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An Archaeological Assessment of the Knockraha Bomb Factory & Knockraha's War of Independence Heritage

Report Author: Damian Shiels

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to assess the available information as to the location of the Knockraha Bomb Factory in the townland of Ballynanelagh and its likely archaeological and heritage significance. In addition it seeks to assess the War of Independence heritage of Knockraha as a whole, providing a statement as to its importance and significance. Finally it provides a series of recommendations for both future work and the potential development of this heritage as a tourist asset.

1 INTRODUCTION

The village of Knockraha was the location of 'E' Company, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade of the I.R.A. during the War of Independence. The Company was commanded by Captain Martin Corry, who later served as a Fianna Fáil T.D. The evidence illustrates that Knockraha served as a vital logistical base for the I.R.A. in both East Cork and Cork City throughout the conflict. The Company Area was, among other things, the location of two vital bomb production factories, the site of the principal prison for the Cork No. 1 Brigade area, the first training base for the 4th Battalion Flying Column, the site of key 4th Battalion area safe houses, and a location where arms and equipment could be stored. Indeed the activities that took place in Knockraha are of critical importance when considering the War of Independence in Co. Cork as a whole. Knockraha has also benefited from efforts by the Knockraha Area Historical and Heritage Society to interview former members of the I.R.A. in the locality, with a view to locating sites of historical importance. These efforts have led to the identification of 'Sing Sing', the Cork No. 1 Brigade prison, and 'Liberty Hall', the building where the Knockraha Volunteers were first established. They also produced the recordings known as the 'Corry Tapes', based on interviews by local historian James Fitzgerald with the former Company commander in the 1970s, and which have since been frequently referenced by noted historians throughout the country.

2 THE BALLYNANELAGH BOMB FACTORY

The primary aim of this report is to assess the evidence as to the existence, location and form of this bomb factory. It was among a list of three sites (together with 'Sing Sing' and 'Liberty Hall') which were submitted by Knockraha Area Historical and Heritage Society to Cork County Council requesting their inclusion as protected structures in the County Development Plan (dCDP14/1769). While acknowledging

the merit of including 'Sing Sing' and 'Liberty Hall', Ballynanelagh bomb factory was not included. The Chief Executive's Report provided the following response in relation to the factory:

'The exact condition of the bomb factory has not been determined. The information on the Bomb Factory is inconclusive. (There are commemorative plaques on both Liberty Hall and Sing Sing prison).' (Cork County Development Plan Review, 2014 Vol. 2, 186)

The Knockraha Area Historical & Heritage Society had explored the potential of conducting a geophysical survey at the site of the bomb factory, but the presence of a 220kV line immediately above the location is likely to interfere with the results of prospection. Rubicon Heritage Services Ltd was appointed to assess the available evidence for the site's form and location and present it in this report.

2.1 *The archaeological environment (Figure 1)*

Ballynanelagh townland contains two recorded monuments, both of which are located to the east of the bomb factory and neither of which are directly associated with the site. They are as follows:

CO064-065- Ballynanelagh- Possible ringfort

In pasture, on S-Facing slope. Shown as circular enclosure (diam. c. 40m) on 1842 OS map. According to Power (1923, 177) 'The lios...has disappeared. On Gleeson's farm there was a second lios, which also has been long since improved away'. Levelled, no visible surface trace (Power 1994, 127).

CO064-066- Ballynanelagh- Standing Stone

Field locally known as 'Ban na gCloch' field. According to Power (1923, 177), in 'Ban na gCloch- field of the pillar-stones....Only a single dallán now survives; this stands about 4 feet by 2 feet'. No visible surface trace (Power 1994, 8).

There are a number of other recorded monuments within c. 1 km of the bomb factory site, as set out in Table 1 below.

RECORD NO.	TOWNLAND	CLASSIFICATION
CO064-074	Killeena	Ringfort-rath
CO064-073	Killeena	Ringfort-rath
CO064-075	Killeena	Enclosure
CO064-076	Killeena	Bullaun stone
CO064-078	Ballinbrittig	Ringfort-rath
CO064-079	Ballinbrittig	Ritual site- holy well
CO064-028	Knockraha East	Ringfort- rath
CO064-029	Knockraha East	Enclosure

Table 1. Recorded monuments in c. 1km proximity to bomb factory site

The townland – in Irish Baile na nGeimhleach- may be that referred to in 1614 as 'Ballynnnymelagh' in the Calendar of Patent Rolls of James I, and it appears relatively frequently from this point forward (www.logainm.ie).

The site of the bomb factory does not currently enjoy any archaeological or heritage protection. Despite this, there is substantial and convincing evidence to support the precise location of the bomb factory within Ballynanelagh and documentary evidence as to its form. This evidence is discussed in detail in section 2.2 below.

2.2 Evidence for the bomb factory (Figure 3)

Two I.R.A. bomb factories operated in Knockraha during the War of Independence. One was run by Cork No. 1 Brigade, while the other- that located in Ballynanelagh- was operated by the Knockraha Company ('E' Company, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade). These factories were intended to produce bomb casings (mainly for grenades) with the explosive added at separate locations. The documentary sources abound with references to these factories. Michael Walsh, a Captain of 'C' Company, 2nd Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade remembered:

'Early in 1921, an armed raid was carried out by our company on Messrs. Ford's Factory, and a large quantity of pig-iron scrap iron and moulding sand taken away. This was brought by us to Cobh Junction where it was handed up to men of Knockraha company (4th Battalion, East Cork). In Knockraha (about 7 miles east of Cork city) there was a bomb factory operated by men of the Knockraha Company under the command of Martin Corry, the present Fianna Fáil Dáil deputy for East Cork' (WS 1521 of Michael Walsh).

Seamus Fitzgerald, of 'A' Company (Cobh), 4th Battalion, Cork No.1 Brigade and T.D. was officially placed in charge of the Brigade bomb factory in Knockraha during the War of Independence. He stated that in addition to his own bomb factory there was *'an independent Knockraha one [bomb factory] well operated by Ned Fitzgerald'* (WS 1737 of Seamus Fitzgerald). Martin Corry elaborated on the origins of the Ballynanelagh bomb factory during the interviews conducted by James Fitzgerald:

'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, operated by Seamus Fitzgerald] 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. And I was very disappointed at this. Ned went off, [inaudible] Ned do only go over to Knockraha and consult with the Knockraha boys. And then he came back to me, "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. "No matter, Martin" he said, 'We'll make one for you' – and they did. And I said "you can have it" [inaudible] 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-I suppose I better say he got 'em he didn't steal 'em anyway- 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. And it took 'em only a couple of months when they had another dugout ready for me' (Extract transcribed from Martin Corry Tapes).

In addition to this evidence for the existence of the Ballynanelagh bomb factory there is also the hand written account of Ned Fitzgerald, the member of the Knockraha Company responsible for devising the bomb factory. He wrote his recollections in 1953, which are currently in the possession of his nephew, William Fitzgerald. They

relate how the bomb factory was '*situated by a bend in the... ditch between Patrick Fitzgerald's Farm & Lynches neighbouring farm.*' In a corroboration of Corry's statement, he notes how it had previously been '*an underground "dump" a store for arms and ammunition*' which he described as a '*deep narrow hole.*' His account records how Denny Lynch, '*the eldest son of the neighbouring farm*' and the Longs were enlisted to turn this into a bomb factory. The dump was initially covered in by roofing it with old railway sleepers and earth, into which vents had been placed. All this was flush with the ground. Fitzgerald's account includes a diagram of the factory, complete with machinery and roof and a description of how the system operated (Plate 1) (Ned Fitzgerald Account, 1953).

Denny Lynch's family farmed the land in Ballynanelagh townland. This is confirmed by the 1911 Census, which records farmer William Lynch (55), his wife Ellen (45) and their four children living in Ballynanelagh along with William's brother Denis (53). The eldest son, Denis (Denny) was 12 at the time (Census of Ireland, 1911). Patrick Fitzgerald farmed the land in Knockraha East townland, also confirmed by the 1911 Census which records farmer Patrick Fitzgerald (48), his wife Margret (46) along with their six children and three servants. One of their children was Ned Fitzgerald, who would eventually establish the factory, then aged nine (Ibid.). The boundary between the two farms was (and remains) the townland boundary between Knockraha East and Ballynanelagh. The factory itself was accessed through the ditch from the Knockraha East side, with the underground portion on the Lynch farm in Ballynanelagh. Indeed Ned describes the bomb factory as 'Knockraha East' in his account. Cartographic analysis reveals that there is only one location along this boundary that matches the description provided by Ned Fitzgerald, and it is the site of a notable kink in the townland boundary line that is present from at least the 1842 Ordnance Survey mapping and which still survives today. Based on the primary evidence there can be little doubt that this is the exact location of the bomb factory run by the Knockraha Company in Ballynanelagh (Plate 2) (Figure 3).

That this site on the townland boundary between Knockraha East and Ballynanelagh is the precise location of the bomb factory is further corroborated by the efforts of the Knockraha Area Historical & Heritage Society. Local historian James Fitzgerald was personally shown the site by Denny Lynch, who helped in its construction and operation, and Patsy Higgins, who had a brother who worked in the factory. Additionally William Fitzgerald was also told this was the location of the factory by his father, Martin Fitzgerald, a member of Knockraha Company who worked in the factory and brother of Ned Fitzgerald, who established it.

Further details as to the form of the bomb factory are provided James Fitzgerald based on interviews with those involved. It was some 35 feet long and approximately 8 feet wide, with the hole itself being dug to a depth of 9 feet. The earth that was removed was drawn away to a furze-brake on the Lynch farm, all part of a process that took three weeks to complete. Surmounting the sleepers that served as the factory's roof was two feet of earth and sod. The entrance at the Fitzgerald side of the ditch sloped down into the factory and was big enough for a man to creep through. This entrance was hidden by a swinging trap-door that was concealed in the ditch-line (Fitzgerald 2005, 95-6) (Plate 3).

The factory remained in operation throughout the War of Independence, with six men necessary to keep it functioning. During the period of the Truce the equipment was moved over ground as production continued, presumably to take advantage of an opportunity to work in safer and more comfortable surroundings. Sometime in 1921 the equipment was destroyed by unknown parties. The bomb factory remained extant for a number of years following the War of Independence, but after the Lynch farm was sold to Denis Collins it was filled in, as it presented a danger to livestock (Ibid, 101).

The Fitzgerald family still live on the site of the Fitzgerald farmhouse and retain a significant number of historic objects that directly relate to the operation of the bomb factory. These include a large metal trough used in conjunction with the grenade moulds (Plate 4), one of the moulds themselves (Plate 5), and a crucible constructed from part of a tea-pot (Plate 6). There also exists a photograph of the men involved in the factory operation, standing with the equipment they used. Included in this image are Mick Higgins, Din Bowen, Martin Corry and Denny Lynch (Plate 7). In addition to this, the Fitzgerald family also possess a silver presentation watch given to Ned, inscribed:

TO
E. FITZGERALD
FOR SPECIAL SERVICES
FROM
E. CO.
KNOCKRAHA
XMAS 1921 (Plate 8)

With no doubt as to the location of the Ballynanelagh bomb factory, the only question mark which remains relates to the level of archaeological survival. It is not known how Denis Collins went about filling in the site, but it seems unlikely that whatever method he employed would have removed all trace of such a substantial structure. It is therefore probable that there are archaeological remains which survive relate to the site. What of their significance? Despite the fact that the War of Independence occurred less than a century ago, the failure to protect these sites has seen substantial amounts of this heritage destroyed. Recent landscaping works at the Kilmichael Ambush site in Co. Cork, which have seriously impacted surviving archaeology, are a case in point. The archaeological landscape of the War of Independence is one that has yet to be substantively explored and is an area that

requires detailed and urgent attention. Indeed, it could be argued that the rarity and importance of locations such as the Knockraha bomb factory are likely to far exceed that of many of the fully archaeologically protected sites located in the immediate hinterland; whereas there are tens of thousands of examples of ringforts, for example, there are exceptionally few locations associated with War of Independence bomb production. It is also worth noting that the kink in the townland boundary which was utilised for the bomb factory is somewhat unusual, and it may be that it is itself archaeological in origin, suggesting that earlier archaeological remains may also be encountered on the site. It is not implausible that a site such as souterrain (often referred to simply as 'holes' or 'caves' in the past) may have been what initially attracted the men to this location.

This report recommends that the site of the Ballynanelagh bomb factory be protected and that consideration be given to public access to the location, perhaps as part of a War of Independence Trail (discussed in more detail in Section 3.3 below). If any works are necessary at the site, they should only be considered following detailed archaeological investigation, up to and including full licensed archaeological excavation.

3 KNOCKRAHA'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE HERITAGE

The second element of this report seeks to assess the War of Independence heritage of Knockraha as a whole, thereby placing the Ballynanelagh bomb factory in its local and regional context and identifying a number of other sites of significant historical, archaeological and heritage importance. It will also put forward potential avenues of further research and how an educational and tourism offering might be developed based around this conflict archaeological landscape.

3.1 *Knockraha's Role in the War of Independence*

Knockraha was never the scene of major engagements with Crown forces during the War of Independence. Its position as a 'quiet' area was far from accidental. Rather it was part of an intentional strategy by the I.R.A. of Cork No. 1 Brigade to avoid suspicion falling on the locality, allowing it to be utilised as a logistical base for the Brigade. That this was a strategic decision is borne out by the research of Dr. John Borgonovo, a historian based in U.C.C.:

'Cork Number One Brigade forbade attacks on the Crown Forces in the Knockraha area. From the perspective of Crown Forces reports, therefore, this parish was one of the most inactive in County Cork. Its importance as an I.R.A. base cannot be understood from statistical analysis of British material, reflecting the shortcomings of such methodology in a guerrilla conflict often composed of undocumented forces and actions' (Borgonovo 2010, 214).

3.1.1 *Bomb Factories*

There is ample documentary evidence to suggest Knockraha's key importance for I.R.A. operations in Cork City and East Cork. As noted above, apart from the Ballynanelagh bomb factory it was also the location of a Brigade bomb factory. This was operated by Seamus Fitzgerald:

'In January [1921] I decided to go back to my 4th Battalion area and contacted David O'Brien who was on his safe keeping in E Company area at Knockraha, where we arranged, under instructions from the brigade, to set up and operate a brigade foundry unit for the manufacture of bomb cases. All this work took up full time duties to the end of March and the unit comprised David O'Brien, Charlie Reid (moulder) and myself. We were looked upon by the brigade as a special unit, engaged on full

time work, and were paid 30/- a week for maintenance. The foundry building was built in a steep ravine to the west of Knockraha, with a small stream running under the floor, which latter had to be substantially made. The roof was camouflaged, as the area around was hunted at times by the Foxhounds of the United Hunt. The furnace was built with plates specially made for us at Rushbrooke Dockyard, and, after many failures, we eventually succeeded in making a large number of finished bomb cases in sand moulds and special chill moulds, delivered the bomb cases in sacks to special brigade couriers. We worked day and night, and slept in neighbouring barns and sometimes in dug-outs in the open.

We were helped in this work by men from E Company, including Martin Corry, who was under strict orders to keep his company unit free from other active service and so avoid Crown Force activity in the area. Despite this, it was apparent that Capt. Geary, a British Intelligence Officer at Collins Barracks, had some knowledge of activity in the area, as we were raided by Crown Forces on many occasions and surrounded by lorries and armoured cars- 5 times during the fortnight preceding the Truce, when we were under fire on one occasion. Although we continued to carry rifles for protection all the time, we did not return fire, so that the foundry unit and ourselves successfully avoided capture up to the Truce' (WS 1737 of Seamus Fitzgerald).

The establishment of this Brigade bomb factory in Knockraha had elicited significant effort on behalf of the 4th Battalion in order to get it up and running. Captain Michael J. Burke of 'A' (Cobh) Company, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade described a raid on Rushbrooke Docks in order to garner supplies for it:

'late in the year 1920 a party of twenty-five men from the Cobh Company seized Rushbrooke Docks and placed the watchmen and about ten officials under armed guard. Armed sentries were also placed at vantage points around the dockyard. Many of the men were competent tradesmen, i.e. ship-

wrights and fitters trained in Haulbowline and Rushbrooke. The machinery was got going and the men set to making a furnace for the manufacture of hand grenades. The men worked from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m, when the job was completed. The furnace was delivered to the brigade grenade dug-out at Knockraha, East Cork' (WS 1424 of Michael J. Burke).

Similarly Edward Moloney, the 'Governor' of Sing Sing and member of the Knockraha Company recalled the efforts he made to support the Brigade bomb factory. A blacksmith with a forge in the village, his facilities were of use. He recalled how he *'worked with the Brigade below in the forge about half a mile, and I gave them the forge while they were making a chimney. And when they had it made they took it away to the fields.'* He also stated that the very first bomb was in fact made in his forge: *'I was there [at the forge] the first night a bomb was made, with Mick Leahy [Vice-Commandant of Cork No. 1 Brigade], and I got a piece of it and he got a piece of it'* (Edward Moloney Pension Application).

The importance the bomb factories held is evidenced in correspondence relating to the military pensions board in 1935. When a number of those who had served in the Ballynanelagh bomb factory and the Brigade bomb factory sought pensions (Denis Lynch, John Long, Patrick Fitzgerald, James Murphy, Martin Fitzgerald, William Sheehan and Michael Burke) a request was sent to Tom Crofts requesting that he *'submit a detailed statement regarding the Grenade Factories which are stated to have been established in the 4th Battn. Area, Cork I Brigade, during the Black and Tan period, indicating- (a) the names (and addresses if possible) of those who were engaged whole time therein; (b) the nature of the work on which each was engaged.'* (MA/MSPC/RO/31)

3.1.2 Battalion Depot Area

Knockraha's importance to the I.R.A. effort extended well beyond its utilisation as a location for bomb production. It also seems to have performed functions as a Battalion depot area. Joseph Aherne, Captain of 'B' (Midleton) Company of the 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, recalled how after an ambush *'we handed over the captured arms to Lt. Fitzgerald, Ballinbrittas, Knockraha Company, and returned to Midleton...'* (WS 1367 of Joseph Aherne). The 4th Battalion Officer Commanding, Diarmuid Hurley, was also regularly to be found in Knockraha. Michael Burke recalled how he *'walked to Knockraha, eight miles to the east, where I contacted Diarmuid Hurley, O/C of the 4th Battalion, and told him of the success of my mission'* (WS 1424 of Michael J. Burke) while Joseph Aherne related receiving *'a message from Hurley [the O.C.] stating that he wanted to see me and that he was staying at Lt. Fitzgerald's house at Ballinbrittas near Knockraha'* (WS 1367 of Joseph Aherne).

3.1.3 Formation of Flying Column

When a decision was made to form a 4th Battalion Flying Column, Knockraha was once again the location selected. Patrick J. Whelan, Vice Commandant of the battalion relates:

'In the month of September 1920, the idea of forming flying columns was conceived in the Cork No. 1 brigade area. These columns were to be comprised of men already on the run, or who were considered to be in danger of arrest. Diarmuid Hurley, who had been on the run and who been out of the area for some time, returned to command the 4th battalion flying column. Mick Leahy, battalion O/C, conferred with Hurley as to the column's formation, and on 1st October, 1920, I was ordered by Mick to chuck my job with the Midleton Engineering Works, and report to Diarmuid Hurley at Knockraha for whole-time duty with the column' (WS 1449 of Patrick J. Whelan).

Joseph Aherne, Captain of the Middleton Company confirmed that the Flying Column's *'first camp was situated in Knockraha in a disused farmhouse. We remained there for a few weeks and then moved on to Shanagarry'* (WS 1367 of Joseph Aherne). John Kelleher, Lieutenant of 'B' (Middleton) Company of 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, elaborated on Knockraha's role in the Column formation:

'...These men constituted the nucleus of the East Cork Flying Column which was formed about late September, 1920...The first headquarters of the Column was at Knockraha about four or five miles north of Carrigtwohill. Here, a few members of Middleton, Knockraha and other Companies went for training at week-ends. The training courses were conducted by Phil Hyde and Tom Buckley, both ex-British Army men. After six weeks or so, the Column moved to the Ladysbridge area...' (WS 1456 of John Kelleher).

The decision to form the Column in Knockraha and to carry out its initial training there is of extreme significance, as it highlights just what a central role Knockraha played in the development of the guerrilla war in East Cork. It functioned not only as a supply and production centre, but also as a training location and perhaps most importantly a 'safe' area.

3.1.4 Safe Houses & Point of Retreat

The fact that Knockraha was being kept intentionally quiet meant that it was ideal as a safe area and point of retreat. Patrick Whelan, 4th Battalion Vice-Commandant, particularly noted the value of the Fitzgerald farmhouse in Ballinbrittig and Canavan's pub in Knockraha village, noting that they were locals who provided food and board to the Flying Column (WS 1449 of Patrick J. Whelan). After one incident where it became necessary to abandon an ambush, Francis Healy of 'D'

Company, 4th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, issued orders to '*abandon the place [the ambush site] immediately, dump all arms and equipment and retreat towards Knockraha*' (WS 1694 of Francis Healy).

Perhaps the most telling evidence of Knockraha's role in this regard were the actions of the Column in the immediate aftermath of the Clonmult Ambush, the disastrous reverse which left 12 volunteers dead in what was the worst loss of life sustained by the I.R.A. in a single event during the War of Independence. Only one man- Jack O'Connell- had escaped Clonmult. Patrick J. Whelan recalled the moment when he found about the disaster, and where everyone went in its aftermath:

'We were in the vicinity of Killacloyne, a few miles on the Cork side of Carrigtwohill, when we were stopped by Mick Burke, captain of the Cobh company, who told us that the column had been wiped out at Clonmult except for one man. He had no further details. We were staggered by this news, thought it impossible that he could be right, and hoped he was wrong. Poor Diarmuid was frantic on hearing the news, and asked me where I thought the one survivor would go. I gave, as a guess, Canavan's house at Knockraha in Martin Corry's territory- he was O/C, Knockraha company. We decided to go there, and sure enough, there was Jacko (Jack O'Connell), the one man who escaped Clonmult, the man whom I suggested should be in charge in our absence. He looked in a pitiable condition after his terrible ordeal- he had led a sortie from the house in Clonmult and was the sole survivor of the attempt- and told us all he knew. The four of us then set off by car for Clonmult' (WS 1449 of Patrick J. Whelan).

It seems probable that there were standing orders to retreat to Knockraha, as men began making their way there as soon as they learned of what had occurred at Clonmult: Seamus Fitzgerald: '*...we drove in a trap to our base in Knockraha*' (WS 1737 of Seamus Fitzgerald); John P. O'Connell: '*Following the collapse of the blazing roof of the house in which the Column was trapped [in Clonmult], and as the messengers I had sent*

for help had not returned, I made my way to Knockraha, a few miles distance' (WS 1444 of John P. O'Connell); Joseph Aherne: *'Getting into the car, which was closeby, we proceeded to Knockraha, arriving in the village we met some of the volunteers of the local company, including Martin Corry and Capt. Jack O'Connell'* (WS 1367 of Joseph Aherne).

3.1.5 Prison & Place of Execution

Perhaps Knockraha's most famous connection with the War of Independence was its use as the prison of Cork No. 1 Brigade and as a place where suspected spies, informers and British military were executed. Dr. John Borgonovo related how the prison, located within the cemetery, operated:

'Volunteers located an isolated, half-submerged crypt that was sound proof and could be locked from the outside, which they called Sing-Sing (after the famous American prison). The Brigade, rather than the local company, maintained Sing-Sing, which accommodated suspects, criminals, and condemned spies. The 'prison governor', a Brigade staff captain, fed the prisoners at night and left them alone during the daytime. Prisoners were brought into Sing-Sing blindfolded, to keep the location secret but also from a fear of their sanity, should they learn they were being left alone in a graveyard. Some prisoners were released, but many were removed and executed nearby' (Borgonovo 2010, 213).

That the prison was run by the Brigade as opposed to Martin Corry and the local company is confirmed in the pension file of the Governor of Sing-Sing, Edward Moloney, who stated that he would not give the key to Corry even if he wanted it (Edward Moloney Pension Application). The fact that Knockraha was used as place of imprisonment and execution is apparent in a number of Witness Statements. Captain Sean Healy of 'A' Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No.1 Brigade told how one informer:

'was employed as a Post Office clerk where he was in a position to obtain valuable information for the enemy. Sean Culhane, J.J. O'Connell and I got instructions to put a stop to his activities. When he was picked up, walking along King St. one evening, we arrested him and conveyed him to 'an unknown destination' (in Knockraha) from which he never returned' (WS 1479 of Sean Healy).

Captain Jos. O'Shea of 'E' Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade:

'On an evening in July [1920], following receipt of a report from our intelligence service, I went, with five others from E. Company, to Penrose Quay, Cork. We were armed with revolvers. In due course, O'Gorman came along, obviously going to the Cork Steampacket Company's boat which was sailing for England that same evening. I held him up and, with the others, put him into a motor car which we had ready nearby. He was brought to the Kilcully district, north of the city, where he was kept in a house, under armed guard, for a few days. He was then taken by car to Knockraha in East Cork where he was executed.' (WS 1675 of Jos. O'Shea).

Captain Sean Healy of 'A' Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade:

'I have already referred to a traitorous Irishman who was executed at Knockraha. He died with "God save England" on his lips, may God forgive him' (WS 1643 of Sean Healy).

The burial of these bodies has garnered much attention in recent years, particularly with the publication of the *The Year of Disappearances: Political Killings in Cork, 1920-1921* by Gerard Murphy in 2010 and *The Graves of the Disappeared* television series broadcast by TV3 in 2012, both of which reference the burial of individuals in

Knockraha. There is no doubt that such burials did occur, most notably in a boggy area of upland known locally as 'The Rea.'

The historical record clearly demonstrates the importance of Knockraha to the operations of Cork No. 1 Brigade during the War of Independence. The work completed by the local history society in identifying many of the locations associated with these events places Knockraha in an enviable position, both in terms of preserving elements of this important conflict landscape and in developing it from an educational and heritage tourism perspective.

3.2 *Knockraha War of Independence Heritage Sites (Figure 1, 2)*

It is possible to locate a large number of War of Independence sites within Knockraha's landscape. These encompass the full range of I.R.A. activities during the War of Independence, from munitions production to training areas to safe houses. The majority of sites are identifiable due to the work undertaken by James Fitzgerald and others in interviewing surviving members of the company, including Martin Corry. A number of these sites have been highlighted on the accompanying maps to demonstrate the breadth of site-type in the area.

3.2.1 *Knockraha Village*

The main street of the village was where 'E' Company was assembled to drill each Sunday. The school (now a crèche) was the location where the Sinn Féin Courts were held (Plate 9). Canavan's pub, the Flying Column safe-house and building where volunteers assembled after Clonmult is today O' Donoghue's bar (Plate 10). It is notable that this is the building where the only survivor of Clonmult went, and where many would have heard what happened there for the first time. The house where Edward Moloney, Governor of Sing-Sing lived, also survives, as does the

forge where he helped make material for the Brigade bomb factory (Plate 11). Knockraha Catholic Church also played a role in the War of Independence landscape, being used to store arms (Plate 12).

3.2.2 Dug-outs & Dumps

Dug-outs were recorded at a number of sites around Knockraha, some associated with pre-existing archaeological monuments. These include the dug-out in the ditch of the ringfort in Ballinbrittig townland (CO064-082). Martin Corry goes into some detail in the Corry Tapes about his extensive exploration with another volunteer of another ringfort and souterrain with a view to its use as an arms dump. During this investigation one of the men became trapped under a flag-stone and had to be extracted. Corry also expressed his shock when after the Truce it was discovered that the ringfort and souterrain were both marked on the Ordnance Survey maps! This ringfort (CO064-021001) is in Rathfilode townland as is the accompanying souterrain (CO064-021002) which is marked as a 'cave' on the Ordnance Survey mapping. Another dug-out was located in Knockraha East townland where six men could sleep safely; although the site survives the dug-out itself has been filled in.

The Knockraha Company also created a number of 'dumps' of supplies around the landscape. Among these was a cast iron dump in Aghadull townland to provide raw material for the operation of Ballynanelagh Bomb Factory, with the same field also the site of an arms dump of weapons taken from H.M.S. Upnor.

3.2.3 Buildings

Perhaps the most notable of the buildings is 'Liberty Hall' in the townland of Killacloyne near Ballinbrittig crossroads. A plaque was placed on this building by the local historical society in 2001 (Plate 13). It was in this building that the

Knockraha Company was formed, as was the Flying Column subsequently (The Story of Cork's Own Liberty Hall). The surrounding fields were also used for training. The Fitzgerald safehouse referred to in the historical records was situated across the road in Ballinbrittig (the Fitzgerald family also owned the land on which Liberty Hall was located. Another company camp was located at 'McGrath's House' in the townland of Kilrussane, a complex of buildings which still survives. Another safe house was 'Roche's', where Sean Hegarty, Officer Commanding Cork No. 1 Brigade is believed to have stayed for a time- located in Aghaduff townland, buildings still survive on the site. An abandoned farm cottage known as 'McGraths' in Blossomgrove townland is probably that used by the Flying Column soon after its formation, and was situated close to the Brigade bomb factory. As such the area around this building is particularly significant with regard to the early training of the East Cork Column. Although much of this site is now in use as a yard some older buildings survive as do the adjoining fields. Another important support building in the landscape is Longs Forge, which survives in Killeena townland. This forge supplied support to the Ballynanelagh Bomb Factory (in which the Longs also worked); some of the material utilised in the factory was made here.

3.2.4 Prisons & Executions

The most notable prison site in Knockraha is Sing-Sing, in Kilquane townland (Plate 14, 15). The site is well-maintained and is another location where the local society has placed a commemorative plaque. It lies within the recorded graveyard (CO064-026002) and is also within an early ecclesiastical enclosure (CO064-026001). The graveyard is also the location of a church (CO064-026003). Originally used to imprison thieves and lawbreakers, the site was taken over by Cork No. 1 Brigade as a centre to hold their most valuable prisoners. Another building where prisoners were believed to be held was Carrigeen in Knockraha townland to the south-west of the village, where some buildings still survive. A number of execution sites have

been identified around Knockraha. These include the sand pit in Twomey's, now filled in but still under pasture, located in the townland of Ballinbrittig. Another is Ballingohig Bridge where a British army man was reportedly executed. The most significant is the boggy area in the north-east of Kilquane townland known as 'The Rea' where a number of executions were carried out. Today much of this area is under forestry.

3.2.5 Bomb Factories

As highlighted in the first part of this report the bomb factory operated by the Knockraha Company was located in Ballynanelagh townland. The Brigade bomb factory was located in Blossomgrove townland close to the southern bank of the river, although its precise location has yet to be established. This area was also subjected to a raid as British forces unsuccessfully attempted to locate I.R.A. activity in the area.

3.3 *Future Research & Development Potential*

As part of the research in compiling this report the author discussed Knockraha's importance with Dr. John Borgonovo, a noted War of Independence scholar based at U.C.C. Dr. Borgonovo contributed the following:

Knockraha was a critical logistical area for Cork No. 1 Brigade which was one of the most influential I.R.A. organisations in the country. The Revolutionary period is critical to local identity and it still generates high levels of interest in the young and old, people interested in their place and how that relates to the world at large. For a critical period in Irish history, Knockraha was a front line in the War of Independence.

The efforts of the local historical society in dedicating plaques at key sites such as Liberty Hall and Sing Sing are to be commended. The research they undertook while veterans of the War of Independence were still alive places the community in a position to identify an extremely extensive War of Independence conflict landscape. Today's community are equally fortunate in that Knockraha played such an important role in the operations of the Cork No. 1 Brigade area, encompassing both Cork City and East Cork.

3.3.1 Future Research

Future research should focus on bringing together as many location indicators as possible to identify further elements of the War of Independence conflict landscape in Knockraha. There are substantial additional resources to be drawn upon in this regard, both in terms of knowledge within the local historical society and also in the increasing amount of primary source material that is being made accessible. Chief among these will be the pension applications of members of the Knockraha Company of the I.R.A. and others who served in the area, many of which are due to come online via the Military Archives website between now and 2016.

Consideration should also be given to identifying the state of preservation of many of the locations associated with Knockraha's conflict landscape. Any such initiative should have a strong community component, and could take the form of creating photographic records of key sites, together with conducting online cartographic research and creating condition record sheets relating to each location. This could be combined with archaeological and historical input, facilitating the development of resources such as a GIS database of War of Independence sites and raising awareness of the local, regional and national place of the Knockraha activities in the story of the War of Independence. Similar community driven initiatives have been undertaken on 20th century archaeological sites in the United Kingdom, such as the

Defence of Britain Project (<http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cba/projects/dob>) and the Home Front Legacies Project (<http://www.homefrontlegacy.org.uk/wp/>), and are ideal for engaging local communities with their recent past. Indeed such initiatives could be replicated throughout the county and further afield, to tie in with the decade of centenaries.

3.3.2 Heritage Development Potential

Currently Ireland's War of Independence heritage is a largely untapped potential educational and heritage-tourism resource. Although the Irish landscape is dotted with memorials relating to the War of Independence, there is very little to highlight the physical remains of this past conflict landscape that surround us. Monuments such as Sing Sing, Liberty Hall and the myriad other locations in Knockraha offer visitors an opportunity to directly engage with the physical remains of the War of Independence; the range of site types also serves as an educational driver to highlight the complex network of connections and supports required to operate a guerrilla war.

The War of Independence landscape of Knockraha offers significant developmental potential from a heritage and tourism perspective. The wealth and varied nature of the sites could be combined as part of a War of Independence walking trail, which could also take advantage of some of the locality's archaeology from other periods. This is particularly relevant with the 100th anniversary of the War of Independence approaching. If possible such a trail should incorporate pedestrian access to those sites which are located off main routes. Such an offering could be explored through grant opportunities such as Leader funding.

Cork has a unique opportunity in the coming years to lead the way in engagement and interpretation of the War of Independence landscape. Knockraha serves as an

ideal initial location for a county-wide War of Independence trail, given the wealth of documentary sources and local knowledge regarding the progress of the conflict there. A Knockraha trail could serve as a building block for a network of such trails throughout the county, developed in a cost-effective manner and based around local community engagement, education and participation. The organisational makeup of the War of Independence I.R.A., structured as it was around local companies, provides an ideal format for progressing such a vision in different areas.

4. CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this report is to identify the form and function of the grenade factory operated by the Knockraha Company of the I.R.A. during the War of Independence. The documentary and cartographic sources confirm the location of this important site, situated in the kink in the townland boundary where Knockraha East and Ballynanelagh townlands meet. It is probable that sub-surface archaeological remains relating to this site survive. This site should be preserved as part of the area's wider War of Independence heritage; if this is not achievable detailed archaeological survey and excavation should be undertaken prior to any development of the site.

The secondary aim of the report was to assess the potential of the War of Independence landscape in Knockraha. As has been demonstrated this goes far beyond the 'headline' sites of Sing Sing and Liberty Hall. The increasing accessibility of documentary sources and the past efforts of the Knockraha Area Historical & Heritage Society have combined to present an opportunity to create a detailed picture of multiple locations associated with the War of Independence in what was a critical part of Cork No. 1 Brigade's area of operations. This in turn presents opportunities both for enhanced local community engagement with the past and also for the development of what would be a ground-breaking War of Independence

heritage trail, while also highlighting the importance of preserving key elements of this conflict archaeological landscape. Knockraha's complex and sometimes controversial role in the War of Independence offers an ideal platform to discuss the wider conflict and its impact on communities and combatants alike; providing the potential for a lasting legacy to the decade of commemorations.

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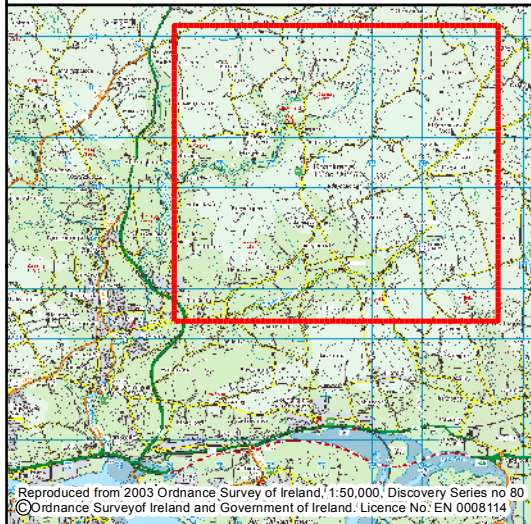
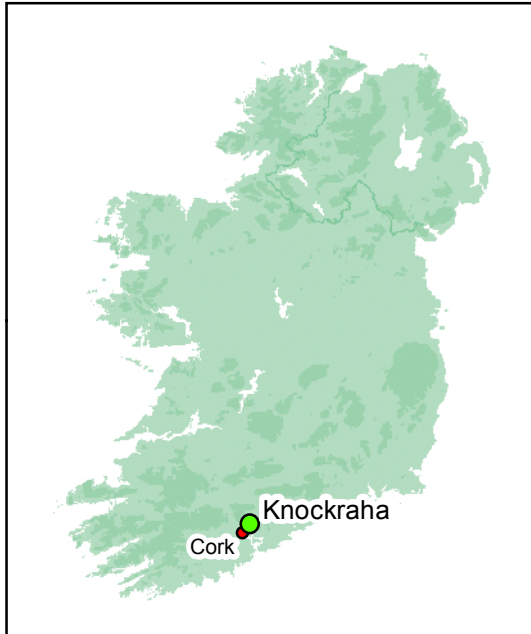
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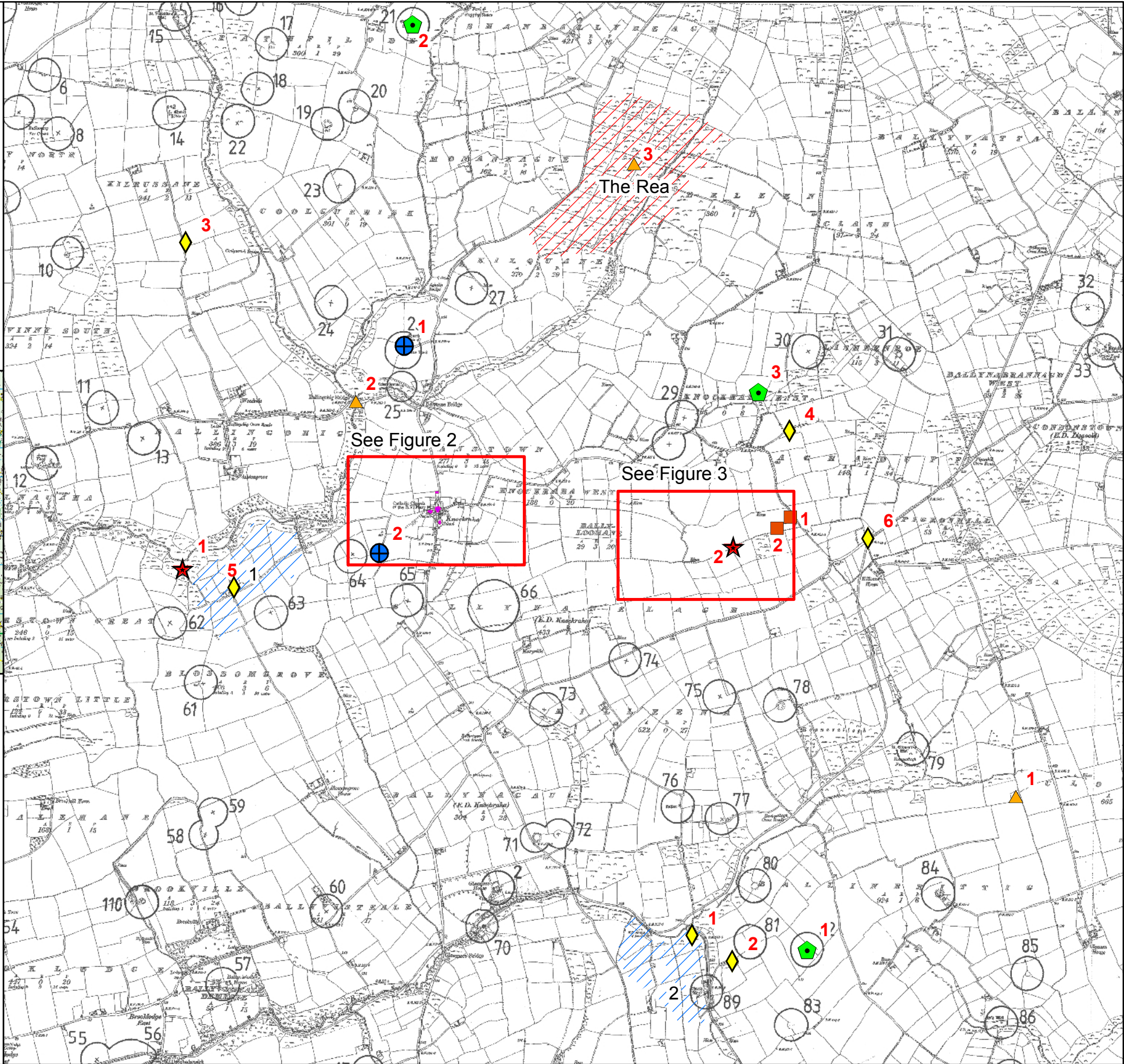
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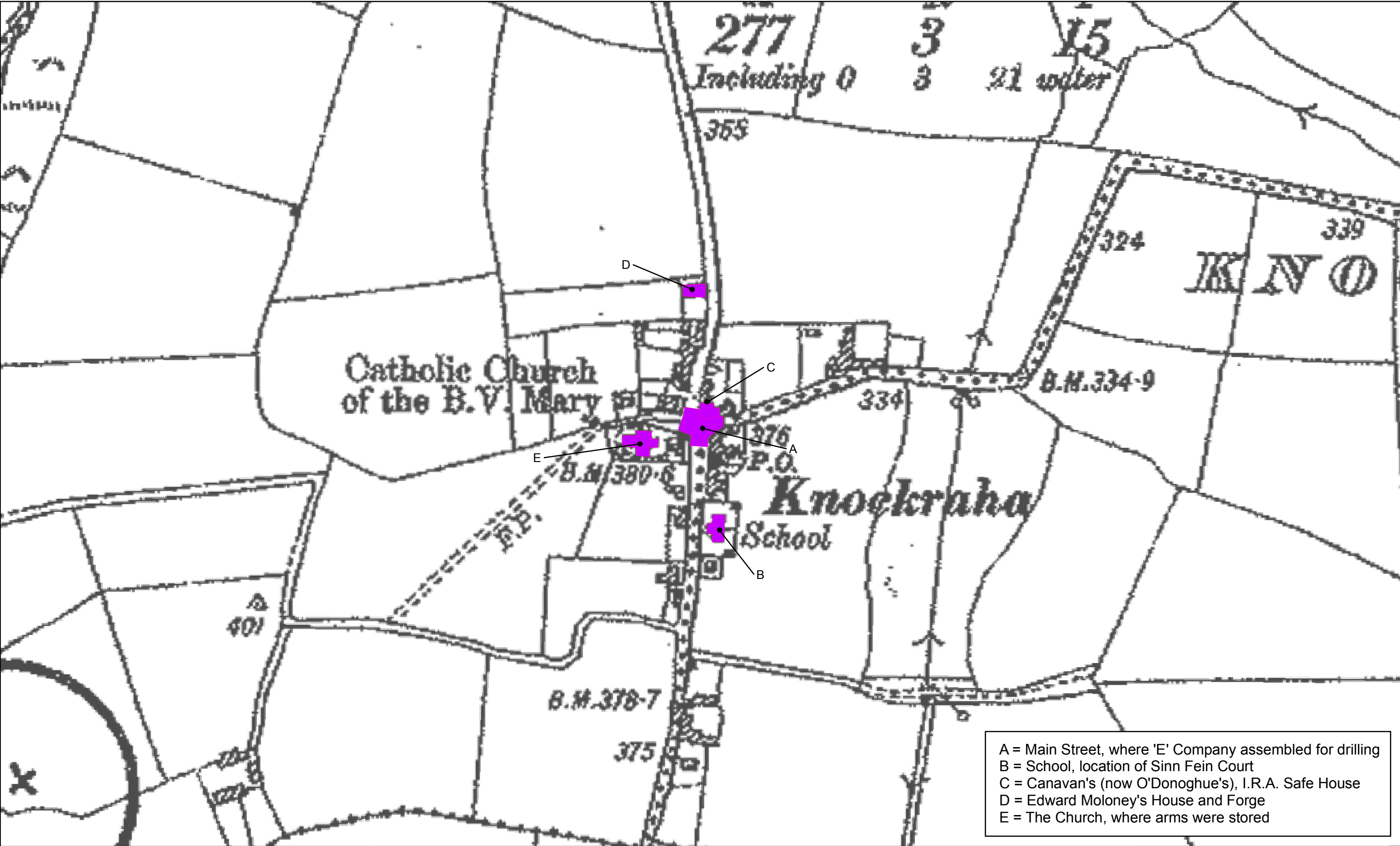
Knockraha's War of Independence Heritage Landscape



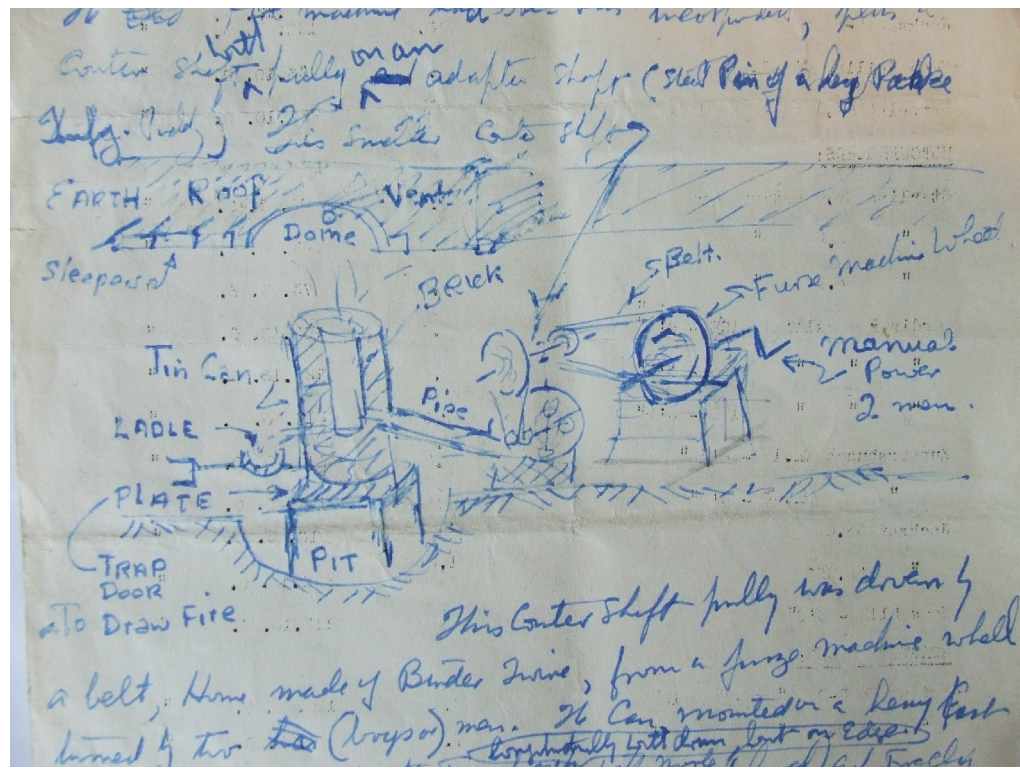
Key

Knockraha War of Independence features

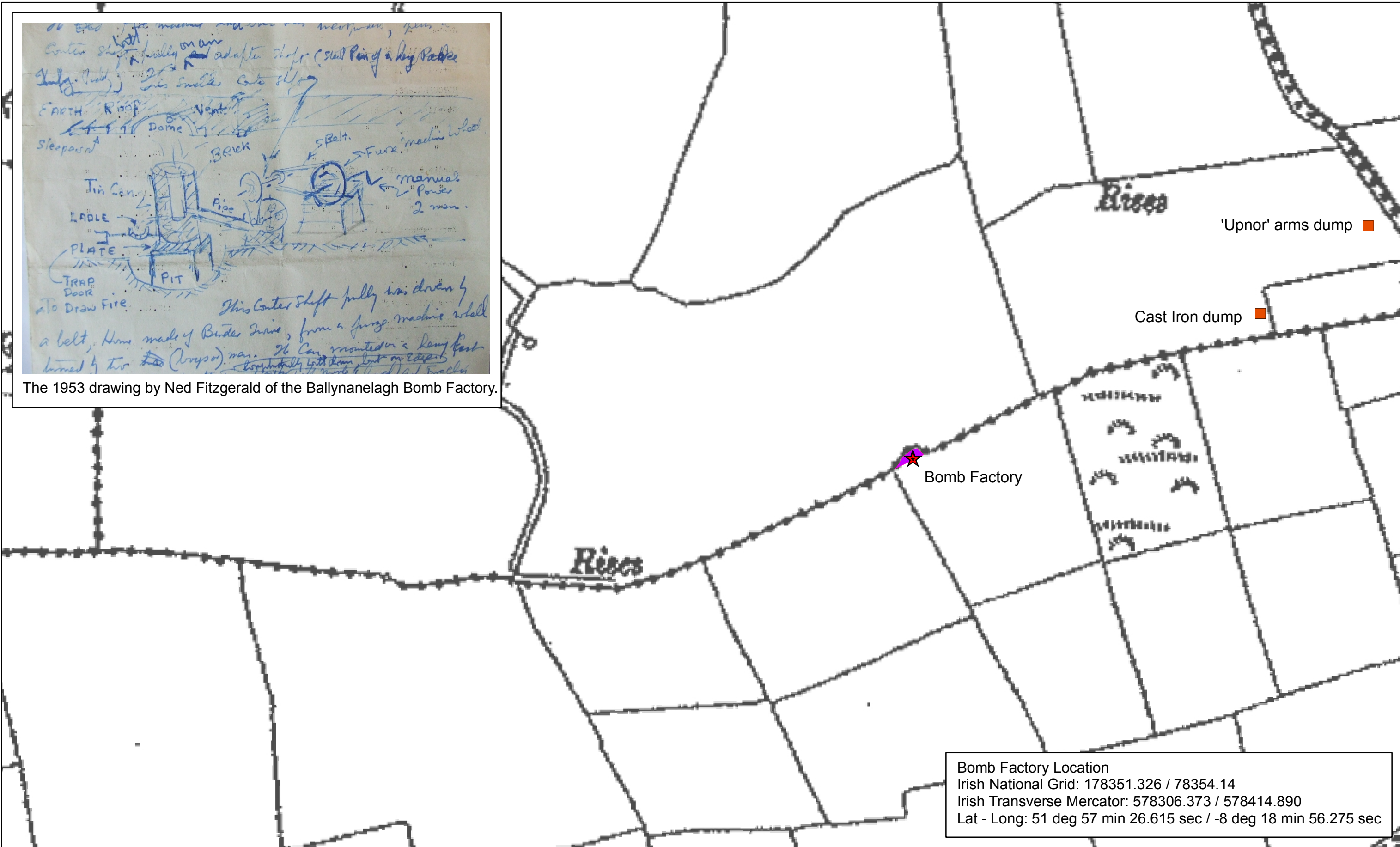
- Knockraha sites (figure 2)
- Training area
 - 1 - Flying Column Training Area
 - 2 - Company Training Area
- Bomb Factory
 - 1 - Brigade Bomb Factory
 - 2 - Company Bomb Factory (figure 3)
- Building
 - 1 - 'Liberty Hall'
 - 2 - Fitzgerald's Safe House
 - 3 - McGrath's House, Company Camp
 - 4 - Roche's, where Sean Hegarty stayed
 - 5 - McGrath's of Blossomgrove
 - 6 - Long's Forge
- Dug-out
 - 1 - Ballinbrittig Ringfort
 - 2 - Rathfilode 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 - Carrigeen Prison
- Dumps
 - 1 - Upnor Arms dump
 - 2 - Cast Iron dump for Bomb Factory



<h3>Key</h3> <div><div></div>Sites</div>		<p>Study Area: Knockraha, Cork Archaeological Assessment of Knockraha Bomb Factory and Knockraha's War of Independence Heritage</p> <p>Project Code: KBFG14</p>	<div><div>0125 m</div></div>	<p>Figure 2 - Knockraha Village, War of Independence Conflict landscape.</p>	
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The 1953 drawing by Ned Fitzgerald of the Ballynanelagh Bomb Factory.



Study Area: Knockraha, Cork
Archaeological Assessment of Knockraha Bomb Factory
and Knockraha's War of Independence Heritage

Project Code: KBFG14

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Figure 3 - Knockraha Bomb Factory

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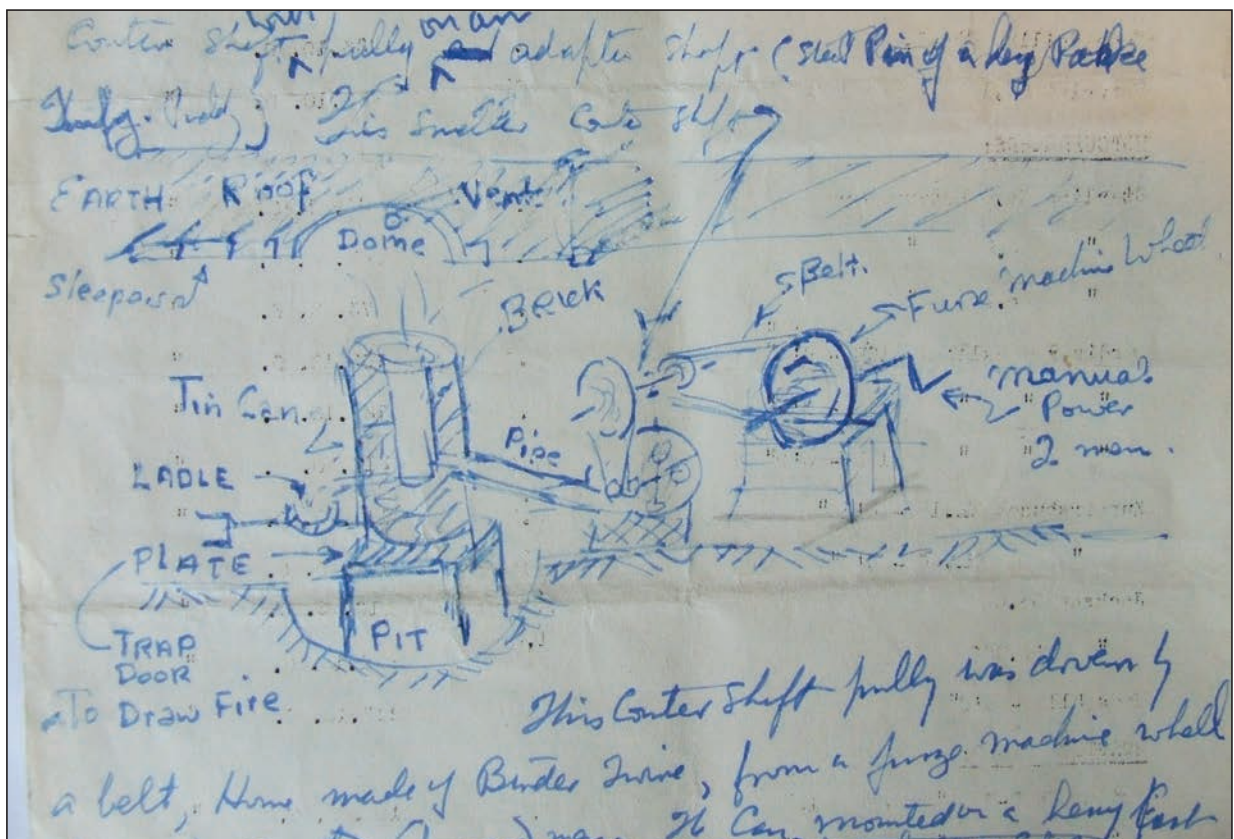


Plate 1. The 1953 drawing by Ned Fitzgerald of the Ballynanelagh Bomb Factory, who set it up. Note the sleepers used for the roof and the vents.



Plate 2. The site of the bomb factory in Ballynanelagh townland, looking ENE at the 'kink' in the townland boundary.

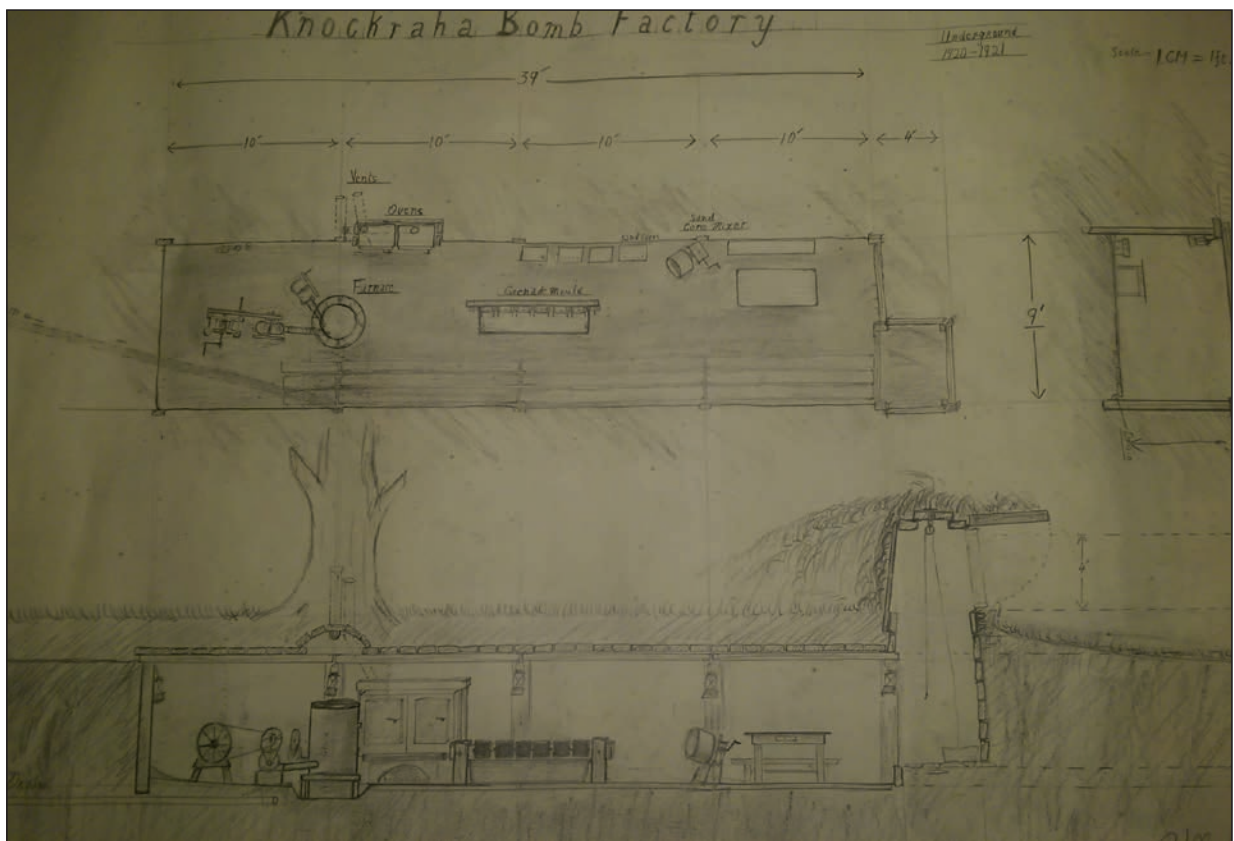


Plate 3. Interpretation of how Ballynanelagh Bomb Factory may have looked, drawn by William Fitzgerald, Knockraha Area Historical & Heritage Society.



Plate 4. Metal trough used in Ballynanelagh Bomb Factory.



Plate 5. Grenade moulds and 'blank' grenades from Ballynanelagh Bomb Factory.



Plate 6. The 'crucible' used for molten metal and fabricated out of an old kettle, now with replacement handle. Used in Ballynanelagh Bomb Factory.



Plate 7. The men who operated the Bomb Factory at Ballynanelagh pose at the site with their equipment. From l-r, Mick Higgins, Unknown, Din Bowen, Martin Corry (his likeness was added to the image), Unknown, Denny Lynch.



Plate 8. Inscribed watch presented to Ned Fitzgerald for 'Special Services' in 1921.



Plate 9. The schoolhouse, where Sinn Fein Courts were held during the War of Independence.



Plate 10. O'Donoghue's Pub, Knockraha, formerly Canavans, where I.R.A. members went following the Clonmult Ambush.



Plate 11. The house and forge of Edward Moloney, Governor of 'Sing Sing' Prison.



Plate 12. Knockraha Church, where arms were stored during the War of Independence.



Plate 13. 'Liberty Hall' where the Knockraha Company was formed in 1917.



Plate 14. 'Sing Sing' prison in Knockraha.



Plate 15. Interior view towards door of 'Sing Sing' Prison.