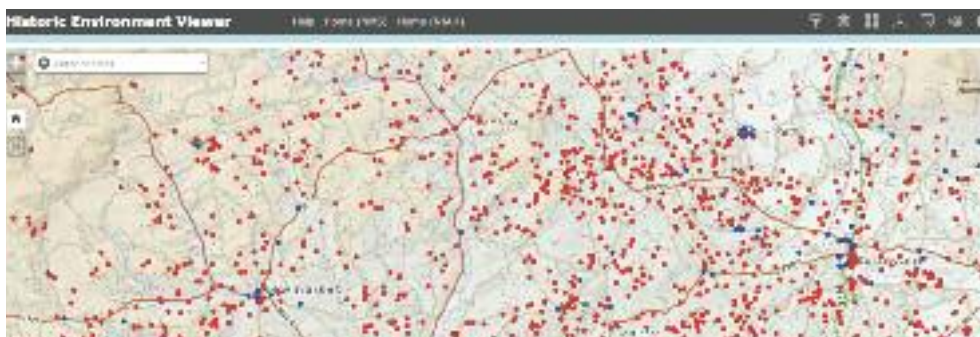
<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/Surveys/Buildings/>



**The homepage of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.** Courtesy of National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

Examining the records for your locality can highlight many buildings that played important roles during the revolutionary era, and which may have since changed use. It is particularly useful with respect to RIC Barracks (usually recorded as 'Constabulary Barracks') and other public buildings that were central parts of the community between 1913 and 1923.

Local Volunteer groups also made use of older archaeological sites during the War of Independence, usually to store arms. Sites such as ringforts and subterranean souterrains were favoured locations, and are sometimes mentioned by veterans. Where the veteran specifies a townland in their account, the precise location of these site types can occasionally be identified via the National Monuments Service, which runs the [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) website. The Historic Environment Viewer plots these monuments around the country and is searchable by townland and archaeological site type:



**Archaeological Record of Monuments and Places (with NIAH sites) in the vicinity of Newmarket, Buttevant and Kanturk. A number of these archaeological sites were likely utilised by local Republicans during the War of Independence.** Courtesy of Ordnance Survey Ireland/Government of Ireland.

For those eager to take their research beyond the internet and your local library, there are many archive records from the period not yet online that are worth exploring. Cork City and County Archives and both Cork City and Cork County Libraries have strong local studies collections, while institutions such as University College Cork, the National Library of Ireland, the National Archives of Ireland, the Military Archives of Ireland, University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin all have material of relevance to Cork in their archives. It is worth remembering that there is also a wealth of British source material relating to the 1913-23 period, though again, the majority is not yet available online. The British sources can be particularly useful as a tool to compare against the recollections of Volunteers, and to discern how events and occurrences were viewed from the other perspective. The National Archives of Ireland and the National Library of Ireland both hold some British material of relevance, while the UK National Archives in Kew contain a large number of documents, including RIC and British Army records, while the Imperial War Museum also contains some British accounts. The National Library of Ireland and the Imperial War Museum both have online image collections that relate to the 1913-23 period in Ireland.

Once you have compiled all the available information about revolutionary-era sites in your locality, it becomes possible to map the results. This can reveal much about the course of the decade in your area, and can serve as an educational tool to teach others about the period. It will also increase awareness as to the existence, and value, of this heritage resource. Of course, such an approach is not restricted simply to examining our revolutionary past. A similar strategy works just as well to explore other local archaeologies- for example the impact of the First World War on your area. Examining and identifying these sites is a journey of discovery into your own locality- a journey that can be extremely rewarding, and one that may lead to a suite of further projects such as walking trails, exhibitions, documentaries and much more.

**A list of some useful websites with material pertaining to Cork that may help you in your research:**

**Online Digital Collections, Archive Catalogues & Useful Websites**

Cork City and County Archives

[\*\*www.corkarchives.ie/collections/\*\*](http://www.corkarchives.ie/collections/)

Cork City Libraries Local Studies

[\*\*www.corkcitylibraries.ie/central/corklocalstudies/\*\*](http://www.corkcitylibraries.ie/central/corklocalstudies/)

Cork County Library Local Studies

[\*\*www.corkcoco.ie/co/web/Cork%20County%20Council/Departments/Library%20&%20Arts%20Service/Services/Local%20Studies\*\*](http://www.corkcoco.ie/co/web/Cork%20County%20Council/Departments/Library%20&%20Arts%20Service/Services/Local%20Studies)

Decade of Centenaries Website

[\*\*www.decadeofcentenaries.com\*\*](http://www.decadeofcentenaries.com)



Imperial War Museum Online Collections & Catalogue

[\*\*www.iwm.org.uk/collections\*\*](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections)

Irish Military Archives

[\*\*www.militaryarchives.ie/en/home/\*\*](http://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/home/)

National Archives of Ireland Decade of Centenaries Website

[\*\*http://centenaries.nationalarchives.ie/centenaries/\*\*](http://centenaries.nationalarchives.ie/centenaries/)

National Archives of Ireland Digital Resources

[\*\*www.nationalarchives.ie/digital-resources/introduction/\*\*](http://www.nationalarchives.ie/digital-resources/introduction/)

National Archives of Ireland Online Catalogue

[\*\*www.nationalarchives.ie/search-the-archives/\*\*](http://www.nationalarchives.ie/search-the-archives/)

National Library of Ireland Digital Photographs

[\*\*www.nli.ie/digital-photographs.aspx\*\*](http://www.nli.ie/digital-photographs.aspx)

National Library of Ireland Online Catalogue

[\*\*www.nli.ie/en/online-catalogue.aspx\*\*](http://www.nli.ie/en/online-catalogue.aspx)

Public Record Office Northern Ireland Online Catalogue

[\*\*www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/ecatalogue\*\*](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/ecatalogue)

Royal Irish Academy Decade of Centenaries Website

[\*\*www.ria.ie/research-projects/decade-centenaries\*\*](http://www.ria.ie/research-projects/decade-centenaries)

RTE Century Ireland Website

[\*\*www.rte.ie/centuryireland/\*\*](http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/)

UCC Library Catalogue

[\*\*http://library.ucc.ie/\*\*](http://library.ucc.ie/)

UCC & Irish Examiner Irish Revolution Website

[\*\*http://theirishrevolution.ie/\*\*](http://theirishrevolution.ie/)

UCD Decade of Centenaries Website

[\*\*http://centenaries.ucd.ie/\*\*](http://centenaries.ucd.ie/)

UK National Archives Online Catalogue

[\*\*http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/\*\*](http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/)

TCD Decade of Centenaries Website

[\*\*www.tcd.ie/decade-commemoration/\*\*](http://www.tcd.ie/decade-commemoration/)

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<sup>1</sup> Witness Statement 827: Denis Collins, Member of Ballinispittal Company, Bandon Battalion, Irish Volunteers, 1917–, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Witness Statement 1644: Edward Horgan, 1st Lieutenant, H Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Witness Statement 1449: Patrick J. Whelan, Vice

Commandant, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, 68–9.

<sup>4</sup> Witness Statement 1347: Daniel Guiney, O/C Kiskeam Company IRA, Vice O/C Newmarket Battalion IRA, Co. Cork, 11–12.

<sup>5</sup> Witness Statement 990: John Fanning, Member of Fermoy Company Irish Volunteers, Co. Cork, 1917–, 15–16.

## Chapter 10

### Conclusion



**This book has been produced as part of the commemorative programme in Cork to remember the 1916 Rising. However, the events of Easter Week a century ago did not occur in isolation; they were a product of previous historical experience, just as the events of the years that followed were in large part a product of the Rising itself. The men and women of the revolutionary-era often drew inspiration and motivation from events in our past, often the distant past, but particularly those from 1798 onwards. Equally, the most striking ultimate consequence of 1916 was the War of Independence - a conflict in which Cork played a central role - and which led to the foundation of the nation in which we now live.**

The decade of centenaries and the events of 1913-23 continue to resonate with us today. Not only did they create the modern country, but they informed the ideals and politics of that country for many years. In the 21st century, many still look to the revolutionary leaders of a century ago as inspirations and exemplars. That is something that is likely to remain a constant for many decades to come.

The county of Cork is one filled with history; interacting in the landscape with the physical traces of that history is one of the most fulfilling ways we have of engaging with and learning from the past. One way in which we can do so is through an exploration of landscapes of conflict. They are sites that Cork certainly has an abundance of, but they also sometimes remain unrecognized and unprotected. This is apparent with our revolutionary-era heritage, which is perhaps our least understood archaeological resource, and there is much to learn about what survives from the landscapes of 1916, the War of Independence and the Civil War in Cork.

Notwithstanding this, the county is blessed with a fascinating landscape of memory and memorialization, that for many has come to symbolize the events of our revolutionary past. This book hopes to encourage communities throughout the county to identify, record, map and interact with their own revolutionary landscapes, an activity that in itself will help to reveal significantly more information about our shared story, and serve as one of the lasting legacies of the Decade of Commemorations that we now find ourselves within.

The 1913-1923 period in Ireland saw much hardship as did many of the previous centuries, particularly due to grievances with the Protestant Ascendancy, land rent, Penal Laws, and not least the severity of An Gorta Mór (The Great Famine).

As a culmination of Ireland's efforts to rise over many centuries one got the sense that the people of Ireland, and in particular the people of County Cork, would not stop until freedom was achieved. In this regard one could say that Ireland, of a Republic, was destined to be, and undoubtedly there will be more twists and turns in Éire's journey in the many years ahead.

Throughout history, people have remarked on the splendor and unique nature of Ireland's people and places, indeed its very heritage, and the following words by Cork Volunteer Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin beautifully encapsulate this essence - what better way to conclude this publication:

**“ What is it that has stirred the hearts of all true lovers of Ireland, in every generation, and has steeled them to do some deeds worthy of recognition as a link in the unbroken chain of resistance to slavery? It is the aisling or vision which only true lovers are privileged to behold. It is said that our forefathers saw it before they ever set foot on this land of Ireland. Since then our bards and poets have sung of it and have spared no effort to describe it. The Spirit of Ireland invariably appears in the form of a woman, young and beautiful in appearance though of an immeasurable age, older even than the Old Woman of Beara. She is the Mother of the Irish race. Her children are scattered to the four corners of the earth.”<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Ó Súilleabháin, Mícheál, 1965. Where mountainy men have sown. Anvil Books, Tralee, 180

### Brothers Of War - By Clara Crowley

Let us remember our boys from West Cork,  
Who fought in the fields, with their hurls and pitch forks,  
These men, these heroes, they had no names,  
They had no recognition, claimed no fame.

The message it came from the capital city,  
The British to be driven out, to take no pity,  
Loyal Irish men and women answered the cause,  
This is war they were told, There are no rules and no laws.

How could one man say he owns the land?  
When it is not rightfully his? We must make a stand,  
For this, this is our time to stand up and fight,  
To reclaim what is ours, to make things right.

British soldiers, artilleries, the Black and Tans,  
When marching through our streets, had few fans,  
They stood there, with their tanks and their guns,  
To scare the Irish people, to make them run.

But our men fought back, with pride in their eyes,  
For in this point in history, a nation would rise,  
Above any other, they wanted to be free,  
To become a Republic, to reclaim their dignity.

They fought in Ballinascarthy, Clon and Arigadeen,  
As the flowers around them withered, the shamrock grew green,  
In defeat they would rise, and in victory stand tall,  
For this is what they were born for, to answer Ireland's call.

They did not sell out, but stayed silent and lie,  
They were willing to suffer, to be killed and die,  
To be able to call, this country their own,  
For it to be independent, and it to be written in stone.

So let us remember the boys from West Cork,  
Who fought in the fields with their hurls and pitch forks,  
They all fought together, and never stood alone,  
We salute those brave soldiers who saved Ireland from the throne.

A wonderful poem, written by Transition Year student, Clara Crowley, from Clonakilty, which was kindly submitted for inclusion in this publication. The country's schools played an inspirational role in the centenary commemorations of 1916 and Clara's poetry is testament to this.

### Éire By Any Other Name - By Conor Nelligan

Born of a land we are proud to call our own  
Where great deeds abound as history has shown  
Being Irish, what does it mean to you?  
Sweet Éire, we know what you have been through.

When land became something to own and not cherish  
Were the tales of this land now destined to perish?  
Were the deeds now henceforth to be written on paper,  
Laying claim to this land, oh Éire, someone save her!

Can someone claim ownership of the air that we breathe?  
We need air for our lungs, common ground for our feet,  
Yet so many people in a race to have more,  
Without a notion will seek foreign shores.

Those who seek power rarely find it within,  
And a land overseas is no place to begin  
This land we call Éire gives its power to its people,  
Those who'd call her home, those who wish to be equal.

An August destiny in April '16,  
Six Risings before with one common dream  
Of an Irish Republic for on(c)e and for all  
Efforts were made by hands big and small

The Whiteboys, the Rightboys, and United Irishmen,  
Young Irelanders and old, time and time again, with,  
The Fenians, Irish Volunteers, not least Cumann na mBan,  
They stood up for our freedom and their memory shines on

So today as we reflect on the role that Cork has played  
In Éire's quest for freedom, we remember those who shared the stage  
A curtain call for those from Cork who all did what they could -  
Up to us to live our lives today, the way we know we should.



## Pictorial of further sites within the county that tell of Cork's role in Ireland's Fight for Freedom.

Diarmuid Lynch from Tracton, County Cork, played a monumental role in Ireland's Fight for Freedom and was one of only five men who decided that the Easter Rising would go ahead, yet the only one alive one month later. This plaque commemorates Diarmuid Lynch. The image was kindly provided by Eileen McGough, author of the wonderful publication 'Diarmuid Lynch - A Forgotten Irish Patriot'.



A monument in Glantane, Mallow, to Liam Ó Connaill, Éamon Mac Uatair and Mícheál Ua Cadhla who died during the War of Independence. This monument was beautifully restored in 2016 as a centenary year project.

A 1966 memorial in Castlelyons, just outside of St. Nicholas' Church. Remembered are Richard Kent, Thomas Kent, Arthur Mulcahy and Michael Fitzgerald.



Godfrey Joseph Canty was killed on 9th May 1921 during the War of Independence and this memorial at Dromavane, Murragh, has been erected in his memory.



This Glebe House in Inchigeela was burned by the I.R.A. in 1919 to prevent it from being occupied by British forces. Detail courtesy of Ted Cook, Marian O' Leary and Seán Ó Súilleabháin.

During the War of Independence, the owner of Kilcrohane House, a Mrs. Coxwell-Rogers was ordered to leave the place, but she invited the soldiers in and was able to convince them of her long Irish ancestry so that they changed their minds. Detail and image courtesy of Marie Guillot.





Michael Galvin, killed by British Forces at the age of 29, on August 22nd 1920, is commemorated by this monument.

The monument to Michael Galvin is a local landmark, perched high above the Cork-Macroom road, just outside of Lissarda.



The modern Ten Arch Bridge, Mallow. This replaced the previous Ten Arch Bridge following its destruction during the Civil War.

Leo Murphy from Ballincollig played a very important role in the War of Independence, having been Commandant of the 3rd Battalion, Cork 1st Brigade, I.R.A. Leo was killed in Waterfall on 27th June 1921 by British Forces and this memorial was erected in Waterfall in his memory.

Image courtesy of Aoife Nelligan.



For many years the British operated a military base in Ballincollig. During the War of Independence and regarding a number of the notable ambushes in the wider area, it was generally from the military base in Ballincollig that reinforcements came. The building pictured is one of the remaining buildings today that is associated with this military base, same having been used as an Officers' mess at the time. Image courtesy of Eoghan Nelligan.

A memorial stone to commemorate Cork's Thomas Hunter, Vice Commandant, 2nd Battalion in Dublin during the Easter Rising, was unveiled by the local community in Castletownroche on 8 July 2016 as part of the Cork County Centenary Commemorative Programme.







A rare example of a 20th century pill box built of mass concrete and strategically positioned to protect the Killavullen bridge in North Cork.

Images courtesy of Mary Sleeman.

Present day bullet holes from a Civil War engagement in Passage West, located above this ope at the Royal Victoria Dockyard.



These are believed to be the remains of an alleged sniper post at Barnavara Hill, Glanmire. This information was held locally and kindly passed on to Cork County Council by Tim Murphy.



A 19th century rural house and pub called The Four Alls at Sam's Cross, near Clonakilty. It has been in the same family (Collins) for over 5 generations. The name 'Four Alls' relates to four figures - King, soldier, Priest and farmer. Michael Collins visited his cousin Jeremiah there shortly before his ultimate death at Béal na mBláth. Much of the social history of West Cork has come in and out of these doors.

Image courtesy of Rachel Cronin.



A memorial in Coachford to the memory of John Foley who was killed on 10th July 1921 during the Irish War of Independence.

During the war of independence and civil war three attempts were made to blow up this bridge in Lombardstown, and while considerable damage was done, none of the arches collapsed. Boreholes for explosives can still be seen underneath the southern arch of the bridge.



## Details Of 30 Featured Sites

	SITE ID	NAME	MOVEMENT	YEAR A.D.	LOCATION	EASTING	NORTHING	
	1	Bere Island	Viking Invasion	837	Bere Island	75737.00	44328.00	
	2	Youghal	Norman Invasion	1172	Youghal	210111.69	78060.29	
	3	Dunboy Castle	Siege of Dunboy	1602	Castletownbere	66889.00	44013.00	
	4	Liscarroll Castle	Irish Confederate War	1647	Liscarroll	145199.00	112395.00	
	5	Charles Fort	United Irishmen Uprising	1690	Kinsale	165556.00	49482.00	
	6	Astna Square	United Irishmen Uprising	1798	Clonakilty	138569.00	41497.00	
	7	Carr's Hill	Famine	1845	Carrigaline	171556.54	66676.67	
	8	Thomas Davis	Young Ireland Uprising	1848	Mallow	156162.00	98319.00	
	9	Jeremiah O' Donovan Rossa	Fenian Rising	1867	Reenascreena	126966.00	41973.00	
	10	The Bard Ó Súilleabháin	Land Agitation	1891	Millstreet	132424.00	87263.00	
	11	Aud Shipwreck	Easter Rising	1916	Cork Harbour	180327.00	64625.00	
	12	Carriganima	Easter Rising	1916	Carriganimma	128839.00	81170.00	
	13	The Kents	Easter Rising	1916	Castlelyons	184473.00	91886.00	
	14	Seán Hurley	Easter Rising	1916	Drinagh	120693.00	44952.00	
	15	Béal a'Ghleanna	War of Independence	1918	Gortnabinna	116275.00	71247.00	
	16	McSwiney & MacCurtain	Easter Rising/ War of Independence	1916	Mourneabbey	157085.00	92151.00	
	17	Carrigtwohill	War of Independence	1919	Carrigtwohill	182073.00	73011.00	
	18	Carrigadrohid RIC Barracks	Easter Rising/ War of Independence	1920	Carrigadrohid	141501.00	72288.00	
	19	Kilmichael	War of Independence	1919	Kilmichael	127014.00	62807.00	
	20	Midleton	War of Independence	1919	Midleton	188249.00	73399.00	
	21	Dripsey Memorial	War of Independence	1919	Dripsey	148206.00	73147.00	
	22	Upton	War of Independence	1920	Upton	153684.00	59707.00	
	23	Clonmult	War of Independence	1919	Clonmult	191589.00	82855.00	
	24	Coolnacaheragh	War of Independence	1921	Coolnacaheragh	123199.00	75192.00	
	25	Crossbarry	War of Independence	1919	Crossbarry	155359.00	61317.00	
	26	Clogagh Church & Cemetery	War of Independence	1919	Cloghagh	144915.00	47264.00	
	27	Knockraha Bomb Factory/ Sing Sing	War of Independence	1919	Knockraha	176681.00	78573.00	
	28	Passage West	Civil War	1922	Passage West	177093.00	68568.00	
	29	Macroom Castle	Civil War	1922	Macroom	133957.00	72924.00	
	30	Béal na mBláth	Civil War	1922	Béal na mBláth	140990.00	62675.00	

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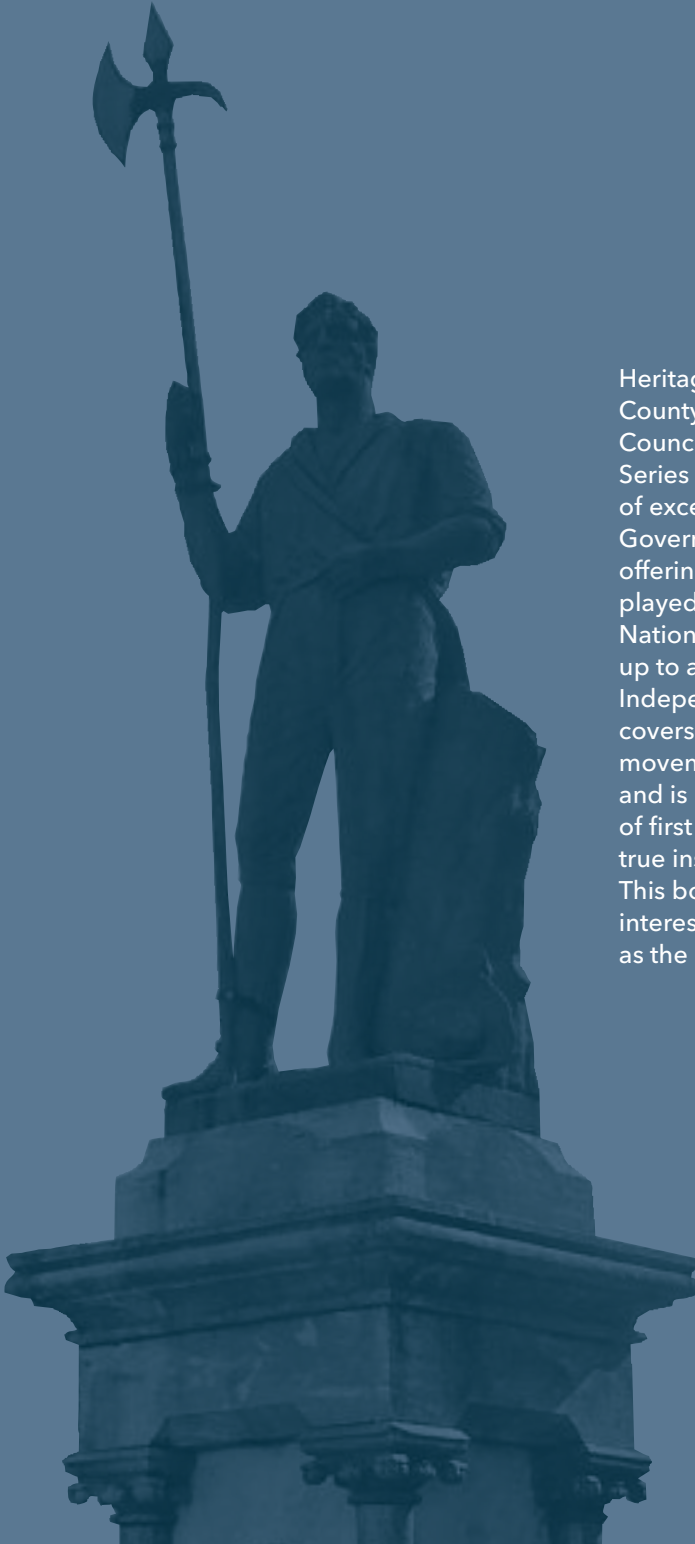
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