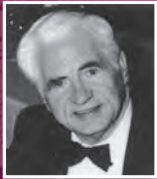


Jim
Maher

In the Shade of Slievenamon

The Flying Column West Kilkenny 1916 - 1921



Jim Maher is a native of Kilkenny City and was educated at C.B.S. primary and secondary schools, Kilkenny and later at St. Patrick's Training College, Dublin. Jim has taught in C.B.S. Primary School, Kilkenny, The Swan N.S., Co. Laois, Stonyford N.S., Co. Kilkenny, and was principal teacher in Tullaroan N.S., Co. Kilkenny for many years. He was deeply

involved in promoting athletics in Co. Kilkenny and represented the county at minor grade in hurling.

*Jim has a strong interest in the Irish language and has published two plays in Irish for children. His first book was *The Flying Column, West Kilkenny, 1916-21* (1987). His second book was *Harry Boland, a Biography* (1998), and he followed that up with *The Oath is Dead and Gone* (2011). Jim and his wife, Mary, who live in Kilkenny, have two sons, Michael and Tom.*



In the Shade of Slievenamon - The Flying Column West Kilkenny 1916 - 1921



Jim Maher

In the Shade of Slievenamon

The Flying Column
West Kilkenny
1916-21

JIM MAHER



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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
List of Illustrations	v
Preface to new edition	ix
Acknowledgements in new edition	x
Preface to 1987 edition	xii
Acknowledgements in 1987 edition	xiv
Introduction to 1987 edition	xviii
Dedication	xx
1. 1916 in Kilkenny	1
2. A revolutionary editor	25
3. The Border Battalion	29
4. 1917 By-election in Kilkenny City	31
5. The great election in South Kilkenny	39
6. Thomastown Sinn Féiners	51
7. Call to arms	61
8. The capture of Hugginstown barracks	65
9. Kilkenny men help out in Tipperary	83
10. A change of fortune	93
11. Sinn Féin courts and the Black & Tans	99
12. Attack on Woodstock House Aborted	111
13. The Ninemilehouse ambush	127
14. Auxiliaries Ill-treat Prisoners in Woodstock	133
15. The Friary Street ambush	139
16. Garryricken	153
17. An unfortunate accident	173
18. The death of the Bloody Sunday footballer on the Flying Column	177
19. The Flying Column moves South	183
20. The Enlarged Flying Column	191
21. The I.R.A. occupy Kilmanagh and billet in Tullaroan	195
22. ‘We’re surrounded – Fight till ye die, lads’	203
23. Death in the West Kilkenny Hills	219

24. They buried them with dignity	233
25. O'Mara resigns. Aylward is selected as T.D.	239
26. The Truce	243
27. Jackie Brett is finally laid to rest	253
28. The tunnel escape from Kilkenny Jail	257
29. Those who came home	265
30. The 'Rainbow Chasers' have won	277
31. Survivors	279
32. The Last Post Sounded	285

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Structure and names of Kilkenny Brigade, Battalions, Companies and Cumann na mBan	305
Appendix 2: Seán Hogan's Flying Column 7th Battalion (Callan) Flying Column	307
Appendix 3: Some ballads of the period collected in West Kilkenny	310
Appendix 4: 'Katmandu'	318
Appendix 5: Further notes on the lives of Jackie Brett, Seán Quinn and Pat Walsh	319

Index	321
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List of Illustrations

1. Irish Volunteers, Kilkenny, in training
2. Kilkenny Volunteers 1916
3. Letter from Thomas MacDonagh to Tim Hanrahan, Kilkenny
4. Cathal Brugha
5. Thomas MacDonagh
6. Michael Collins
7. E.T. Keane, Editor *Kilkenny People*
8. Henry J. Meagher, Tullaroan
9. Pat ‘Fox’ Maher, Tullaroan
10. Jimmy Ayers, Dicksboro Hurling Club
11. ‘Little Sim’ Walton, player on Kilkenny’s All-Ireland winning team 1911-12
12. Suppression of *Kilkenny People* 1917
13. Mícheál Ó hAnnracháin
14. Letter from Michael Collins to Éamon de Valera, 13 July, 1917
15. Éamon de Valera addressing an election meeting in Kilkenny in 1917
16. W.T. Cosgrave
17. Countess Markievicz
18. John Magennis
19. John Locke, Callan Fenian
20. Peter De Loughry, Kilkenny
21. Paddy Hogan, Cashel
22. Jim Roughan, Ahenure
23. James O’Mara, Limerick
24. Paddy Funcheon, Callan
25. Michael Shelley, Callan
26. Michael McSweeney, Snr, Kilkenny
27. Paddy Kelly, Callan
28. Michael McSweeney, Jnr, Kilkenny
29. Kell’s Pipe Band
30. Kilkenny Military Barrack
31. Seán O’Mahoney, Thomastown
32. William Forristal, Jerpoint Church
33. Edward McSweeney
34. Thomas Ryan, Bonnybrook
35. Dunnamaggin I.R.A. Company
36. Carrickshock Memorial Committee
37. Machine for capping and uncapping cartridges
38. Machine for packing cartridges with gunpowder
39. Hugginstown prisoners after hunger strike in Wormwood Scrubs

40. R.I.C. and British military taking possession of Jimmy Lalor's car at Friary Street, Kilkenny
41. Tommy Kerwick, Jimmy Carroll, Lyda Holden, Callan
42. Ned Aylward
43. Lyda Holden in escort for Archbishop Mannix in Callan
44. Military engagements in the three phases of the War of Independence 1919/21
45. Mr & Mrs Bob Cahill, Cappahenry
46. Mr & Mrs Pat Egan, Poulacapple
47. Paddy Maher (Foxy), Ballylarkin, Callan
48. Tom O'Donovan, Glengoole, Tipperary
49. J. J. Dunne, Callan
50. Gus Delaney, Kilkenny
51. 2nd Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade IRA, Kilkenny
52. Patrick Ryan, Ahenure
53. Jim Egan, Poulacapple
54. Group of soldiers from Devonshire Regiment, Callan with hostage James Gethings, repairing bridge at the Cross of Graigue, Kilmanagh, 1921
55. Fr Ferdinand, Dan Breen and Dick Dalton
56. Martin Mulhall, Kilkenny
57. Danny Murphy, Bennettsbridge
58. John Greene, Barronsland
59. One of the last parades of the Old IRA on Easter Sunday, c.1970
60. Woodstock House
61. Tom Kearney, the Racecourse, Kilkenny
62. Jim McKenna, Coolagh
63. John Dullard, Bennettsbridge
64. Patrick Luttrell, Garryricken
65. Insets of Tom Hennessy and Michael Dermody on photograph of their memorial outside Tullow Church, Threecastles
66. Suppression of *Kilkenny People* 1919
67. RIC, military and civilians outside *Kilkenny People* office 1919
68. The 7th Battalion Flying Column at Garryricken House
69. Garryricken House
70. The 7th Battalion Kilkenny Brigade Flying Column, March 1921
71. Ninemilehouse ambush/The *London Times* map and account
72. Friary St. ambush site, Kilkenny City, 21 Feb.
73. Unveiling of plaque at Friary Street
74. Ned Aylward, Ahenure
75. Michael Gibbs, Ahenure
76. Jim and Ellie Leahy, Coolagh
77. Spike used by I.R.A. for puncturing Black & Tan lorries

78. Plaque in honour of deceased members of Dunnamaggin Co. I.R.A.
79. (a) 303 Lee Enfield Rifle (b) Shotgun with side mounted hammer (used in Nine-Mile-House ambush) (c) and ‘Bandolier’, each pouch contained 10 rounds (when full a bandolier contained 50 rounds) (d) leggings otherwise known as ‘putties’
80. George O’Dwyer, Coon
81. Andy Forristal, Dunnamaggin
82. Glory Rovers Football team c.1924
83. Ned Halley, Ballyline
84. Michael Ruth, Kilkenny
85. Site of gun battle at Garryricken House, 12 March 1921
86. Richard Mulcahy
87. Route and military engagements of the Flying Columns, 1921
88. Seán Hogan
89. Fr P.H. Delahunty, Éamon de Valera and unidentified in the 1920s
90. Shipton, 1987
91. Seán Hogan’s Flying Column (part of)
92. Thomas & Joanna Kennedy, Knocknamuck
93. Sadie Kennedy and husband James Butler, Clomantagh
94. Jimmy Kelly, Callan
95. Paddy Power, Kilmoganny
96. Robert Champion, Woodsgift
97. Michael Brennan, Graine
98. Tommy Noonan, Woodsgift
99. Jack Purcell, Kildrinagh
100. Michael Purcell, Kildrinagh
101. Kate Delaney (nee Heffernan), Monavrogue
102. Road network in Knocknagress area (showing why the Flying Column was surrounded)
103. Escape route of the Flying Column from Kennedy’s house to New England Road, 13 May, 1921
104. Sites referred to in account of Knocknagress gun battle, 13 May, 1921
105. Escape route of Flying Column from Knocknagress into County Tipperary, 13-14 May, 1921
106. Guard of honour at Pat Walsh’s funeral, Dunnamaggin, 22 May, 1921
107. Cumann na mBan at Pat Walsh’s funeral, Dunnamaggin, 22 May, 1921
108. Kennedys of Knocknagress
109. Heffernans’ house, Monavrogue, 1921
110. Teehans’ house, New England
111. John Champion’s house, Knocknagress as it was in 1921
112. ‘Sleeping house’ in Tom Kennedy’s farmyard
113. Group at unveiling of Knocknagress Monument in 1936
114. Poster for unveiling of Knocknagress memorial 1936

115. Jack Hoyne who lived in New England 1921
116. Monument in Coadys' field, Knocknagress, to Seán Quinn and Pat Walsh
117. Kealys' pub, Tubrid Cross, 1921
118. Jack Gardiner, Poulacapple
119. Patrick Downey, Callan
120. Mick Maher, Ballylarkin
121. Jim Dillon's gate and fence through which Seán Hogan's Flying Column escaped in 1921
122. Neddie Butler (Buckshot)
123. Michael Hogan, Grangemockler
124. Dan Breen
125. John O'Gorman born Carrickshock 1810
126. John O'Gorman, Poulacapple, grandson of John O'Gorman, Carrickshock
127. Jackie Brett's funeral passing through Callan, August 1921
128. Bob Kennedy, Michael Maher, Bob Cahill, Jack Gardiner, Pat Dooley
129. 'Katmandu', Poulacapple
130. James O'Brien, Poulacapple
131. Joseph Rice, Outrath
132. Memorial to participants in War of Independence, Callan (erected 1987)
133. Michael McSweeney, Tom Derrig, J.J. Dunne and Éamon de Valera
134. Fr Delahunty and Watt Walsh, Mooncoin.
135. Patrick Bealin, Loon, Castlecomer.
136. John Kealy, Blanchfield's Park, Gowran
137. Thomas Hennessy, Threecastles
138. Michael Dermody, Threecastles
139. Jackie Brett, Mullinahone
140. Peter Freyne, Kilcullan, Thomastown
141. Thomas Phelan, Oldtown
142. Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, London and North Western Hotel, Dublin, 11 April, 1921
143. Seán Quinn, Mullinahone
144. Pat Walsh Dunnamaggin
145. Seán Hartley, Weatherstown, Glenmore
146. Nicholas Mullins, Thomastown
147. Joe McMahan, Kilmaley, Co. Clare
148. Mr de Valera receiving the freedom of Kilkenny City
149. Seán Treacy
150. Pierce McCann, Ballyowen, Tipperary

Preface to new edition

In the shade of Slievenamon. The Flying Column West Kilkenny 1916-1921, which deals with the events of 1916 and the War of Independence in Kilkenny and the borderlands of the county with Tipperary, is an enlarged and revised edition of *The Flying Column West Kilkenny 1916-1921* published in 1987. The new title is an acknowledgement that much of the action described in the book took place within sight of the storied mountain. It is a much bigger book with some 340 pages compared to 210 in the earlier publication, and there are 150 illustrations many of which have never been published previously. Apart from revisions throughout the text, new material has been added. Chapters dealing with 1916 in Kilkenny and the famous by-election of 1917, in which W T Cosgrave won a key victory for Sinn Féin over John Magennis of the Irish Party, give a national context to the story. Many of the principal players in these revolutionary years, such as Roger Casement, Thomas MacDonagh, Michael Collins, Éamon de Valera, Countess Markievicz and Cathal Brugha, are linked to Kilkenny. There are also important new chapters on the role of the *Kilkenny People* newspaper and its editor, E.T. Keane, in articulating nationalist opinion post 1916, the beginnings of Sinn Féin in Thomastown, and a list with biographical details of all those connected with County Kilkenny who lost their lives in 1916 and the War of Independence. The detailed accounts of the military engagements of the Flying Columns with British forces, at Hugginstown, Ninemilehouse, Friary Street, Garryricken and Knocknagress, remain as the core of the book.

Acknowledgements in new edition

In the first issue of *The Flying Column West Kilkenny, 1916-1921*, I have already acknowledged the great help that all the old I.R.A. veterans, who have all since gone to their eternal rest, gave to me with the 1987 edition of this book. There are others especially linked to this second publication to whom I desire to show my gratitude.

I am indebted to Commandant Victor Lang (now retired) and the staff in the Bureau of Military History, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin who provided me with 1916 historical material from the numerous files they hold in their archives. My sincere thanks is due to Caitriona Crowe and the staff of the National Archives for allowing me to study in comfort more of these same witness statements.

I am grateful to the staff of the National Library of Ireland for all their great help and especially to Bernie Metcalfe, Glen Dunne and James Harte for digitising some photographs from their collections and allowing me to use them in the pages of this enlarged book.

My thanks to the staff in the photographic section of White's Pharmacy, High Street, Kilkenny for brightening up the faded images on some old photographs that came into my possession. I am grateful to Gerry O'Neill, author of *'Up the Boro'*, for generously sending me two photographs from his successful book.

In recent times relatives of some of the persons cited in this book kindly furnished me with photographs and information about members of their families. I thank them and Colm Mullins for his work in the Thomastown area in this regard.

I am grateful to Eleanor Cantwell, Threecastles for giving me permission to quote twice from her book, *Threecastles*. Eunan O'Halpin, Professor of Contemporary Irish History, Trinity College, Dublin, sent me a copy of the Pension Papers of Frank Freyne and I appreciate that.

During my recent research I came across typewritten copies of interviews I did in the late 1960s with Richard Kinchella, Mullinavat Company I.R.A. and Nicholas Maher of the Conahy Company I.R.A. that gave me further information about the period.

Professor Willie Nolan, Geography Publications, the original publisher of this book, has worked hard on the shaping, design and lay-out of the whole revised book. I thank him for his interest and his vast expertise that he applied wholeheartedly to the entire project.

My thanks to Frank Kearney and Keystrokes Digital for typesetting and putting the book together and to Grehan Printers for printing the book efficiently.

I am deeply indebted to Tom Nolan, Fenor, Co. Waterford and his wife, Terry, for putting together the index for this book. They worked diligently and long through an accumulation of names and places. My wife, Mary, assisted me in proofreading the book from beginning to end. Her help in doing this was invaluable and she provided a second pair of eyes for this work.

To anyone else who helped me in any way, I offer thanks.

Preface to 1987 edition

It is hoped in this book to give an accurate and true account of the part played by the men and women of West Kilkenny in the struggle for freedom between 1916 and 1921. As I grew up, I knew many of them and they had gained nothing but had lost much because of their involvement in the national struggle. They had spent the best years of their lives either ‘on the run’ or in prison and many of them found it difficult to settle down again to ordinary life or get suitable employment when the struggle ended.

These men and women fought so that their children might have peace, a nationality, a good education, equal rights, a job and a home in this country. Whether they accepted the Free State view or went with the Anti-Treaty side in the tragic Civil War, all of them, whom I knew, eventually supported constitutional politics and advised young people of my acquaintance to do likewise. They had been through it all and they had learned through experience that nothing can be achieved by a nation except an overwhelming majority of its people are united behind a common purpose as they were from 1918 to 1921.

In the summer of 1966, I got to know Michael Ruth, a friend of my late uncle, Michael McSweeney, both of whom had been members of Kilkenny No. 1 Flying Column under George O’Dwyer. From him I learned many stirring tales of that period. We agreed that it was a pity that those events had never been recorded in print. We travelled to some of Michael Ruth’s old I.R.A. friends and we began to put the story together. In the course of our travels we met other old I.R.A. veterans like Jack Gardiner of Callan, Martin Mulhall of the Callan Road, Kilkenny, Danny Murphy of Maidenhall, Bennettsbridge and Michael Bartley of Gortnahoe. They began to travel all over County Kilkenny and County Tipperary with me, meeting other old I.R.A. veterans and recording their reminiscences. During our early travels Michael Ruth died suddenly on the 9th October, 1966 and I have a note written in my diary for the next day stating that if ever a book was written, a deserving tribute would be paid to him for his labours to have Kilkenny’s War of Independence recorded in print.

When Michael Ruth died, I got the full and wholehearted support and cooperation of Jack Gardiner of Callan. He brought me all over the 7th Kilkenny Battalion area, and around the whole of south Tipperary where the mention of the old days was a key to every door. Through Jack, I made contact with all the great freedom fighters of the 3rd. Tipperary Brigade I.R.A., and I had the honour of meeting renowned I.R.A. veterans like Dan Breen and Seán Hogan. Jack

Gardiner is now deceased but he was my constant adviser in the writing of this book. Whenever I had to check out a fact or confirm a place name I got in touch with Jack. Many times when I needed extra information I consulted him and he was always able to supply the required details accurately. I think Jack was quite happy that the 7th Battalion I.R.A. activities on the Tipperary/Kilkenny border had at last been put down in print.

Martin Mulhall, Danny Murphy and Michael Bartley have all passed away since they travelled most of County Kilkenny and south Tipperary with me forty years ago. It is regrettable that the book was not put together before they departed. They would have been very interested in the contents.

One question has been asked of me more than once, “ Why West Kilkenny rather than the whole of County Kilkenny?” I researched the whole of County Kilkenny as well as most of County Tipperary but the War of Independence in East Kilkenny had been already covered by Tom Lyng in his *Castlecomer Connections*, and Judge James J. Comerford in his *My Kilkenny I.R.A. Days* and by Marilyn Silverman and P. H. Gulliver in their *In the Valley of the Nore*. I have covered all the events of the War of Independence in which members of the 7th Battalion Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. were involved. This battalion contained the Mullinahone Co. I.R.A. who combined with I.R.A. Volunteers from East Tipperary in many activities around the border of the two counties. The story covers events in East Tipperary as well, – like the election there in 1918, the capture of Drangan barracks, the death of Tom Donovan in Killenaule, and the massacre at Knockroe. There is no doubt but that West Kilkenny played an important role in the War of Independence, and that this 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade was as active as any other battalion in Ireland during the two and a half years’ fight for Irish freedom.

Those who died for freedom in West Kilkenny are well-mentioned and those who survived the war have not been forgotten. Let them all be remembered with pride.

Acknowledgements in 1987 edition

Many people have to be thanked for valuable help and information given to the author, but none more than Jack Gardiner of Green Street, Callan. Forty years ago he brought me all over the 7th Kilkenny Battalion area and around the whole of south Tipperary where the mention of the old days was a key to every door and a reason for taking busy agricultural farmers out of their tillage fields for a whole evening. Jack Gardiner is now deceased but he was my constant supplier of facts for this book, right up to the date of publication. Sometimes I think Jack lost hope of ever seeing the story in print, but his patience was rewarded.

Mick Ruth of Kickham St., Kilkenny first encouraged me to research the War of Independence in County Kilkenny but Mick died suddenly on the 9th October, 1966, shortly after we had begun our early research trips. This book is a well-deserved tribute to a man who helped to start a project that he did not live to see accomplished. Martin Mulhall, Callan Road, Kilkenny, Danny Murphy, Maidenhall, Bennettsbridge and Michael Bartley of Gortnahoe were other men who travelled all over County Kilkenny and County Tipperary with me recording the reminiscences of other I.R.A. veterans. It is regrettable that they have all passed away since.

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Between 1966 and 1969 the following supplied me with oral and written accounts of the period and they are all now deceased:

Michael Ruth, Kilkenny; John Wall, Kilkenny; James Maher, Parliament St., Kilkenny; Tom Kearney, The Racecourse; Ned Aylward, Ahenure; Bob Cahill, Cappahenry; Jack Gardiner, Poulacapple; Gus Delaney, Kilkenny; James Lalor, Kilkenny; William Oakes, Kilkenny; Paddy Power, Kilmoganny; Thomas Treacy, Kilkenny; Ned Halley, Ballyclovean; Paud Egan, Butlerswood; Seán Hayes, Thurles; Tom Kirwan, Hogan's Flying Column; James McKenna, Coolagh; Mrs Cantwell (nee Aly Luttrell), Garryricken; Michael Maher, Ballylarkin; Lyda Holden, Callan; Michael Ryan, Graine; Denis Treacy, Dunnamaggin; Laurence Forristal, Dunnamaggin; Pat Holden, Dunnamaggin; Robert Campion, Graine; Paddy Donoghue, Kilkenny; Michael Gibbs, Ahenure; Ned Dunne, Threecastles; Martin

Murphy, Grange, Mooncoin; Jack (na Cullagh) Walsh, Mooncoin; Seán Carroll, Templeorum; Ellen Gardiner, Poulacapple; Denis Keane, Garnaman; Andy Maher, Ennisnag; Ned Dalton, Hogan's Flying Column; Seán Hogan, Tipperary Town; Michael Burke, Dualla; Jack Nagle, Hogan's Flying Column; Jim Mullaly, Drangan; Bill Walsh, Ballaght, Carrickshock; Jim Daly, Coolagh; Patrick Butler, Nine-Mile-House; Denis Dermody, Threecastles; Thomas Walsh, Newtown, Kells; John Dermody, Threecastles; Jack Nagle, New Inn; Bill Treacy, Mullinahone; Mrs Statia Brett, Mullinahone; Jimmy Byrne, Threecastles; Bill Johnson, Killenaule; Tom Power, Killenaule; Dick Keane, Garnaman; Maurice Walsh, Drangan; Seán Walsh, Fethard; Tom Barron, Hugginstown; Dick McEvoy, Threecastles; Kitty and Molly Teehan, Shipton; Ned Grogan, Cashel.

Primary sources also studied at that time were the papers of Brigadier George O'Dwyer, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. kindly supplied to me, by his son, Liam O'Dwyer, Lavistown, Kilkenny and the courtmartial papers of the Garryricken gun-battle given to me by Jim McKenna, Coolagh.

Due to varied circumstances in the early seventies, I did not complete the work of writing this book. It was four years ago, in fact, when I resumed interest in the project. This was due, in no small measure, to a video project I undertook locally with Daniel Grace, Gaulstown, Tullaroan, which revived my complete interest in writing this story. My sincere thanks is due to Daniel Grace for all the long hours of deep concentration he gave to the making of the video.

Since then the following old I.R.A. veterans supplied me with oral accounts:- Andy Forristal, Ballyconway, Thomastown; Danny Kelly, Harristown; Phil Dwyer, Brittas, Tullaroan and Michael Walsh, Rathealy.

Tom Coady, Monavrogue guided me around the fields in Knocknagress several times, and willingly gave much of his spare time describing the scene of the gun-battle there, field by field. Dick Teehan, Bullockhill, Ballyfoyle and Tod Teehan, Corrstown, Kilmanagh helped me in a similar capacity around their own former home in New England. I got valuable narrative material from the following:

Gerry Mahoney, Tullaroan; Matty Duggan, Greenhill; Ned Campion, Woodsgift; Paddy Malone, Kilmanagh; Tom Cuddihy, Knocknagress ; Matty Purcell, Greenhill; Peter Smithwick, Inistioge; Lily Dillon, Ballybeigh; Paddy Walsh, Knocknamuck; Helen Walsh, Knocknamuck; Billy Campion, Woodsgift; Dick Walshe, The Church, Tullaroan; Jimmy Treacy, Raheen, Tullaroan; Jimmy Murphy, Killamery; Chris Holden, Newmarket; Paddy Hearne, Catstown, Hugginstown; Mrs Margaret Coogan (nee Teehan), Dublin; Johnny Butler, Tullaroan; Johnny Butler, Lisnalea, Tullaroan; Daniel Grace, Gaulstown,

Tullaroan; Kevin Keogh, Callan; James Delahunty, Mooncoin; Mrs Martin Murphy, Grange, Mooncoin; Frank McCann, Dualla; Paddy and Mary Purcell, Windgap; Fr Fergus Farrell, St Kieran's College, Kilkenny; John Hassett, Cashel, County Tipperary; John Roberts, Kilkenny.

Secondary sources of references include the following books already published:

- C. Ó Labhra, *Trodairí na Treas Briogáide* (Aonach Urmhumhan, 1955)
- D. Ryan, *Seán Treacy and the Third Tipperary Brigade I.R.A.* (Tralee, 1945)
- D. Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (4th edition, Dublin, 1951)
- P. Lavelle, *James O'Mara* (Dublin, 1961)
- E. O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (Dublin, 1979)
- J. O'Donoghue, *No Other Law* (Dublin, 1954)
- D. Hogan, *The Four Glorious Years* (Dublin, 1953)
- T. Ryall, Kilkenny, *The G.A.A. Story, 1884-1984* (Kilkenny, 1984)
- A. Ó Dúill, *Famous Tullaroan 1884-1984* (Kilkenny, 1984)

I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Kilkenny Archaeological Society who afforded me access to the *Kilkenny Journal* files in Rothe House, and to Mrs Margaret Phelan who allowed me the use of some of her valuable photographs.

I am indebted to the management and staff of the *Kilkenny People* who gave me every facility to look up the files of that old but still very vibrant Kilkenny newspaper.

Many thanks to the staff of Trinity College Library, Dublin for allowing me to peruse old copies of the *Irish Times* and to the British Newspaper Library, Colindale Avenue, London, for the use of their archives and microfilm facilities.

I am indebted to Michael Gibbs, Mrs Cecilia Molloy; Ned Cahill; Jimmy Murphy, Michael O'Grady and Paddy Clohosey who supplied me with local ballads, and to Paddy Fitzpatrick, Tullaroan for composing two new ballads which are published in the appendix.

Ignatius O'Neill did excellent work in re-producing many faded old photographs and photographing other items which are in the text. Tom Brett, Waterford Road, Kilkenny took some very interesting photographs for me in the late sixties. I am grateful to David Gaffney, Kilcreene who gave me some very useful photographs which he himself produced.

Seán Murphy, Dublin, and Indianapolis, U.S.A., deserves my sincere thanks and gratitude for designing and producing the cover. He looked after most of the illustrations in the book. Unfortunately, however, he emigrated to the U.S.A. before the book was completed, and Aideen Connolly, Dublin, then completed the last two illustrations.

The Knocknagress Memorial Committee has given encouragement and support all along since the publication of this book was first mooted. Their work in marketing the book has been much appreciated and particularly the selling drive of Cis Delaney and Mrs T. Noonan in the Woodsgift area and Billy Walsh in Kilmanagh. The members of this committee have submitted numerous photographs and some historical material for which I am grateful.

Willie Nolan of Geography Publications has worked hard on the shaping, design and lay-out of the whole book and has given me advice and practical assistance all through the project since I was fortunate to come into contact with him in June, 1987. I thank him for his interest and wholehearted assistance to one who is new to writing and needed his encouragement and valuable advice at every step.

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I wish to thank Mrs Maureen Delaney, Circular Road, Kilkenny for typing the script and her husband, Mr Thomas Delaney T.C., and my wife, Mary, for reading the proofs.

I remember, in passing, my late father and mother, grandfather and uncles who took part in the national struggle but who were non-militant republicans afterwards and wished to pass on to me a deep love and respect for my native country.

I am deeply indebted to my wife, Mary, who has patiently endured being a ‘Flying Column’ widow for the past six months and Michael and Tom, my sons, for being ‘West Kilkenny orphans’ of late.

All who are involved in the production of this book deeply appreciate the gesture of Avonmore Creameries Ltd., Ballyragget, County Kilkenny in sponsoring its launch. Thanks are also due to the Bank of Ireland, Urlingford for their subvention.

Introduction to 1987 edition

The publication of this book marks an important contribution to the political and social history of the borderlands of counties Kilkenny and Tipperary during the War of Independence. Jim Maher is particularly well qualified to write this book. As a Kilkennyman he has a deep appreciation of the things which matter in this quietly proud corner of Ireland; as a researcher he has travelled ‘boisins’ and backroads searching out and recording those who made history. His knowledge of the tumbling countryside around Knocknagress and Tullaroan is particularly detailed for he has taught the children of this place in classroom, hurling field and athletic arena.

The book’s main theme concerns the local dimensions of the political and military struggles of the War of Independence as these were played out on the borderlands of counties Kilkenny and Tipperary. West Kilkenny marches with Tipperary and stretches south from Urlingford through the Slieveardagh hills, Knocknagress, Tullaroan, Kilmanagh, Callan, by Garryricken of the Butlers, through ancient Killamery, Windgap on the hill and Tullahought before reaching the Suir. Across the county boundary, that cuts through the cold, damp Slieveardaghs and proud Slievenamon, are the musical names of the Tipperary countryside – Farranrory of 1848, The Commons, Ballingarry, then onto the vale of Anner, Mullinahone, Drangan, Ninemilehouse and Grangemockler.

The author re-peoples this countryside with men and women who came together from a variety of backgrounds to participate in the fight for the right to govern. Why at this time did small farmers and labourers leave their farms and workplaces; tradesmen and professionals cast aside their tools and pens to march the weary marches with the Flying Column. History and tradition give some answers – economics may also intrude – but there is no doubt that education played a central role. For the best part of a century the national schools’ system, the Christian Brothers and diocesan colleges, such as St Kieran’s, had played a formative role in lifting a stricken people. Apart from these formal classrooms there were the voluntary groupings – Gaelic Athletic Association, Conradh na Gaeilge (a veritable university on bicycles), workingman and farmer organisations – which gave people practice in the art of organisation, belief in their right to shape their own destinies and the ambition and confidence to do so.

The book begins with the 1918 elections which obliterated the Irish Party and heralded the onward march of Sinn Féin. Jim Maher skillfully recreates the atmosphere of the period – torch light processions, bonfires on the hills, notables

on the platforms, the rousing speeches and hats in the air. We are brought back to earlier days when Doheny and Meagher addressed an estimated 50,000 people on Slievenamon – when Charles Kickham travelled with his parish priest to the monster repeal meeting in Thurles town.

The shots fired at Soloheadbeg, 21 January, 1919, stopped the speeches and led to the commencement of a war of attrition. Men who worked horses by day became soldiers by night, collected arms and bridged the gap between theory and practice. The people of the borderlands, now drawn away from the comforts of home and farm, were becoming part of a national political process. From the ranks emerged the heroic figures such as Ned Aylward and Seán Treacy. As the war moved into its second phase the policy of rendering the civil administration redundant was paramount. Attacks on R.I.C. barracks in isolated places would drive the force back to urban shelter and in its place the Sinn Féin Courts would operate the process of law and order. Here in vivid detail are accounts of the military engagements – Hugginstown, Garryricken, Drangan, Friary Street and Wilford.

The Knocknagress material is full of graphic detail and brings us with the joint Flying Columns as they march, billet and are surrounded by British forces. This is an impressive account of the logistics of guerilla warfare and the integration of the elite Flying Columns with the local companies. Not only does Jim Maher provide a gripping narrative of this episode but he also has assembled detailed plans of this event of ninety-four years ago. The book breathes new life into the folk heroes of the borderland and the sections on the funerals of Seán Quinn, Pat Walsh and young Jackie Brett tell us much about Ireland in the early years of this century.

Wars end and people have to gather again the threads of life. For many the rigours of the campaign and the tensions of military activity made it difficult for them to settle into civilian life. The idealism and comradeship of the Flying Columns was often now shattered by the Civil War. The majority returned to their families, farms and fields and the occupations of the countryside; some had to leave to find work in England and America. The most poignant part of the book is the section dealing with those who survived. Jim Maher began his task at the opportune time and recognised the importance of the old men in the corners nurturing quiet pints. The co-operation he received from the community in his task is evident in the many excellent photographs, lovingly preserved in family archives, which the author was given free access to. Ned Aylward and his boyish companions, Knocknagress and Garryricken have now a monument which will endure.

WILLIE NOLAN

*To my wife, Mary,
for all her generous and willing help
in the production of this book*

CHAPTER 1

1916 in Kilkenny

In 1913 it seemed as if Home Rule for Ireland was about to be granted. Sir Edward Carson, however, called upon every Ulsterman to enrol in the Ulster Volunteers to fight Home Rule and the Ulster Volunteers were formed in December, 1912. On 25 November, 1913, the National Volunteers were formed after a meeting at the Rotunda in Dublin addressed by Professor Eoin MacNéill. The aim of the National Volunteers was to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland without distinction of creed, class or politics and they were in opposition to the Ulster Volunteers who wanted to deny the right to Home Rule to the Irish people. By the end of 1913 the National Volunteers were believed to be 10,000 strong.

On 5 March, 1914, Sir Roger Casement and Thomas MacDonagh spoke at a meeting held on the Parade in Kilkenny appealing for the young men of Kilkenny to join the National Volunteers and form a group of that movement in Kilkenny. Thomas MacDonagh was in all probability sent to Kilkenny for this task because of his previous connections with the Marble City. MacDonagh had taught English in St. Kieran's College for three years. During those three years he was a member of the Gaelic League and well-known in the city. It is mentioned in the minutes of the Kilkenny Branch of the Gaelic League that he joined the League at the end of 1901, was co-opted onto the committee on 28 April, 1902, and served as branch secretary for over one year. At the Annual General Meeting of 1 June,

1903, he resigned from the branch¹ and later, but not immediately, went on to teach in St. Enda's - Pádraig Pearse's All-Irish Secondary School in Dublin.

As a result of this Roger Casement – Thomas MacDonagh meeting in Kilkenny a large number of young men handed in their names to join the National Volunteers and they formed a local company of the force. Tom Treacy, then a young man, was one of them. 'This committee was controlled by supporters of John Redmond's party and the A.O.H.,' Tom Treacy said.² But also on that committee were people who would not have been of the same mind as supporters of John Redmond or of the A.O.H. – they were members of the I.R.B. and Sinn Féin. Jimmy Lalor, who also joined the National Volunteers that night, explained this point, 'There were some I.R.B. members in Kilkenny before the Volunteers started – Peter De Loughry, Pat Corcoran, Ned Comerford, old Mr Lennon, Parnell Street, myself and maybe old Michael McSweeney, St. Canice's Place. Peter De Loughry was the Head Centre and gave the oath to me. Seán McDermott was in touch with us.'³ An inbred passion for Irish freedom and armed resistance had been passed on to these I.R.B. members through their families' commitment to the Fenian cause. Some of them were old enough to have remembered James Stephens, who spent his childhood days in Blackmill Street, Kilkenny, and had worked to organise the I.R.B. and prepare for a Fenian Rising in 1867. The Rising never came about in Kilkenny but there was an uprising in Co. Tipperary and other revolts in other areas. Many of those named by Jimmy Lalor as being members of the I.R.B. were born or resided in streets bordering on Blackmill Street where Stephens lived for some time.

Recruitment for the I.R.B. continued in Kilkenny even after the company of National Volunteers was founded in Kilkenny. Billy Oakes who was born in the Waterbarrack, just beside Blackmill Street, said, 'Ald. James Nowlan⁴ asked me to join the I.R.B. I took the oath in the brewery from Pat Corcoran and James Nowlan.'⁵ Tom Treacy claimed that 'the I.R.B. and Sinn Féin members were the driving force on the County Committee of the National Volunteers.'⁶

Callan, a walled town in Co. Kilkenny was the homeplace of Edmund Ignatius Rice, founder of the Irish Christian Brothers. According to John Devoy there had been more Fenians in Callan than in Kilkenny City. One of the republican activists there was John Locke, the Fenian poet, whose first poems were published in the Fenian newspaper, *The Irish People*, and who later wrote the well-known emigrant poem, *Dawn on the Irish Coast*. He was arrested after the Fenian Rising in 1867 and imprisoned for six months in Kilkenny jail. True to tradition, it was not surprising that a strong company of National Volunteers was formed in Callan in the early part of 1914. Father Delahunty, a native of Mooncoin, had been appointed curate in Callan in 1912 and had been prominent in the National

Volunteers from their foundation. With Michael Shelley, J. J. Dunne and Jim Roughan, Ahenure, he organised parades in Callan and helped to equip and train new recruits to the National Volunteers.

On 3 August, 1914, in the British House of Commons, Sir Edward Grey announced the Government's decision to declare war on Germany. The Ulster Unionist Party had promised the Government its support. John Redmond, leader of the Irish Party, speaking in the Westminster Parliament, then assured the British Government that they might with confidence withdraw all troops from Ireland; that the National Volunteers would co-operate with the Ulster Volunteers in guarding Ireland's shores.

It was on 20 September, 1914, at Woodenbridge in County Wicklow, that John Redmond went further and made a speech which caused a final split in the ranks of the National Volunteers. Hitherto, he had called upon Irishmen to be ready to defend Ireland against invasion; now he declared: 'Your duty is twofold. It would be a disgrace forever to Ireland if Irishmen refrained from fighting wherever the firing extends, in defence of right, freedom and religion in this war.' John Redmond's Irish Party was of the opinion that if Irishmen fought on England's side this would guarantee the passing of Home Rule when the war ended.

The Redmondites and the A.O.H. members in Kilkenny openly advocated recruitment for the British Army and Tom Treacy said that in September, 1914, 'the matter came to a head at a full parade of all the City Companies in the Market Place, Kilkenny.'

There were about 650, counting officers, N.C.O.s and men, on parade on that occasion. Rev Fr Rowe, St. Mary's, Kilkenny and Rev Philip Moore, St. John's, Kilkenny addressed all assembled. They spoke in favour of the policy of the Redmondites and A.O.H. They were vigorously replied to and opposed by Peter De Loughry of Parliament Street, Pat Corcoran, Patrick Street and Ned Comerford of Wellington Square on behalf of the Irish Ireland side. After numerous very hot exchanges by the speakers on both sides, Peter De Loughry called on all those who stood for Ireland and the Green Flag to fall out and line up at a point indicated by him and all those who stood for England and the Union Jack to stand where they were. Twenty-eight men left the ranks and lined up at the point indicated for those who stood for Ireland and the Green Flag and the balance on parade stood on the Redmondite side.

I (Tom Treacy) was put in charge of the 28 men who stood for the Green Flag and I marched them out of the Market Yard amidst a most hostile demonstration. I marched the 28 to what was then known as Banba Hall (now Kyteler's Inn) which was at the time occupied by Fianna Éireann.⁷

These dissenters, 28 in number, became known as the Irish Volunteers or in other counties they were called the Sinn Féin Volunteers or the Republican Volunteers.⁸ Two things are apparent from this account. Only 4.3 per cent of the men on parade joined the Irish Volunteers and 95.7 per cent of the men remained loyal to John Redmond. A second feature to be gleaned from Tom Treacy's account shows the prominent part played by the Catholic clergy in the affairs of the National Volunteers and the great influence that they had over the members.

Very few among the officers of the Irish Volunteers knew the plans that were being made by the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The Supreme Council of the Brotherhood, after infiltrating the Council of the Irish Volunteers, took secret action as soon as the European War began. Pearse was then one of their number as he had been co-opted to the Council in July, 1914. The I.R.B. decided that Ireland should make use of the opportunity of the Great War to rise in insurrection against England and to declare Irish independence in the fullest sense rather than just Home Rule that would still keep Ireland subservient in many ways to the British Parliament in Westminster.

In Kilkenny City, the Irish Volunteers held parades, training sessions in Infantry Drill and with wooden guns performed Arms Drill. Irish classes were held and lectures on military and historical subjects were given. Each Sunday morning, with rare exceptions, the whole company assembled for rifle practice at the rifle range at Lower Dunmore, kindly put at the Irish Volunteers' disposal by Mr Richard Maher. The arms used were mostly shotguns. Each man paid for his own gun and ammunition.

As a consequence of the split in the National Volunteers from the city companies, it followed that there was a split in the County Committee that controlled the organisation. The members of the County Committee who were either Sinn Féin or IRB formed their own committee. About ten new Lee Enfield Rifles and about a dozen small automatics and revolvers were procured and they were distributed to the Irish Volunteers in Co. Kilkenny. Those who received them contributed a portion of the cost.

In 1915, Capt. J. J. O'Connell, better known to the officers and men as 'Ginger' O'Connell, arrived in Kilkenny from the Irish Volunteer Headquarters in Dublin to train members in the city and county of Kilkenny. He had some



1. *Members of the Irish Volunteers, Kilkenny in Galbally, Co. Limerick, training prior to 1916.*

experience in the American army before joining the Irish Volunteers. He was in Kilkenny for about three months, during which time the city company made great strides. During that time the membership of the Irish Volunteers increased in urban and rural areas of the county. Capt. O'Connell set up a training camp in Galbally, Co. Limerick for members in the Munster area and officers from Kilkenny attended the camp. Amongst those who went to Galbally were Jimmy Lalor, Éamon Comerford, Martin Kealy, Tim Hennessy and Larry De Loughry.

The Irish Volunteers in Kilkenny liked Captain J. J. O'Connell (Ginger) but unknown to them it was the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., amongst them Pearse, Clarke, MacDermott, Ceannt, MacDonagh, Plunkett and James Connolly, leader of the Citizen Army, who were organising a rising that they planned to put into effect before the end of the European War. These men were operating secretly and not confiding their plans to Eoin MacNeill (Chairman of the Volunteer Executive), Bulmer Hobson (Secretary), The O'Rahilly (Treasurer) or Captain J. J. O'Connell, head of the Military sub-committee, all of whom were known to be in favour of defensive action if the British Government should attempt to enforce conscription, or arrest or disarm the Volunteers. They did not plan to take the initiative in attacking British forces.

Mr Tom Treacy said that when, in November 1915 the Kilkenny Irish Volunteers commemorated the execution of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien, the Manchester Martyrs, the new Enfield rifles were carried in the demonstration.

Seán McDermott gave the oration. He delivered the oration in the Gaelic League Rooms in Rothe Arch, Parliament Street, Kilkenny.⁹

A member of the Irish Volunteers at the time, Billy Oakes, added that he was on guard with three others outside the Gaelic League Rooms that night. They were told to let no one in except known members and sympathisers.¹⁰

Mr Jimmy Lalor spoke about this visit of Seán MacDiarmada (Seán McDermott) to Kilkenny. He said that:

The Irish Volunteers marched with other organisations up John Street, by the Military Barracks, over Greensbridge and up to Rothe House. Seán McDermott addressed us all in Rothe House. After the meeting Seán along with the officers of the local Irish Volunteers went in to nearby Peter De Loughry's house, Parliament Street. He spoke about the local Irish Volunteers. Then he told us that the Rising was to take place soon. He could not say when it would take place for certain – ‘as soon as we are ready,’ he said. ‘It is definitely decided to have a Rising. Some of us will not come out of it but that's the way’. I (Jimmy Lalor) looked at him as he announced this. There was determination in his eyes. He was not a tall person – he was slightly built. He was lame and he walked with a limp. There was no pomp about him, he spoke in a straightforward manner.¹¹

At the beginning of 1916 the leaders of the I.R.B. began to fear that if they delayed much longer, their secret preparations would be disclosed, all the leaders imprisoned and the whole organisation destroyed. Connolly declared that if no one else acted, he would go out with a few dozen of the Citizen Army himself. In January, the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. decided on the date when the Rising was to begin. Easter Sunday, 23 April, 1916, was the first date chosen. The I.R.B. leaders did not confide their plans to Bulmer Hobson, the Secretary of the Irish Volunteers, or to Eoin MacNeill, Chairman of the Executive and Chief of Staff.

Mr Éamon Aylward, Callan, Co. Kilkenny, was studying for the priesthood in St. Kieran's College seminary in Kilkenny. He recalled that there was a fellow student with him from Fethard and he was very friendly with him. He was Arthur Cantwell, a nephew of the Archbishop of Los Angeles. Both of them were returning by bus to St. Kieran's from Christmas vacation early in January, 1916. Cantwell told Aylward that there was an Irish Volunteer Company in Fethard but that he was sorry to hear there was none in Callan. The Fethard Irish Volunteers would like Callan to have an Irish Volunteer Company so that they

could link up with Irish Volunteer Headquarters in Dublin through a company in Callan and also, through them, to the Irish Volunteers in Kilkenny. Aylward told him that they should send an organiser to Callan. He had no doubt that a company could be formed there as there were people in Callan who would be sympathetically disposed. One of these could be Jim Roughan, who was a farmer in Ahenure, as, to Aylward's knowledge, he was not in agreement with the Irish Parliamentary Party. Cantwell said the matter was urgent as there would be a rebellion before the year was out. 'Get in touch with Roughan and Michael Shelley,' said Aylward. Éamon Aylward added that, 'an organiser came down from Dublin to interview Father Delahunty C.C., leader of the Redmondite Volunteers in Callan, but nothing came of the visit'¹²

In February, 1916, Lieutenant Ted O'Kelly, a medical doctor and a native of Kildare, was sent from Irish Volunteer Headquarters to organise and train the Irish Volunteers in the county and city of Kilkenny. He was placed under the command of Captain J. J. O'Connell. He brought the Kilkenny Irish Volunteers on a route march, early in March, 1916 from Kilkenny to Ballyfoyle, and then via Muckalee to Johnswell. The company never halted near a pub. Drinking by members was very much discouraged.

The Kilkenny Company Irish Volunteers paraded to Mass in St. John's, Kilkenny on St. Patrick's Day, 1916. They were becoming more daring, carried Lee Enfield rifles and marched behind the Republican flag.

On 3 April, 1916, Pearse gave public orders for a three days' march and field manoeuvres to be held throughout Ireland on Easter Sunday. Eoin MacNéill, Bulmer Hobson and their immediate associates became suspicious. MacNéill summoned the Headquarters Staff and demanded a promise from Pearse, Ceannt and MacDonagh, who were present, that they would give no order, outside routine matters, to the Volunteers without his endorsement. This undertaking they gave. They realised that MacNéill had the power to wreck their enterprise at the last moment by issuing a countermanding order.

About a fortnight before Easter, 1916, Pat Corcoran called Tom Treacy out from the Irish Volunteer Hall saying someone wanted to see him outside in King Street (now Kieran Street). On arrival outside he introduced Treacy to Cathal Brugha. Tom Treacy had previously known Brugha by sight as a commercial traveller who came to Kilkenny. Pat Corcoran told him that Cathal Brugha had something very secret and important to tell him that was very relevant to Treacy's position as Captain of 'A' Company, Kilkenny City Irish Volunteers. Cathal Brugha told him that the Rising was coming off and the instructions he gave were:

- (a) General manoeuvres were to be arranged for Easter Sunday.

KILKENNY VOLUNTEERS 1916



2. A photograph of a group of men, taken in 1916, after their return from serving terms of imprisonment in various Irish and British prisons. Tom Stallard, who was a prominent figure in the movement, is not included in the group as he was in hospital at the time.

Denis Barry (Monster House) died on hunger strike in the Curragh Military Hospital during the Civil War. Peter De Loughry was later elected to An Dáil and was Mayor of Kilkenny for seven consecutive terms. Seán Gibbons was later a T.D. and subsequently a Senator in Seanad Éireann.

Back Row (L to R): John Lalor, Denis Barry, Pat Corcoran, James Nowlan, Laurence Walsh, Thomas Treacy, John Harte, Pierce Brett.

Second Row from Back (L to R): Patrick Parsons, Tom Furlong, Martin Kealy, Maurice Higgins, William Denn, Thomas Neary, Jimmy Lalor, Michael Purcell, Peter DeLoughry.

Third Row from Back (L to R): Charles Smyth, Stephen O'Dwyer, Edward Comerford, Anthony Mullaly, Patrick Bourke, James Carrigan, Larry DeLoughry, Seán Gibbons.

Front Row (L to R): Michael Ryan, Joseph Coyne, James Madigan, William Stephens.

Sgoil Eanna,
Rathmines,
8 :VII: 9.

A Chara Dhill,

I was sorry I missed you that second evening I stayed in Kilkenny; you had departed from the rooms by the time I got down. When talking to you of our need of extensions and the means of carrying them out, I intended only to consult you as a business man on the difficulty we find in acquiring those means. When I got back I found that Mr Pearse, having consulted some of our supporters, had sent copies of the enclosed letter (proper fair copies) to four or five who had expressed interest in our venture, no venture now. He has since gone ~~to~~ on holidays and I remain in charge this month. I have discovered this among his papers, and send it to you in hopes that you see your way yourself to join our undertaking or may be able to suggest someone who may do so, or some means to go forward.

Neither Mr Pearse nor I regard this as a personal matter. It is really one for the country and more especially one for those in our movement. He, as he says, receives no salary from the school, and indeed has to forego half his salary as editor of "An Claidheamh", and live on the other half. His income is now just £100. I have made a sacrifice to come here too, and am now in receipt of a much smaller salary than I have had these seven or eight years. But on the other hand we understand that this way of serving the cause is our choice, and that you and others may prefer other ways. You and I know each other well enough to understand each other, and anyhow I am not asking a personal favour.

Our prospects for next year are bright otherwise; we receive so much approval that we have to examine our consciences and duly blush every day.

By the way, if no notices of our magazine, "An Macaoimh", have appeared in the Kilkenny papers, I wonder could Doherty or Keane or others be got to put in something. I had better see that our publisher has sent copies.

Well, once more I must say that I send you this with a perfect confidence of mutual understanding, just as I might ask you to go for a walk - you would do so if you at all could, if not, not, and there an end.

hitt let- uindas t hns offanrahan,

hnp so eip 13 coin uirde,

Tomás Mac Donnchadha

3. Letter from Tomás MacDonnchadha (Thomas MacDonagh) to Tim Hanrahan, Kilkenny.



4. Cathal Brugha



5. Thomas MacDonagh



6. Michael Collins

- (b) The company with all its equipment was to proceed by Gowran, Goresbridge, Borris (Co. Carlow), Ballymurphy (Co. Carlow) to Scolloge Gap on the Wexford border where they were to link up with the Wexford Irish Volunteers.
- (c) No operations were to be commenced until they linked up with the Wexford contingent.
- (d) Captain J. J. O’Connell from G.H.Q. would be in command of all units from the city and county and all orders for the carrying out of operations and tasks were to be taken from him and this would hold when they linked up with their Wexford allies at Scolloge Gap.¹³

Scolloge Gap is on the road to Killealy, Co. Wexford but the gap itself is in Co. Carlow about ten metres from the border of Co. Wexford. It is a gap in the Blackstairs Mountains. On this site Irishmen and women fought a bloody battle in the 1798 Rebellion for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Captain Thomas Treacy told Cathal Brugha that his company numbered about 66 at this time and they had rifles, revolvers and small automatics for only 25 of the 66. Cathal Brugha said that there was a quantity of arms to be picked up from Dr Dundon in Borris, Co. Carlow, if they contacted him on Easter Sunday. Brugha intimated that he confidently expected a further supply of arms would be available later.

These proposed plans inextricably linked the Irish Volunteers in Co. Kilkenny to their counterparts in Co. Wexford. This was good as a strategy if one considers the strength of British forces in and around Kilkenny City at the time and the relative strength of the Irish Volunteers. There were two R.I.C. barracks in Kilkenny, one in Parliament Street and one in John Street. Between both they had an estimated strength of 40 policemen. Kilkenny Military Barracks was where James Stephens Military Barracks now is and 400 soldiers occupied the barracks. These 400 soldiers were fully armed with the best weapons of the period. As Tom Treacy had told Cathal Brugha the number of members of ‘A’ Company, Kilkenny City Irish Volunteers was 66. In addition there were around 70 other Volunteers scattered throughout County Kilkenny. The total number of Irish Volunteers in the whole county, according to Tom Treacy’s recorded figures was 136.¹⁴ The Irish Volunteers were poorly armed. On their own, they would be annihilated if they rose in Kilkenny City and county. But if this plan to link the Irish Volunteers in Co. Kilkenny with their counterparts in Co. Wexford went well and if they succeeded in joining together at Scolloge Gap in the shadow of the Blackstairs Mountains, they would have a better chance if from then on they used guerrilla tactics.

Inexplicably, the organisers of the rebellion put both the Wexford and Kilkenny Volunteers under the command of Captain J. J. (Ginger) O’Connell – head of the Military sub-committee of the Volunteer Executive in Dublin who differed with the Military Council of the IRB that included Tom Clarke, Seán Mac Diarmada and Pádraig Pearse, as to whether there should be a Rising at all on Easter Sunday. This was a decision that the Wexford Brigade Irish Volunteers did not understand as they had presumed that Pádraig Pearse would be in direct command of the Wexford contingent after he had visited Enniscorthy earlier in 1916, had given a lecture to them on Robert Emmet and had spoken to them about the intended Rising. He had then promoted Séamus Doyle, Enniscorthy to Brigade Adjutant of the Wexford Brigade Irish Volunteers and he had arranged a code with him and other Co. Wexford officers by means of which the date of the Rising would be made known to them.¹⁵ Pearse had also appointed Robert Brennan from Wexford to be Quartermaster of the Brigade with the rank of captain.¹⁶

In Kilkenny the details of the plan and instructions had also been communicated to Peter De Loughry who had represented the Kilkenny Volunteers at General Headquarters in Dublin. In a letter from former Kilkenny Irish Volunteer, Tom Stallard, to his sister, Josephine, dated 5 June, 1951, Tom stated that:

Cathal Brugha came down here - - - and told us there was going to be a rising. As it was the first we heard of it, we held a meeting and sent Peter De Loughry and Pat Corcoran up to Dublin to see MacNéill (Eoin) to know something about it. They saw him and he said the first he knew about it himself was when a few more lads from other parts of the country went to him on the same mission. Anyway they came to an agreement that if MacNéill did not give orders to Kilkenny to rise, Kilkenny would not rise. We would do whatever MacNéill ordered.¹⁷

The fact that the Co. Wexford Irish Volunteers relied on Pádraig Pearse to inform them of the date of the Rising and that they were prepared to obey that order and the Irish Volunteers from Co. Kilkenny pledged themselves to take orders from Eoin MacNéill held the seeds of disaster.

However, not fully aware of the deep divisions in the top echelons of the Irish Volunteer movement, the Kilkenny Company made its own preparations for a probable Easter Rising. Tom Treacy gave his instructions to ‘A’ Company: ‘Arms, equipment and rations are to be mounted on bicycles for the journey to Scolloge Gap.’

On Spy Wednesday, Peter De Loughry and Jimmy Lalor, Kilkenny with Éamon Fleming of The Swan, Co. Leix (now Co. Laois) went to Wolfhill Coal Mines and

collected explosives which they delivered to Mr Patrick Ramsbottom, Maryborough (now Portlaoise).

Holy Thursday proved to be a very confusing day for all the Irish Volunteers in Ireland. Bulmer Hobson and Commandant J. J. O’Connell became convinced that something more than a route march with manoeuvres was being planned by Pearse and his I.R.B. friends for Easter Sunday. They carried their suspicions to MacNéill. The three called on Pearse and insisted on being told the truth. He told them that a Rising was intended. MacNéill said that he would use every means short of betraying them to the British, to prevent it.¹⁸ MacNéill sent out orders giving Bulmer Hobson authority over all the Volunteers in the city, appointing Commandant J. J. O’Connell to take over all control in the South and cancelling every order not endorsed by Hobson or himself. This confirmed that Eoin MacNéill had put O’Connell in charge of all movements in the Kilkenny-Wexford and Munster areas.¹⁹

Later that day the promised order from Pearse for the Easter Rising was brought to the Irish Volunteers in Enniscorthy by Miss Eileen O’Hanrahan, sister of Michael O’Hanrahan, a native of New Ross, who was one of the leaders later executed for his part in the Rising. Commandant Seán Sinnott in Wexford also received a coded message from Pádraig Pearse that the Rising was to take place on Easter Sunday. Some time later a document reached Séamus Doyle, Brigade Adjutant of the Wexford Volunteers by post, he thought, which although not referring to Pearse’s order, virtually countermanded it. Séamus Doyle stated that ‘this document was, in military language, a directive.’²⁰ This was the communiqué from Eoin MacNéill ‘cancelling every order not endorsed by Hobson or himself’. Doyle claimed that soon after that he received another message – this time purportedly from the Kilkenny Irish Volunteers to the effect that in their estimation ‘the second directive was paramount (overriding).’²¹ However the Kilkenny Volunteers later declared categorically ‘that no one in Kilkenny knew anything of such a despatch.’²²

Early on Good Friday morning, however, Pearse, McDermott and MacDonagh saw MacNéill, told him for the first time that arms were arriving from Germany in a ship named the Aud and succeeded in persuading him that no alternative remained to the Volunteers but to carry out their plans. MacNéill agreed to revoke his orders of Thursday and to let things take their course.²³

On the same morning the Aud arrived in Tralee Bay with the promised arms from Germany but there was no one to meet it. British warships surrounded it. The British ship, Bluebell, ordered Spindler, the German captain of the Aud, to follow the English convoy into Queenstown (now Cobh) harbour. On the way the Germans blew up their ship together with all the promised arms aboard.

While all this was happening and unknown to them, Pat Corcoran, Peter De Loughry, Jimmy Lalor and Tom Furlong from the Kilkenny Company of the Irish Volunteers went to Co. Wexford in Peter De Loughry's motor car and collected a quantity of explosives from a brother of Tom Furlong, another Kilkenny Irish Volunteer. They intended to use these in the planned rebellion.

The British heard early on Saturday morning about the destruction of the German ship off Queenstown. They now had enough evidence to proceed, whenever it suited them, with their policy of arresting and interning all the prominent members of the Irish Volunteers. The I.R.B. members on the Military Council believed the British would now make a sweeping arrest of Volunteers throughout the country. They thought action should be taken without delay. MacNeill reacted to the news in a contrary sense. He called a meeting of some of his colleagues. He told MacDonagh, who was present at this meeting, that his final decision was to call off the mobilisation. At midnight, MacNeill sent messengers to the country to warn the Volunteers that no movements were to take place and sent notices to the same effect to the press.

The late editions of *The Sunday Independent* on Easter Sunday morning contained MacNeill's notice countermanding the parades and manoeuvres arranged:

Owing to the very critical position, all orders given to Irish Volunteers for to-morrow, Easter Sunday, are hereby rescinded, and no parades, marches, or other movements of Irish Volunteers will take place. Each individual Volunteer will obey this order strictly in every particular.

Acting on the instructions given to them by Cathal Brugha, the Kilkenny members of the Irish Volunteers mobilised that morning in Banba Hall (now Kyteler's Inn), King Street (now Kieran Street). Tom Treacy was the officer in charge. Billy Oakes said that they came together in a room that was into the left after they climbed the stairs.²⁴ At ten o'clock that morning Treacy received a copy of the *Sunday Independent* and was shocked to read the announcement that the manoeuvres were cancelled. He told many of the officers and men about the countermanding order from Eoin MacNeill. In consultation with the company officers, Treacy did not dismiss the Company until about 2 p.m. as he still awaited an official despatch to be certain. He asked the men to report back again to Banba Hall that night.

The company of the Irish Volunteers in Wexford Town had mobilised. They were to set out for Enniscorthy that evening. Capt. J.J. O'Connell, accompanied by Doctor Dundon of Borris, arrived in Wexford to announce that the Rising was off.²⁵ Captain Robert Brennan said to O'Connell, 'We heard that MacNeill

was against the Rising but what about Pearse and Clarke and the others?’ O’Connell replied, ‘They wanted to go on but they all agreed to call it off.’²⁶ The Wexford Volunteer officers sent their men home.²⁷ Capt. J. J. O’Connell and Dr Dundon returned to Borris.

Left without any further instructions, Capt. Tom Treacy in Kilkenny decided on Easter Sunday afternoon to meet the Kilkenny City officers and some Irish Volunteer officers from the rural areas who were on alert for the planned Rising and they discussed the situation in detail.

Again at eight o’clock on Easter Sunday night, the Kilkenny Irish Volunteers came together. Gus Delaney, Watergate, Kilkenny stated that they played rings and cards as a bluff in case they were raided.²⁸ At about ten o’clock that night Pat Corcoran, who had been in Dublin that day, arrived at Banba Hall, accompanied by Capt. J. J. O’Connell with official word that everything was off. The Kilkenny Irish Volunteers then went home.

Jimmy Lalor was disappointed. He was waiting for the go-ahead to put the plan given to them by Cathal Brugha into operation. He described his feelings:

Scolloge Gap was our destination, if there had been no countermanding order. We were prepared to follow that plan. We had planned to go on bicycles or even walk if that was the only way but it could be a hell of a walk. Scolloge Gap is a few miles beyond Ballymurphy, up to the top of a hill. We would have to go down to the Gap by night – for fear of detection by day. We were to collect guns on the way – in Borris. I went down there beforehand. I saw the guns. They were hidden in a mill – single-barrelled shotguns. Dr Dundon had charge of them. We were to join up with the Wexfordmen - maybe around Enniscorthy and I think the Waterford men were to go up there too. We had 60 Kilkennymen at least. We were not sure what was to happen after that. All the lads did not have guns. That was our problem. We took it that Eoin MacNéill was the Commander-in-Chief. Officially he was, but in fact he had been shoved aside. Captain Ginger O’Connell had been down in Wexford and he was the one in charge here. He was from the Irish Volunteers’ Headquarters and over the officers here. He was in communication with Dublin. He was with MacNéill at the time. Oh - it was all a mess-up.²⁹

In the meantime the secret I.R.B. Military Council had met in Liberty Hall, Dublin. Some of the members were almost in despair. MacNéill’s order had destroyed their chance of any military success. Nevertheless they decided to go

ahead with the same plans for the Rising on Easter Monday morning and they hoped for support from the rest of the country.

Early on Monday morning the following summons was sent out, signed by Thomas MacDonagh, Brigade Commandant and countersigned by Pádraig Pearse.

The four City Battalions will parade for inspection and route march at 10 a.m. to-day.

Later that same morning in Dublin, about twelve hundred men answered the summons to parade – the group contained nearly the whole of the Citizen Army and about eleven hundred Volunteers.³⁰ At mid-day the Irish Republican forces rushed into the G.P.O. and took possession of the building. Simultaneously members of the new Republican forces occupied buildings in other parts of Dublin. P. H. Pearse, Commandant-in-Chief, came to the steps of the G.P.O. and read the proclamation of the Irish Republic. The 1916 Insurrection had started!

In Kilkenny on Easter Monday morning Pat Corcoran and Peter De Loughry went in Peter De Loughry's car to bring to Kilkenny the guns that Dr Dundon had in his possession in Borris, Co. Carlow. Captain Robert Brennan, of the Co. Wexford Irish Volunteers heard in Wexford 'that the Sinn Féiners were fighting in Dublin.' He went down to Commandant Seán Sinnott's house in Wexford where he found Capt. O'Connell. O'Connell had been to Borris, Co. Carlow. O'Connell told Brennan that the Wexford Volunteers were not to stir. He had got a despatch in Borris 'that James Connolly had made a mess of things by going out at the head of a handful of Citizen Army men. The Volunteers were standing firm.'³¹ Once again Capt. J. J. O'Connell was negative in his attitude towards the Rising although he was the officer in charge of Kilkenny and Wexford.

Captain Tom Treacy stayed on the alert in Kilkenny but around 2 p.m. that afternoon he received word from Lieutenant Brett, 'A' Company, that word had arrived at the Railway Station in Kilkenny that the Rising had broken out in Dublin. Treacy sent out word to all the available officers and men to mobilise in the vicinity of Stallards' Garden at Asylum Lane, Kilkenny at 7 o'clock that night. A party of men from 'A' Company met the car carrying the guns on the Thomastown Road, on the outskirts of Kilkenny City. Mr John Stallard of Danville, a member of the Kilkenny Irish Volunteers, had left the corrugated iron gate open leading into Stallards' field at the city side of the tennis ground. There the guns, which consisted of about 30 single barrelled shotguns, with a quantity of ammunition, were unloaded. Billy Oakes said that this night 'was a terrible wet night' in Kilkenny.³²

Before Tom Treacy dismissed the men he told them that hostilities had broken out in Dublin and they were to hold themselves readily available to be called out at any time to carry out any orders that might be issued by Captain O’Connell, the officer from Headquarters in charge of the area.

In Wexford Robert Brennan and Captain ‘Ginger’ O’Connell waited for further news. They were joined there by Séamus Doyle, the Adjutant of the Co. Wexford Brigade who had travelled down from Enniscorthy to find out what was now going to happen in Co. Wexford. Brennan went to the railway station and awaited the arrival of the next train from Dublin.

At 2 a.m. on Tuesday morning the train arrived into Wexford after a slow journey from Dublin. The train driver told Brennan that the Sinn Féiners had taken the G.P.O. in Dublin and many other places. Brennan returned to the house with the news. At first O’Connell would not believe him. Finally O’Connell said that whatever the position was, he was not going to order any movement until he got a definite order from Dublin.

All during Easter Tuesday the Irish Volunteers mobilised throughout South Wexford. Commandant Seán Sinnott set ten o’clock that night as the deadline to start for Enniscorthy. They then received a despatch from Capt. ‘Ginger’ O’Connell, ‘Don’t stir. Dublin is smashed’. Sinnott sent his men home.³³

The Kilkenny Volunteer company again mobilised on Tuesday night of Easter Week from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. Members who had small arms (revolvers or automatics) carried them at all times. Tom Treacy said that the attendance of members of ‘A’ Company from Easter Tuesday onwards was 100 per cent.³⁴ No order arrived from Capt. O’Connell.

Early on Easter Wednesday morning the Wexford Commandant, Robert Brennan, met Capt. J. J. O’Connell who had travelled down from Enniscorthy to Wexford. He had a bitter row with O’Connell. Subsequently Brennan heard that O’Connell was on his way to the Railway Station in Wexford to catch a train to Waterford with the intention of travelling from there to Kilkenny. Brennan set off on his bicycle after O’Connell. He caught up with O’Connell just as he was about to board the train. Brennan pleaded with him not to stop the Waterford and Kilkenny Irish Volunteers from joining the Wexfordmen in Enniscorthy. Capt. O’Connell threatened Brennan that he would have him court-martialled if he led the Wexford Irish Volunteers into rebellion. Brennan retorted that he would have him court-martialled. An angered Commandant Robert Brennan left the railway station and went to Enniscorthy.³⁵

As Robert Brennan surmised, Capt. J. J. O’Connell arrived in Kilkenny that Wednesday morning. He had conferences with members of the County Controlling Committees, company officers, and representatives of the small

outlying units. The Kilkenny Irish Volunteers had no clear news of what was happening in Dublin.

Early that afternoon, O’Connell, who was still the commander of the Irish Volunteers south of a line from Wexford to Kerry inclusive, decided to send Kilkenny Volunteer Jimmy Lalor, a competent motor-cyclist, with a despatch to Mr James Leddin, the Irish Volunteer officer in charge in Limerick, asking him for particulars of how things stood in Limerick.

Jimmy Lalor described that trip he made to Limerick on his motorcycle:

Ginger O’Connell sent me on my motorbike to Limerick to find out what had happened to the arms that we expected from the Aud. If there were arms there we were prepared to go to Limerick to collect them. We had plans to commandeer cars- five or six cars - and to load the arms and ammunition into them. We had a list of cars and drivers ready. Before we started on this plan, Ginger O’Connell wanted to know if there were arms to be collected at all. I met Jim Leddin in a shop in William Street, Limerick. Leddin was very upset over the whole affair. He was in the same boat over there. They did not have arms. He told me about the mess up. There were three men drowned. I met Tommy MacInerney afterwards in jail. He was the driver of the car that was going to get in touch with Casement and the Aud. They drove over a pier into the sea by mistake. McInerney, the driver, escaped. They thought they were turning into a road but it was a pier and they toppled into the sea. Tommy got out. It was Wednesday of Easter Week when I went over. Jim Leddin told me it was all up. When I got back I gave my message to Capt. Ginger O’Connell. ‘Too late to do anything now,’ said O’Connell, ‘Things are not going well in Dublin.’³⁶

Capt. O’Connell had given his last negative order to the Kilkenny Irish Volunteers for Easter Week, 1916.

Billy Oakes asked Jimmy Lalor what had happened the Aud. ‘The vessel is gone’, said Jimmy Lalor, ‘there will be no rifles.’

‘What a pity,’ said Billy, ‘the boat was waiting and all they had to do was to flash the light.’³⁷

Over in Enniscorthy, Robert Brennan, Séamus Doyle and other officers had difficulty in restraining the Wexfordmen from marching to Dublin to aid the Volunteers fighting there. Capt. J. J. O’Connell had left for Kilkenny and the Wexford Volunteer officers decided to assume command themselves. Their

Brigade Vice-Commandant P. P. Galligan arrived from Dublin, where he had gone for instructions, bringing with him an order from James Connolly to hold the railway line from Rosslare and prevent British reinforcements reaching Dublin.³⁸

Early on Thursday morning of Easter Week the Volunteers of County Wexford, acting on their own initiative, occupied the town of Enniscorthy. They had about 300 Irish Volunteers under the command of Commandant Robert Brennan.³⁹ The R.I.C. were confined to barracks. There was intermittent firing from the insurgents' positions and from the barracks; one policeman was wounded.⁴⁰ The Brigade Vice-Commandant of the Wexford Volunteers, P. Galligan, mobilised some of his men and occupied Ferns and the surrounding area.⁴¹

Dr Josephine Clarke (nee Stallard) gave a statement to the Bureau of Military History in which she spoke of her visit to Kilkenny during the Easter Rising of 1916. In it she said that 'my two sisters and myself visited De Loughry's shop where we found 'Ginger' O'Connell and some of the Volunteers. Peter was in great distress and my reading of his state of mind was that Commandant O'Connell restrained them from going out to fight, while Peter and the others were anxious to do their part in the Rising.'⁴² This incident in all probability happened on Thursday after O'Connell had finally ruled out giving an order to the Kilkenny Irish Volunteers to take any part in the 1916 Rising.

The surrender in Dublin came on Saturday, 29 April, 1916. The Co. Wexford Irish Volunteers held the town of Enniscorthy and almost the whole of North Wexford until that day. Even on that Saturday, Commandant Brennan refused to surrender until he had received orders directly from Pearse. This fact confirmed that the Wexford Irish Volunteers had decided in the end to overthrow the authority of Captain J. J. O'Connell and recognise the command of Pearse and his authority alone. On the following day (Sunday) Séamus Doyle and Seán Etchingham went to Dublin under an escort provided by the local military commander, Colonel French, and met Pearse - then a prisoner in Arbour Hill. Séamus Doyle said that Pearse was very grave but he confirmed the surrender.⁴³

On 3 May the executions began – P. H. Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh and Thomas Clarke were brought before a British firing squad and shot.

Kilkenny people were shocked at the execution of Thomas MacDonagh who had lived amongst them for almost three years although he was a native of Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary.

On the same day the arrests in Kilkenny began when Captain J. J. O'Connell was taken into custody and lodged in Kilkenny Jail.

On 4 May, 1916, Peter De Loughry of Parliament Street was arrested.⁴⁴ Alderman James Nowlan, after whom Nowlan Park is named, was arrested when he stepped off the train from Dublin. He was President of the GAA at the time.

That evening a large number of British cavalry and infantry arrived in Kilkenny City to reinforce the British Army in Kilkenny Barracks. It was estimated that there were 1100 troops in Kilkenny at this stage. There was a force of about 200 police in the city. The police were keeping their eyes and ears open for possible clues to arrest people.

Commandant Robert Brennan had been under arrest since he surrendered in Enniscorthy. He was court-martialled as was Michael de Lacey, Séamus Doyle, Séamus Rafter, Seán Etchingham, and Dick King, all of whom had taken a prominent part in occupying the town of Enniscorthy. Adjudged guilty of ‘treason’, they were all sentenced to death but the general officer commuted each sentence to five years.

Arrests intensified in Kilkenny. Jimmy Lalor⁴⁵ described his arrest on 5 May, 1916:

I went up to have a talk with Pat Corcoran⁴⁶ in Patrick Street. Liam Mellowes always called there when he was in town. He would talk to Pat about IRB matters. I was barely inside the door of the workshop when a force of RIC and soldiers arrived outside. They came in on top of us into the workshop. They knew the names of both of us. ‘Corcoran we want you,’ a policeman barked. He looked over at me. ‘You too, Lalor’. We were taken to Kilkenny Prison and kept there for a week.⁴⁷

On the same day, 5 May 1916, British forces entered houses and shops in Kilkenny and the following were arrested:

Edward Comerford, Wellington Square⁴⁸; Tom Furlong, Michael Street; Pierce Brett, Blackmill Street; Larry De Loughry, Parliament Street; Thomas Neary, Poulgour;⁴⁹ William Stephens, drapery assistant, Burkes, High Street; Denis Barry, native of Cork, drapery assistant, employed in The Monster House, High Street;⁵⁰ John Lalor, Goosehill; John Kealy, John Street; Patrick Parsons, Wolfe Tone Street; Anthony Mullally, Parnell Street; Patrick Burke Snr., Wolfe Tone Street; James Madigan, Abbey Street; Joseph Coyne, Bishop’s Hill; Michael Ryan, Bishop’s Hill; Charles Smyth, Maudlin Street; Maurice Higgins, Upper John Street; William Denn, Talbot’s. Inch; Michael Purcell, High Street; ⁵¹ Laurence Walsh, Dunmore; Stephen O’Dwyer, reporter, Patrick Street; Michael O’Dwyer, John Street; Thomas Stallard, Parliament Street;⁵² Thomas Treacy, Dean Street.⁵³

On Saturday, 6 May 1916, Kilkenny Irish Volunteers who lived in areas close to Kilkenny City were arrested. Amongst them were Seán Gibbons, Ballylarkin,

Freshford, Co. Kilkenny;⁵⁴ Martin Kealy, Blanchfield's Park; John Harte, Blanchfield's Park; James Carrigan, Clara; Richard Healy, Jenkinstown; John O'Shea, Knocktopher. Altogether 35 prisoners were taken in Kilkenny City and county.

On 9 May, 1916, under a heavy escort of British infantry, cavalry and R.I.C. the prisoners were removed, on foot, from Kilkenny Jail and marched to the Railway Station, Kilkenny to begin their journey to captivity in English and Welsh jails. On the march to the station, John Kealy, one of the prisoners, who was ill when he was arrested, had not the strength to complete the journey and he collapsed and died in Upper John Street, about 30 yards from his own door. He was at the extreme rear of the line. John Kealy had been a faithful member of the Gaelic League in Kilkenny and he is listed in the *Last Post* publication amongst the Irish Republican Dead for 1916. He was a brother of Martin Kealy, Blanchfield's Park, Kilkenny who was also arrested and deported. After alighting from the Dublin train, the Kilkenny prisoners were marched from Kingsbridge (now Seán Heuston Railway Station) to Richmond Barracks.

Jimmy Lalor was amongst 25 of these prisoners who were deported to Wakefield Prison, England. He described their journey to the jail and their subsequent imprisonment:

We were sent to England from the North Wall and we were herded into a cattle boat – on the bottom deck. We were then brought to Wakefield Prison. It was bad there at first. We did not get political or prisoner-of-war treatment. They would not recognise you as an official army. Because of our protests it improved later.⁵⁵

Some of the Kilkenny prisoners ended up in Frongoch Internment Camp in Wales and in Wormwood Scrubs. All of the imprisoned Kilkennymen were released by August, 1916.

SUMMARY

Capt. O'Connell, from his experience in the American Army, completely favoured guerrilla warfare tactics in Ireland and the insurgents in Dublin in 1916 fought the opposite type of warfare. When O'Connell heard that the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army had come out in open insurrection in the heart of Dublin, he spent all his time discouraging the Irish Volunteers in both Kilkenny and Wexford from taking any action.

The Kilkenny Volunteers proved by the preparations they made all through and their attendance at mobilisation each day of Easter Week up to Thursday, that they were ready and willing to take their places in the 1916 Rising but the absolute absence of proper leadership confused and upset their intentions and plans. Whatever criticism can be levelled at O’Connell’s leadership, there can be no disparaging remarks made about the Irish Volunteer officers and men in Kilkenny City or county as they acted strictly under orders. They were few in number, poorly armed and inexperienced in warfare tactics. Because Irish resistance in Dublin collapsed after one week, any Rising in the south-east of the country would soon have suffered the same fate. If the Irish Volunteers all over the country had been completely crushed and routed in 1916, it might have ended any hope for full Irish independence for at least another generation. As it happened a great number of Irish Volunteers in all areas of Ireland failed to participate in the Rising due to a total lack of guidance and co-ordination from the top. This may well have been a godsend for that nucleus was there to re-start the fight in 1919 and by that time they had learned many valuable lessons from 1916.

By executing the leaders of the Rebellion, the British made martyrs of the I.R.B., Irish Volunteer and Citizen Army poets, writers, teachers and young men. The British used other harsh draconian measures to put down the Rising when they imprisoned hundreds of young Irishmen and women, many of whom had taken no part in the fighting.

In crushing the revolt in such a manner the British made the 1916 leaders’ vision of an Irish Republic a spiritual calling. This vision ‘went aswim like a swan on the river and became a reality’⁵⁶ that turned suppression into a great struggle for freedom.

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42. Bureau of Military History, N.A.I., Document No. W.S.699, Dr Josephine Clarke (nee Stallard).
43. Brennan, Robert, *Allegiance*, Browne and Nolan Ltd., The Richview Press, Dublin, 1950, p. 64.
44. Peter De Loughry was later a T.D. for Carlow-Kilkenny.
45. Later manager of the Regent Cinema, Kilkenny.
46. Pat Corcoran was destined to die with cancer within two years.
47. Author's interview with Jimmy Lalor, 1967; Jimmy was later manager of the Regent Cinema, William Street, Kilkenny.
48. He traveled by bicycle to country venues in Co. Kilkenny to teach Irish to Gaelic League classes.
49. Later a hurley maker in Kickham Street.
50. After his term in prison, Denis Barry returned to his native Cork City where he took part in the War of Independence. He took the Republican side in the Civil War that followed. Captured and imprisoned, he went on hunger-strike for immediate release from prison. He died, in the course of his hunger strike in the Curragh Military Hospital on 20 November, 1923.
51. He later had a well-known ice-cream shop in High Street that was managed by his two sisters.
52. He owned the first cinema to come to Kilkenny, Tom Stallard's cinema, Parliament Street. This cinema later changed location to Patrick Street, Kilkenny.
53. Tom Treacy was later head of the Health Department, Kilkenny County Council.
54. Seán Gibbons was later a T.D. for Carlow-Kilkenny.
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CHAPTER 2

A Revolutionary Editor

Reaction against the draconian measures of executions and arrests carried out by the British Government following the 1916 Rising was swift in Kilkenny. Details of this backlash began to appear in the printed pages of *The Kilkenny People* and there was no one better able to put words of protest into scalding and scathing remarks than the editor, Mr. E. T. Keane:

Kilkenny appears to us to have been selected for an extra special dose of martial law. Is it that we have been too quiet? – shall we say too meek and subservient? Perhaps the ‘powers that be’ considered that ‘like a dog and a greenwood tree, the more they bate (beat) us the better we’ll be.’¹

The well-known parish priest of Kilmanagh, Co. Kilkenny, Canon Nicholas Murphy, a strong Land League leader, who had previously led the people of his parish in their fight against landlordism, in a letter to *The Kilkenny People* had this to say:

So from every quarter we have the same account; that the poor foolish young fellows made a clean and gallant fight. Hence a great wave of sympathy has gone out to their memory from every true Irish heart. – They loved their country not at all wisely but too well.²

Prominent nationalist leaders from around County Kilkenny came together and put together a letter to *The Kilkenny People* appealing for subscriptions to aid the

helpless wives and families of those arrested and detained under martial law in Co. Kilkenny and who now were deprived of their breadwinners. In the course of their letter appealing for funds they wrote:

Of the men arrested one has already met his death on the public streets of Kilkenny, surrounded by bayonets and rifles. So far as we know, no charge has been made against these men. Kilkenny city, and county alike, has contributed generously to the distressed people of Belgium, Poland and Serbia. This appeal is for our own people. ‘Women and children first!’ – but Irish women and children first of all.³

The letter was signed by Michael O’Neill, Ballyredding, Bennettsbridge (Chairman Thomastown District Council); John P. Fogarty, Castlecomer (Chairman, Castecomer District Council); H. J. Meagher, Co.C., Curragh, Tullaroan: Dan O’Connell, High Street; Joseph Purcell, Alderman, High Street; W. Kinchella, John Street; E. Kenna, T.C., John Street; James Lennon, President Bakers’ Society; Simon Walton, Captain of Tullaroan H.C.: J. Lalor, Secretary County Committee, G.A.A.; E.T. Keane Editor, *Kilkenny People*.⁴

There was strong G.A.A. support for the appeal. Amongst the first subscribers were Dicksboro’ Hurling Club (from whose support area many arrested after the 1916 Rising came); H. J. Meagher, Co. C., Tullaroan (reputed to be in Hayes’s Hotel, Thurles when the G.A.A. was founded and father of the famous Kilkenny hurler, Lory Meagher) and ‘Fox’ Maher, Tullaroan, one of Kilkenny’s greatest hurling goalkeepers.⁵

The General who conducted the secret trials and executions of the 1916 leaders on behalf of the British Government, General Sir John Maxwell, did not like the tone or the mood of the critical articles that Mr. E. T. Keane was writing in the pages of *The Kilkenny People* concerning the treatment meted out to the executed leaders or the arrest of hundreds of ordinary people with little connection to the actual rising. He addressed this letter to E.T. Keane, Editor and Managing Director, *Kilkenny People*:

My attention has been called to an article appearing in the issue of *the Kilkenny People*, dated 20th May, 1916 entitled ‘The Voice of the People’. Portions of that article seem to have been written with the intention of inciting the people against the military authorities. I have no wish or intention to interfere with the liberty of the Press but inflammatory speeches cannot be permitted and offenders render themselves liable to prosecution, under the Defence of the Realm Act



7. E.T. Keane, Editor, 'Kilkenny People'.



8. Henry J. Meagher, Tullaroan, Co. Kilkenny.



9. Pat "Fox" Maher (famous Tullaroan Hurling goalkeeper).



10. Jimmy Ayers (Hon. Sec. Dicksboro' Hurling Club, 1916 (courtesy: Gerry O'Neill, author, *Up the 'Boro*).



11. Photo showing Kilkenny All-Ireland Hurling Champions 1911-12. 'Little Sim' Walton, captain of Tullaroan Hurling Team, fourth from left – middle row.

and possibly to the seizure and destruction of their Press. You will therefore, until further orders, submit proofs of *The Kilkenny People* to the County Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary at Kilkenny, before publication.⁶

Mr. Keane, true to his strong national principles which cost him time, money, imprisonment and social status during these troubled years in Irish history did not flinch in face of threatening opposition. His reply was short, courageous and to the point,

If the ‘Voice of the People’ cannot speak free and untrammelled, it will not speak in the accents of slavery.⁷

Mr. E. T. Keane was one of the few editors of daily papers in Ireland who stood by the Volunteers of the Easter Rising 1916 and their distressed wives and dependents in the immediate aftermath when many condemned their actions and showed no sympathy to their families. His name should be honoured and his courage in face of mighty, forceful and powerful opposition should be remembered.

Thomas Treacy, Commandant, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A., 1918-1919 paid this tribute to Mr. Edward T. Keane:

He wrote articles in the *Kilkenny People* in his own peculiar hard-hitting style, interspersed with wit of a devastating quality all his own... which was the envy of his opponents and the opponents of the movement. It would be difficult to measure the tremendous importance and value of this support to the cause in Kilkenny City and County, in adjoining counties and, in fact, the whole country, as his articles were regularly quoted by the daily and provincial press of the time.⁸

REFERENCES

1. *Kilkenny People*, 20 May, 1916
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. *Kilkenny People*, 3 June, 1916.
7. Ibid.
8. Bureau of Military history, ‘Witness statement Thomas Treacy, 30 Dean Street, Kilkenny’, document 1093.

CHAPTER 3

The Border Battalion

Following the 1916 Rising, and especially the execution of the leaders, feelings in Co. Kilkenny and Co. Tipperary turned swiftly in favour of the insurgents. In Callan, Father Delahunty changed completely and advised Michael Shelley, J. J. Dunne and Jim Roughan to join the Irish Volunteers, who had taken part in the 1916 Rising, and leave the Redmondite controlled National Volunteers.

In May, 1917, Irish Volunteer leaders from Kilkenny held a meeting in the home of T. B. Cahill in Kilbricken, Callan, to set up the Kilkenny Brigade of the Irish Volunteers. Thomas Treacy, Jimmy Lalor, and Peter De Loughry from Kilkenny, who convened the meeting, had been imprisoned in Wakefield Prison and Frongoch following the 1916 Rising but had come home more determined than ever to continue the fight for Irish independence. Fellow 1916 internees from Kilkenny, Pat Corcoran, Martin Kealy, and Edward Comerford, also attended this meeting as did Leo Dardis from Kilkenny and representatives from all over the county. As a result of this meeting, the Kilkenny Brigade of the Irish Volunteers was founded and eight Battalions were formed. The first O/C of the Kilkenny Brigade was Thomas Treacy, Kilkenny. Vice-Brigade O/C was Jimmy Lalor and Q/M was Edward Comerford. Leo Dardis, also a native of Kilkenny City, was Adjutant.

The Callan area became the seventh Battalion of the Kilkenny Brigade and the closely adjoining Mullinahone I.R.A. Company was included as one of the companies of the Irish Volunteers in the Seventh Battalion area of the Kilkenny Brigade. Paddy Hogan of Cashel, who assisted in organising the Callan Battalion by virtue of a commission from Volunteer Headquarters in Dublin, thought that it would be a good idea to direct all despatches from the 3rd Tipperary Brigade to

the Executive in Dublin through Mullinahone and from there through County Kilkenny. He thought that, if the Mullinahone Company was attached to the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade area, it would act as a communication link for the leaders of both Brigades and, accordingly, Mullinahone Company was included in the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade. (Paddy Hogan was later to die in the War of Independence when he was surrounded by British forces in Richard Dagg's house near Cahir, County Tipperary while he was 'on the run' in March, 1921. With Patrick Keane, he fought a running battle against superior hostile forces, as he tried to break through their cordon, but he was mortally wounded by a British officer).

Jim Roughan was captain of the Ahenure Company of the Irish Volunteers for a short time but was then made Commandant of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade. J. J. Dunne was Vice-Commandant. There was a strong Sinn Féin club in Callan also, guided again by Father P. H. Delahunty C.C., J. J. Dunne and Michael Shelley. Father Delahunty was, in fact, president of the South Kilkenny Executive of Sinn Féin. The Sinn Féin clubs now numbered about twelve hundred in the country at large.

CHAPTER 4

Sinn Féin Victory in the 1917 By-Election in Kilkenny City

It is rare to come upon a letter from Michael Collins to Éamon de Valera but rarer still to find one signed in intimate terms. The salutation, ‘Do Cara Go Buan’, at the end of this letter, dated the 13 July, 1917, although slightly grammatically incorrect, still means ‘Your constant or permanent friend.’ That is why this letter is of historical significance. And Collins in the first sentence asks de Valera for a favour. ‘I was speaking to Mr. Keane of the *Kilkenny People* yesterday and I promised him to speak to you regarding Thursday next.’¹

The letter was written a little over a year after the 1916 Rising, at a time when Sinn Féin was putting all its energies into victory at the polls. The movement at this stage was completely non-violent. Dorothy Macardle refers to this period in her book, *The Irish Republic*.

The volunteers were expected, no matter what provocation they might suffer, to refrain from using their arms.

This was Sinn Féin’s golden era when its members suffered repression but fought back with two years of good electioneering strategy. The campaign started in North Roscommon on the snow-covered roads of January, 1917 when George Noble Count Plunkett, father of the executed Joseph Mary Plunkett, to the amazement of all the experts, captured the by-election seat with an overall majority from two other candidates. South Longford followed by electing the

imprisoned Republican, Joseph McGuinness, with a tiny majority of 39 votes after two recounts. ‘Put him in to get him out’, was the catch phrase. Then came Eamon de Valera’s decisive victory in East Clare where Sinn Féin got a bigger majority than they ever expected.

Sinn Féin supporters were still rejoicing over the win in Clare when Pat O’Brien, Whip of the Irish party, and Member of Parliament for Kilkenny City, died in St. Vincent’s Private Hospital, Dublin, bringing about another by-election but one of a different kind. Sinn Féin’s victories had all so far been in rural areas, but Kilkenny was the first contest in a mainly urban constituency and one Sinn Féin was not too confident of winning. The constituency consisted of Kilkenny City and its rural hinterland stretching four miles from the borough boundary.

In fact, the infant Kilkenny Sinn Féin club had been reorganised only a fortnight earlier on 27 June, 1917, and E.T. Keane, Editor of the *Kilkenny People*, became its chairman. A few days before that Kilkenny Corporation, on the proposition of Ald. Joseph Purcell, seconded by Mr. Peter De Loughry, had decided unanimously to give the Freedom of the City to Countess Markievicz who had just been released from prison in England, having spent twelve months in custody for her part in the 1916 Rising. A reception committee for the occasion was immediately formed and E.T. Keane was again elected chairman.

The second paragraph of the letter from Collins to de Valera dealt with the choice of a candidate for the Kilkenny by-election:

It is suggested that a special meeting of the Sinn Féin Executive should be called for tomorrow evening at 7. A candidate should be chosen that we could all agree to and he will need to be a strong one from the reports of the local men.

On the recommendation of de Valera, the Sinn Féin Executive in Dublin chose Councillor William T. Cosgrave, another 1916 man, and a member of Dublin Corporation, as the candidate to be recommended to the Kilkenny Cumann of the Sinn Féin Party.

On Wednesday morning, 1 July, 1917, a party of British military and police entered the printing works of the *Kilkenny People* in James’s Street, Kilkenny and suppressed the paper. On Wednesday night, the Kilkenny branch of Sinn Féin first held a private meeting of Sinn Féin delegates, under the chairmanship of E.T. Keane, at which they ratified the candidature of Ald. William Cosgrave. Immediately afterwards, Mr. Keane announced the decision to a packed audience in the Town Hall.



12. 'Kilkenny People' suppression 1917.



13. Mícheál Ó hAnnracháin (Michael O'Hanrahan) later executed on 4th May, 1916 after the Easter Rising. (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).

13th July 1917

Dear Eamon

I was speaking to Mr Keane of the "Kilkenny People" yesterday and promised him to speak to you regarding Thursday next. The Council is going down to receive the freedom of the city & they are all most anxious to ~~see~~ have you also. Mícheál Staines is taking this up & if you agree to go down he could write to Keane as arranged.

It is suggested that a special meeting of the Sinn Féin Executive should be called for tomorrow evening at 7. A candidate should be chosen that we could all agree but he will need to be a strong one from the reports of the local men. Eamon will have a good deal to say to you about this.

Do say a few words
Mícheál O'Hanrahan

14. Letter from Michael Collins to Éamon de Valera, written on 13 July, 1917.



15. *Éamon de Valera addressing an election meeting outside Kilkenny Railway Station in support of W.T. Cosgrave during the by-election campaign in Kilkenny in 1917.*

The candidate is Councillor W.T. Cosgrave of Dublin, lately released from Lewes Jail, where he was condemned to penal servitude for life, the court-martial having first determined his execution.

The editor of the *Kilkenny People* then told the public meeting that until that morning he had thought that they were going to fire the first shot in the election campaign but instead it had been fired by someone else. That was a personal matter to which he was not going to refer that night. ‘But owing to circumstances over which I have no control’, E.T. Keane added ‘I will probably have a period of enforced leisure on my hands but it will be given unsparingly and unstintingly to the support of the man whose name we have adopted tonight. Kilkenny will return a rebel as its representative.’ Mr Seán Milroy, a leading member of Sinn Féin, who was present at the meeting said that he had received a shock that morning when he discovered that the *Kilkenny People* had been seized. ‘Before long’, said Mr. Milroy ‘those who seized the *Kilkenny People* will realise that that seizure was the very thing that put the right spirit into the people of Kilkenny’.

Michael Collins refers in the first paragraph of this letter to Éamon de Valera to the impending visit of the Countess Markievicz to Kilkenny on Thursday, 19 July, 1917.

The Countess is going down to receive the freedom of the city and they are all most anxious to have you also. Michael Staines is taking this up and if you agree to go down he could wire to Keane as arranged.

Did de Valera come down to Kilkenny on Thursday, 19 July for the conferring of the Freedom of the City on Countess Markievicz at the request of E.T. Keane passed on through Michael Collins? He did indeed. E.T. Keane had organised everything well. Large crowds thronged the sidewalks and almost everyone wore the Sinn Féin colours. There was a procession from the Railway Station headed by several bands which played a series of national and patriotic airs. The Countess was accompanied to the Town Hall by Commandant Éamon de Valera M.P., William T. Cosgrave, Darrell Figgis and Laurence Ginnell M.P. The civic function of presenting the Countess with the Freedom of the City occupied but a short time. After signing the roll of Freedom the Countess addressed those present:

‘I have been to Kilkenny before’, she began, ‘I know it has old and beautiful associations – its lovely waterside, its beautiful castle and above all – what I appreciated when I was in Kilkenny before – its industries to which I wish every success’.

Already she was speaking like the future Minister of Labour in the first Dáil. Countess Markievicz continued by saying that there were strenuous times in front of them in Ireland. ‘The first blow has fallen in Kilkenny in the seizure of one of its papers but Kilkenny will look after that matter.’

Ald. Joseph Purcell, who acted as chairman, then suggested that a fund be opened for the men who suffered by the seizure of the *Kilkenny People* and this suggestion was heartily approved by all present. Why was the paper suppressed in the first place? Dorothy Macardle explains in her book, *The Irish Republic*.

The editor of the local paper nominated the Sinn Féin candidate. His paper was instantly suppressed.

But the paper had been suppressed earlier that day and it was several hours later before E.T. Keane announced the nomination of Councillor William T. Cosgrave in the Town Hall. Later that week Sir William Blake asked the Prime Minister in the British House of Commons whether the *Kilkenny People* had been suppressed and if he would explain the grounds for the government’s action in the matter. Mr. Bonar Law, who replied, said that action was taken against the paper under the Order made by the competent military authority under Regulation 51 of the

Defence of the Realm Act in respect of publications calculated to cause disaffection and imperil the public safety.

A simpler explanation might be that E.T. Keane defended the rebels of 1916 in his issue of the *Kilkenny People* for 14 July, 1917, when few other Irish newspapers had attempted to do so since the Easter Rising, 1916. He did so in these words:

Twelve months ago a number of Irishmen were put against a wall in a Dublin prison and shot because they were rebels ... East Clare's answer was to endorse the Irish felons.

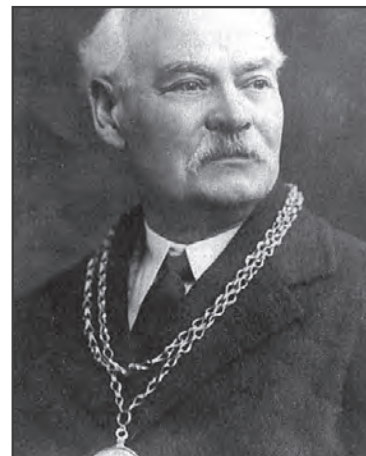
The by-election campaign started immediately after the visit of Countess Markievicz. E.T. Keane had indeed a busy time. He convened a meeting without delay to elect a general committee to conduct the election on behalf of Sinn Féin. Members were selected from Kilkenny City, Danville, Dunmore, Castleinch, Drakelands, Bonnettstown, Troyswood, Reviewfield and Warrington, as these districts were in the electoral area. Dan MacCarthy, the Party's 'victory organiser' who was wounded in the 1916 Rising in his native Dublin, was brought into the constituency as Director of Elections and he opened committee rooms in High Street. A huge meeting and a public reception for the candidate were held in the Market Yard, Parliament Street. Countess Markievicz and Rev. Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, a very powerful Sinn Féin orator at that time, accompanied Mr. Cosgrave.²



16. William T. Cosgrave, Sinn Féin candidate in the by-election in Kilkenny in 1917.



17. Countess Markievicz (courtesy of National Library of Ireland).



18. John Magennis, Irish Party candidate in the by-election in Kilkenny in 1917.

The Irish Party were second in the field when they selected Mr. John Magennis of Wolfe Tone Street, Kilkenny, as their candidate. He was a former Mayor of Kilkenny and a genuine Irish nationalist from the Parnellite era. Their catchword was ‘Kilkenny for a Kilkennyman’. Many prominent speakers came from other parts of Ireland to speak on his behalf. Sinn Féin speakers also descended on Kilkenny from all over the country. W.T. Cosgrave was an enthusiastic and eloquent speaker. ‘I have good experience of local and public affairs on Dublin Corporation’, he said, when he addressed a meeting at the Parade, ‘I understand finance and economics.’ Mr de Valera arrived in Kilkenny on Monday, 29 July, 1917, and immediately spoke from one of the upper windows of his hotel. E.T. Keane presided at many meetings, sometimes addressing two a day. During the election campaign the Kilkenny City Volunteers, assisted by contingents from the companies in the county and outposts, acted as a protecting force for the Sinn Féin speakers at public meetings. The Volunteers carried hurleys in the early days of the campaign.³

The Irish Party fought the election on their achievements in securing decent houses for the labourers. They pointed out that at the beginning of World War I, Mr Pat O’Brien, their previous representative, had endeavoured to get orders when the woollen mills were running on short time and this restored full employment. Mr. John P. Hayden M.P. said ‘What would happen when any local interest was concerned, if Mr. Cosgrave was elected’. John Magennis concurred, ‘What about the purchased farms – the building schemes?’ Sinn Féin canvassed on national issues, the policy of abstentionism from the London Parliament, the setting up of an independent Dáil in Dublin and for approval of the actions of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rebellion in demanding independence for Ireland.

The Kilkenny by-election was held under a very limited franchise. Women could not vote at all and it was only ratepayers and taxpayers who had votes. Not every householder qualified and in most of those households only the head of the family had a vote. Therefore, the voters were the older more cautious members of Kilkenny society. But in a rather new departure for this period, women were encouraged to follow the example of Countess Markievicz and play an equal part with men in the Sinn Féin party. ‘Get your men out and get them to vote Sinn Féin’ they were exhorted to do, since they had no votes themselves.

There were many English newspaper correspondents in Kilkenny for the election and the *Daily Mail* special correspondent wrote:

Kilkenny City constituency is very different from East Clare. It is an urban constituency. Most of the voters are shopkeepers and midland shopkeepers do not listen with patience to spell-binding speeches in Irish.

But Sinn Féin workers worked like Trojans and as an old timer in electioneering remarked, ‘They have four hours’ work completed by noon and take no drink and play no cards’. Sinn Féin became more confident as the campaign went on. The election took place on 11 August, 1917. As news of the count spread, many people from outlying areas came into Kilkenny to hear the result.

William T. Cosgrave (Sinn Féin)	772
John Magennis (Irish Party)	392
Sinn Féin majority	380

In Kilkenny some houses were illuminated all night and tar barrels blazed at various points. The victory was celebrated in many parts of Ireland and William Cosgrave had a homecoming reception on his return to Dublin. David Hogan wrote in his book *The Four Glorious Years*:

And thus ended the Kilkenny City By-Election – the best organised election Sinn Féin had yet contested.

For Michael Collins, the writer of the letter, for Éamon de Valera, Countess Markievicz, Michael Staines, who later became the first Commissioner of the Garda Síochána, for William Cosgrave and E.T. Keane there was much more work ahead to be done. The *Kilkenny People* remained suppressed until 13 October, 1917, three calendar months after its closing, when it published again with the words, “Our Long Vacation’ has terminated”.⁴

REFERENCES

1. de Valera Papers, UCD Archives.
2. Bureau of Military History, ‘Witness statement, Thomas Treacy, 30 Dean Street, Kilkenny,’ document 1093.
3. Ibid.
4. E.T. Keane died in Portobello Nursing Home, Dublin, on 15 May 1945. He was 78 years of age and had a long association with the political life of the nation. He suffered many hardships on behalf of the people of Ireland.

CHAPTER 5

The Great Election in South Kilkenny

The armistice to end the First World War was declared on 11 November, 1918. Lloyd George dissolved the British Parliament on 25 November and announced a general election for 14 December. The moment had come for the Irish people to declare their will through the medium of the ballot for the policy of the Home Rule Party or for republican Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin prepared to contest every constituency in Ireland and the Irish Party was determined to fight for its political existence. Sinn Féin stood now for sovereign independence and the Irish Republic: on that programme and on nothing less it asked for people's votes.

Sinn Féin aimed at securing the establishment of the Irish Republic (1) by withdrawing the Irish representation from the British Parliament, and by denying the right and opposing the will of the British Government or any other foreign Government to legislate for Ireland and (2) by making use of any and every means available to render impotent the power of England to hold Ireland in subjection by military force or otherwise. The Irish Party opposed this policy and looked for support from the electorate for their policy of demanding Home Rule from Great Britain. They did not agree with Sinn Féin's policy of abstention from the British House of Commons. John Dillon, who took over the leadership of the Irish Party after the death of John Redmond, refused to abandon the demand for Home Rule or rule out any form of self-government which maintained the connection with Great Britain, 'for a hopeless fight for an Irish Republic'.

At a Sinn Féin conference in Kilkenny at the end of September, 1918, Councillor William Cosgrave, who had been elected in the by-election in Kilkenny City the previous year - the first Sinn Féin representative to be successful in a parliamentary urban area - was unanimously selected as the party candidate for North Kilkenny. Although Cosgrave was at that time interned in Reading Jail, he was proposed by Seán Gibbons, president North Kilkenny Sinn Féin executive and seconded by Mr E. T. Keane, chairman Kilkenny City Sinn Féin Club and editor of the *Kilkenny People* newspaper. Under the new franchise act, Kilkenny City was amalgamated with North Kilkenny for the 1918 general election. Mr Michael Meagher, Tullaroan, ex-Fenian and sitting member for North Kilkenny since 1906 as an Irish Party representative, although selected as a candidate at a conference convened by the United Irish League in the City Hall, Kilkenny on Sunday 23 November, declined the honour on account of his age. Mr John Maher, Clone, Ballyragget was then selected by the unanimous vote of the conference but, though he accepted the nomination then, he withdrew his candidature shortly before election day. In the general election, held on 14 December William Cosgrave was returned unopposed as the Sinn Féin representative for the constituency of North Kilkenny.

The Sinn Féin convention for the selection of a candidate for South Kilkenny was held at the concert hall, Thomastown. Rev P. H. Delahunty, Callan, presided and there were sixty representatives present from clubs in the constituency. The convention nominated the following Sinn Féin members: Mr James O'Mara, a former member of parliament for the Irish Party until 1907 when he resigned and changed his allegiance to Sinn Féin. He was director of a large bacon factory in Limerick City and managing director of Donnelly's bacon curing business in Cork Street, Dublin; Mr Peter De Loughry T.C., Kilkenny City, who had been imprisoned in Wakefield and Frongoch following the 1916 Rising and who was in Lincoln jail at the time of the convention as a result of the 'German Plot'; Mr James W. Upton, editor, *Kilkenny Journal*, and a well-known Sinn Féin orator at elections in County Kilkenny and other counties; Mr James Walsh, Co. C., Templeorum; Mr G. Dooley Co. C., Rosbercon; Mr John O'Mahoney, Dublin. Mr Upton withdrew his name and then voting by ballot took place. On the final poll, Mr O'Mara was chosen as the Sinn Féin candidate for South Kilkenny.

Mr Matthew Keating of the Irish Party was nominated following a meeting in Callan of leading Nationalists, to contest the South Kilkenny constituency on behalf of John Dillon's party and in keen opposition to Sinn Féin. Mr Keating had the added advantage of being the sitting member of Parliament for South Kilkenny.

There was a rumour circulating in the South Kilkenny constituency that a Labour Party candidate would also enter the contest. Sinn Féin feared this intervention would split their vote. However, on Monday night, 21 October, a special general meeting of the Callan Branch of the Irish Workers' Union was held in the concert hall, Callan. There was a big attendance and it was evident from the start that the workers of Callan had come together to make it clear that no Labour candidate would receive any support from them against the Sinn Féin nominee. Mr Jeremiah Gilbert, who presided, declared that the question before the world was whether Ireland was to have her sovereign independence or whether she was to remain as she was. That was why Labour was not going to oppose Sinn Féin. James Connolly raised and fought under the tricolour and Irish Labour must never desert that flag. In conclusion he proposed the following resolution:

That we the members of the Irish Transport Workers' Union strongly disapprove of placing labour representatives before the Irish constituencies at the present time, believing as we do with the late James Connolly, that the true interests of Ireland and the true interests of Labour are identical.

After Mr Patrick Funcheon had seconded the proposition, Mr J. Molloy, district council, said that Mr O'Mara was the standard-bearer for Sinn Féin and he knew him to be a good employer of labour. He thought that the proposal should be sent all over the country. The men of Callan, anyhow, were with Sinn Féin to a man because they knew Sinn Féin was for Ireland. After Mr P. Kelly had also spoken in support of the motion, the resolution was then carried unanimously.

The editorial in the *Kilkenny Journal* for Saturday 26 October praised the Callan labourites:

Our congratulations to the sturdy men of historic Callan. The remains of the gentle patriot, John Locke, and others of his associates may lie "far off beyond the sea" and the dust of others who made history for the old town in the days that are dead, but unforgotten, may mingle with the earth of their beloved Motherland, but the spirit of old lives in the men of to-day by "the calm Avonree". What the tradesmen and labourers of Callan did on Monday night will be endorsed by the tradesmen and labourers of South Kilkenny whenever it becomes necessary to administer a wholehearted and healthy check to any sinister attempt to exploit Labour against the direct interests of Ireland.

Soon after the Callan meeting, the Labour Party held a national conference in Dublin and, by a majority vote, decided to withdraw its candidates from the 1918 general election in Ireland, as there was a danger in putting candidates forward of endangering the national cause of self-determination.

The scene was now set for a straight fight for the parliamentary seat in South Kilkenny between Mr James O'Mara, Sinn Féin, and Mr Matthew Keating of the Irish Party. For this election women had secured a limited franchise, which permitted women over the age of thirty to vote and to stand for parliament.

AT THE HUSTINGS

The election campaign for South Kilkenny was inaugurated on behalf of Sinn Féin in a great public meeting in Callan on Sunday night, 17 November. The vast gathering was addressed from the stone balcony outside the town hall and the Rev P. H. Delahunty took the chair amid loud applause for the 'Callan curate'. Father Delahunty said that Sinn Féin had been termed the young men's movement, so it was, but it was also an old man's movement. It was the movement of every man and woman in Ireland, whether old or young, who believed in Ireland's right to free nationhood. Mr J. J. Dunne, who was received with cheers, said that the day and the hour had come for Ireland's voice to declare against a British connection, that had impoverished and degraded her and had refused to listen to reason and justice.

Mr Jimmy Upton stated that it was a strange revolution that had brought him to a public platform: hundreds among them knew that he would be much more at home on a hurling or football field or in a library of interesting books but they had reached a transition stage in the history of their beloved motherland when no man or no woman could ignore the call to duty. Next to speak was Mr Michael Shelley, chairman Callan Town Commissioners, who declared that South Kilkenny would be shamed if the men and women of the constituency did not record their votes for the candidate of the Sinn Féin Party who was openly out for the independence of their country.

Mr Matt Keating, the Irish Party candidate opened his campaign in a calmer fashion. He arrived in Kilkenny on Saturday, 23 November. He first had the honour of dining with Bishop Brownrigg at his residence in Kilkenny. He then proceeded to Callan where he held a meeting on the following day. Mr Patrick Pollard J.P. presided and told Keating that they would work might and main for his election. Keating assured those present of a victory at the polls. He stated that all the parish priests in the constituency had promised to support him with

the exception of two. Messrs Edmond Callanan and E. Grainger were appointed secretaries of his election committee. Mr Keating said, in the course of his address, that the interests at stake were too great to allow political gamblers like the members of the Sinn Féin party to risk all in the shadowy gamble of winning an Irish Republic. He would do one man's part to save Ireland from Sinn Féin.

The people of South Kilkenny were balancing the arguments from both sides but Sinn Féin seemed to be winning the votes of the young and their meetings were livelier and more enthusiastic. Still, it was clear that a big number of the silent majority was uncommitted as yet. Both parties stepped up the campaign. Robert Wallace presided at a meeting in Stoneyford in support of O'Mara's candidature. Previous to the meeting Kells Pipers Band, accompanied by a large contingent of Sinn Féin supporters, arrived and the large crowd formed into procession order and marched up the village to the Sinn Féin Club, outside which the meeting was held. The first to speak was J. J. Dunne who declared that people said that Mr O'Mara did not pay good wages to his factory hands. That was not true and he himself was prepared to hand over £25 to any charitable institution if it could be proven that O'Mara did not pay wages as good as anyone in the same trade. Patrick McDonald D.C., Annamult; Joseph Walsh, Haggard, Kells and Jimmy Upton, Kilkenny, also spoke in support of O'Mara.

Sinn Féin watched apprehensively as Matt Keating was cordially received in Graiguenamanagh and Thomastown. Rev P. Mooney presided at a large meeting in Graiguenamanagh which included representatives of farmers, traders, and labourers. All present showed a keen desire to secure Keating's services for the constituency. Three weeks before polling day, Robert Brennan, the national Sinn Féin director of elections was arrested. James O'Mara, the South Kilkenny candidate, was immediately chosen to take his place. This meant that he was busy in other constituencies and absent from his own throughout the greater part of the campaign. The Sinn Féin organisation in South Kilkenny worked even harder on his behalf. However, Keating was around the constituency constantly and was more in contact with the voters during those last few weeks.

Sinn Féin tried to counteract Keating's impact in the Graiguenamanagh area by holding a public meeting in Graiguenamanagh. There was a rumour around that the supporters of the Irish Party candidate were to hold a second meeting in the town and that some of their most prominent speakers, including Joseph Devlin M.P., were to speak. The Sinn Féin meeting was convened at very short notice but the numbers who turned up and the enthusiasm they showed, gave an emphatic answer to those who held that Graiguenamanagh was a stronghold for the Irish Party. A long line of people, headed by the Clashganny Pipers Band, went out to meet the speakers and when the motor cars arrived they were received

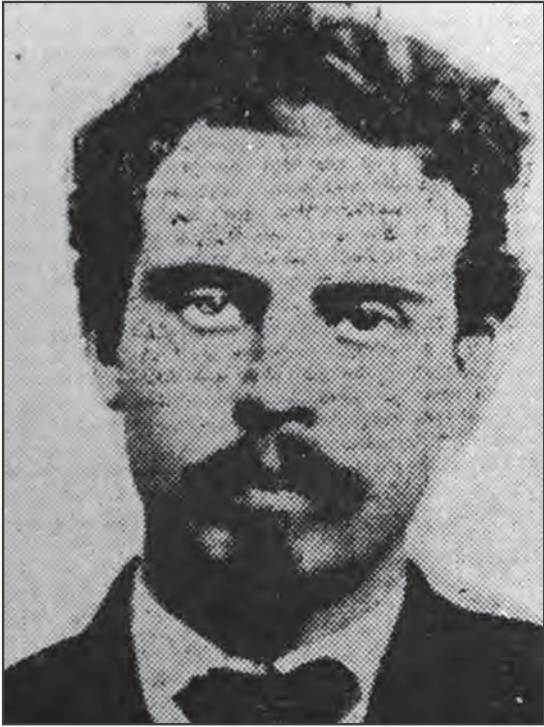
with ringing cheers and waving of many tricolour flags. Mr J. Ryan took the chair. J. J. Dunne said he came from the other end of the constituency because he heard that Graiguenamanagh was a stronghold of Mr Keating. It gave him great pleasure to state that the turn-out that night convinced him otherwise. Other Sinn Féin speakers were Professor O’Sullivan; J. Upton; Dr Dundon, Borris; P. McDonald, Vice-Chairman of Thomastown District Council; Mr McGuire of the I.T.G.W.U.; Mr W. Joyce, and Mr Moloney.

Sinn Féin hopes received a serious set-back a fortnight before the election when a letter from Dr Abraham Brownrigg, Bishop of Ossory, appeared in the local papers in Kilkenny, declaring his support for Matt Keating and the Irish Party. When Sinn Féin members read the letter, they wondered how much an effect it would have on the voters of South Kilkenny. In the course of the letter Dr Brownrigg stated:

I have arrived at the conclusion that the policy which stands for the traditional and constitutional principle is the only safe one for the country now or in the future. That policy has brought, in the past, very substantial benefits to the Irish people. I believe that it is capable, if it gets fair play, of bringing us many more benefits, including what is the supreme ambition of Irishmen – a Government of our own. In regard to the policy adopted on the other side, I will not permit myself to say more than that I consider it impracticable, that it will not lead to any definite results, and that, if persisted in, it may very seriously jeopardise the most vital interests of the country.

His lordship subscribed £10 to the Parliamentary Party to help it in defraying the expenses of the election. In a period when the clergy played a prominent role in Irish politics, the hierarchy and the priests were divided. The older priests generally favoured the Irish Party while the younger priests supported Sinn Féin

Reeling from this setback, Sinn Féin reacted quickly. On the day after Bishop Brownrigg wrote his letter to the local papers, O’Mara returned to the constituency with Rev Michael O’Flanagan, Vice-President of the Sinn Féin executive and addressed a huge meeting in Thomastown, presided over by Patrick Foskin, Co. Co., Mullinavat. A large crowd gathered in the market square and marched around the town, headed by the local brass band. Pipers’ bands, with large contingents, were present from Kells and Ballyhale and there was a big farming representation from surrounding districts. After the parade the people assembled around the ‘Big tree’ where a brake was utilised as a platform and the arrival of the Sinn Féin candidate, James O’Mara, and Father O’Flanagan was the signal for a loud and prolonged outburst of cheering.



19. John Locke, Callan Fenian.



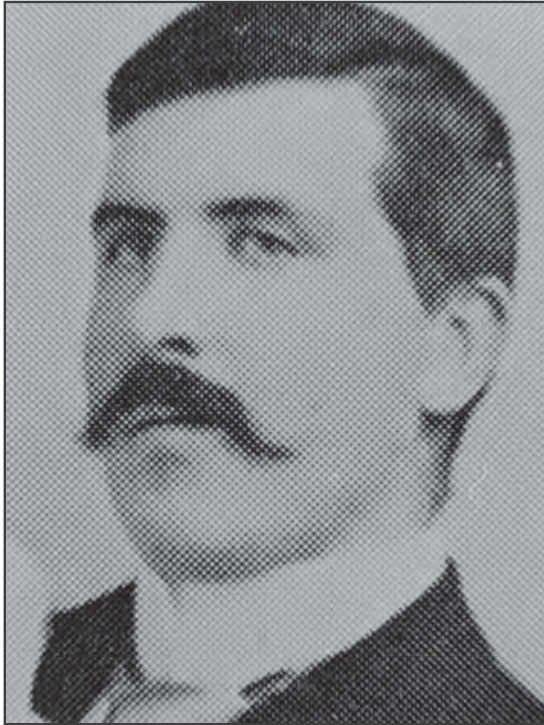
20. Peter De Loughry, Kilkenny.



21. Paddy Hogan, Cashel.



22. Jim Roughan, Ahenure.



23. James O'Mara, Limerick



24. Paddy Funcheon, Callan



25. Michael Shelley, Callan



26. Michael McSweeney Sr., Kilkenny



27. *Paddy Kelly, Callan*



28. *Michael McSweeney Jnr., Kilkenny*
(courtesy of Gerry O'Neill, author
Up The 'Boro).



29. *Kells' Pipe Band.*



30. *Kilkenny Military Barrack (Lawrence Collection).*

Father O’Flanagan said that the Irish Party argued that the House of Commons was the best platform from which to address the world. That was not so and Sinn Féin was not going to send men to that House of Commons where they would be abused and jeered at. Irishmen would assemble in Ireland and fight out the cause of Irish freedom in the only place where it could fight with success. At the beginning of his address O’Mara read a letter of encouragement from the Bishop of Killaloe, Most Rev Dr Fogarty, supporting his candidature and sending a subscription of £25 towards his election expenses.

Sinn Féin held one last big meeting in Ballyclovan in Callan parish on Sunday evening, 8 December, six days before the election. The districts of Ballyclovan, Ballyline and Ballywaters were celebrating the opening of a new village hall in Ballyclovan. The project had originated with the local Sinn Féin Club, who planned meetings and classes and lectures there for the study of subjects relative to the uplifting of Ireland. Rev J. Walsh C.C., Callan took the chair. During the course of his address he stated that he hoped that all present would do what Ireland expected them to do and vote for Sinn Féin. He also hoped that the people of South Kilkenny and the people of Callan, in particular, would do all they could to have the election as orderly as possible. He knew that they would not do anything that would throw the smallest discredit on Sinn Féin or the cause. Other speakers were Rev P. H. Delahunty, Mr Martin, District Council; R. Minogue and J. W. Upton. As a parting conclusion to the Callan election campaign, three rousing cheers were given for ‘James O’Mara and the gallant Irish Republic.’

The election took place on Saturday, 14 December. Interest was high and old men and women, who had never before ventured to a polling booth, came from remote houses and cabins to record their votes.

There was a long impatient wait of a fortnight until 28 December when the results of the national election were declared nationwide. Despite the heavy rain and the semi-darkness of the December evening, large crowds had assembled from all over County Kilkenny to await the South Kilkenny result. They packed themselves into Parliament Street and all eyes were on the courthouse as morning passed into afternoon and the result became more imminent. The result of the poll was announced at about three o'clock in the afternoon from the balcony of the courthouse by the High Sheriff, Major R. T. H. Hanford. James O'Mara was represented by M. P. Kearney, Solr., Kilkenny and Matthew Keating by M. J. O'Dempsey, Solr., Graiguenamanagh.

The High Sheriff read out the following result for Kilkenny South:

Total Electorate - 16410	
James O'Mara (Sinn Féin)	8,685
Matthew Keating (Irish Party)	1,855
Sinn Féin majority	6,830

Tremendous cheering welcomed the announcement of the figures. Amidst great applause, a young man hoisted himself onto the balcony, unfurled a tricolour and waved it triumphantly in the air. The great concourse of people formed themselves into lines, and led by torches and bands, they paraded right around the city through High St., by the Parade, down John St., through Wolfe Tone St., over Greensbridge and back to Parliament St. where they held a meeting almost on the spot where the historic Confederation was once held. During the meeting news arrived of the East Tipperary result.

East Tipperary Total Electorate - 16,232	
Pierce McCann (Sinn Féin)	7,487
T. J. Condon (Irish Party)	4,794
Sinn Féin majority	2,693

Three cheers were called for Pierce McCann when the East Tipperary result was announced to the gathering. Amid emotional scenes of great enthusiasm, the following speakers addressed the meeting: - J. W. Upton, Pat Corcoran, Michael McSweeney T.C. and P. Wall T.C.

Pierce McCann, a large landowner and an Irish language enthusiast from Dualla, County Tipperary was then a prisoner in Gloucester Jail in England. He had been arrested in the previous month of May, and, without being charged with any offence, had been lodged in Gloucester Prison in England with many other Irish prisoners including Arthur Griffith. He had a Kilkenny connection by marriage with the Smithwick family. His aunt was Mrs Danny Smithwick, Kilcreene, mother of Jack, Joe, Dan, Matt, Florrie, and Jennie Smithwick. His uncle, P. J. Power, was a member of parliament for Waterford and it was a sister of P. J. Power, Jane Power, who married his father, Francis McCann, and another sister married Dan Smithwick, Kilkenny. Their son, Joe Smithwick, later had a large business in High Street, Kilkenny and farmed at Birchfield. (Pierce McCann was destined never to see his native land again. After contacting the dreaded “flu” of 1918-'19, within the prison confines, and not having received the best treatment for his illness, he died in Gloucester prison on 6 March, 1919.)

On that December election night, the patriotic town of Callan entered heart and soul into the general exultation of victory and saluted Ireland's decisive verdict for self-determination as pronounced from the polling booths throughout the country. Out of 105 seats, 73 were won by Sinn Féin, Unionists gained 26, and these were mostly in the north-eastern part of Ireland, and the Irish Party secured 6. Almost every house in Callan was illuminated and looking up Green Street and down Bridge Street and the other side streets from the Cross, the scene was one of brilliance. Men and women, some with babes in arms, came out of doors and, after watching the big celebration parade from the sidewalks, joined in the music and dancing on the streets. Bonfires blazed in the distance from many hills in South Kilkenny and East Tipperary. But there were also ominous signs of what was to come. A large force of police was drafted into the town of Callan during the evening and they patrolled the town in a menacing manner but no incidents occurred.

CHAPTER 6

Thomastown Sinn Féiners enter the Fray

The first Sinn Féin branch in Co. Kilkenny was founded in Thomastown on Tuesday (New Year's Day) 1907. The meeting was well attended and there were two members of the National Sinn Féin Executive present who explained the aims and principles of the new movement.

Arthur Griffith had launched Sinn Féin in the Rotunda, Dublin on Tuesday, 28 November, 1905, and it was just a little over a year after that when this inaugural meeting was held in the Coffee House, Thomastown to find out if a branch of the movement could be established in this market town on the banks of the Nore. One of the reasons that the Sinn Féin doctrine had attracted an early interest in Thomastown was that Seán O'Mahoney, a well-known publican in Dublin was a native of Thomastown and was also a prominent member of the National Executive of Sinn Féin.¹ He was accompanied to the Thomastown meeting by Mícheál Ó h-Annracháin (Michael O'Hanrahan) who was then secretary of the National Council of Sinn Féin. Michael, who was a strong Gaelic Leaguer and a fluent Irish speaker, made the chief speech of the night.² The Mayor of Kilkenny, Mr Edward McSweeney, an enthusiastic Gaelic Leaguer, attended the meeting and welcomed the two guest speakers from Dublin to Co. Kilkenny. Amongst others who spoke at the meeting were Peter Stallard and Peter De Loughry. Towards the end of the meeting Richard Muldowney proposed the following resolution:

That we, the people of Thomastown, endorse the principles of the National Council (of Sinn Féin) and hereby establish a branch to carry

its objects into effect: that we pledge to support by every means in our power the revival of our native language and to support only Irish industries, particularly those of our own county³

James Cahill seconded the adoption of the resolution and it was passed unanimously. Afterwards the following officers were elected to promote the Sinn Féin branch amongst the people.

President:	Seán O' Mahoney
Secretaries:	Séamus Ó Riain and James Cahill
Treasurer:	Edward Comerford

From then on there was a strong group of people in Thomastown, even before 1916, who preached the Sinn Féin doctrine when the Irish Party under John Redmond dominated national politics. Michael O'Neill, Ballyredding, Bennettsbridge, who was chairman of Thomastown District Council, was one of these. At the end of March 1916 a motion was proposed at a meeting of the local authority in Thomastown 'that Thomastown District Council sincerely thanks Messrs. John Redmond M.P. and John Dillon M.P. for their successful opposition to the inclusion of Ireland in the Conscription Bill.' The passing of this motion was intended to be a boost to the fortunes of the Home Rule Party which was in direct conflict to the as yet less developed Sinn Féin. During the short discussion on the motion, Michael O'Neill, who obviously had leanings towards the Sinn Féin doctrine remarked that:

A very large number of English politicians have been very anxious that the youth of Ireland should leave the shores of Ireland and go into the trenches in Flanders and Gallipoli and Serbia, there to pour out their lives' blood for some benefit that is to be granted to Ireland in the nature of a Home Rule Act. The Home Rule Act is hung up still-its face is to the wall and I say that if the blood of the youth of Ireland must be shed to obtain it, the game is not worth the candle.⁴

Despite O'Neill's protestations, the motion was passed.

The Sinn Féiners in Thomastown remained active. Séamus Babbington, an energetic member of Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers from Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary, writing about the death of Thomas Ashe in Mountjoy Jail on 25 September, 1917, as a result of forcible feeding while he was on hunger strike stated:

The death of Tom Ashe raised the spirit of the people in revolt and the recognised leaders availed of this to propagate the Republican cause. A big meeting was scheduled to take place in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. On the day Tom Ashe was buried I cycled to Thomastown . We fell in with the South Kilkenny Volunteers, Piltown, Hugginstown, and Templeorum and marched a mile into Thomastown. The crowd was large and the meeting was held in conjunction with a Feis held in a large field, packed to the gates.⁵

Thomastown Sinn Féiners played a prominent part in the campaign that elected the Sinn Féin candidate, James O'Mara, by a huge majority in the Kilkenny South constituency in the 1918 General Election. The Sinn Féin branch in Thomastown continued to get strong support from the people of the area. They carried out a policy of passive resistance to British rule on two different occasions in 1919.

Much excitement prevailed in Thomastown on Friday morning, 14 June, 1919 when seven local Sinn Féiners were charged with collecting money for the Dáil Éireann Self-Determination Fund without a permit from the County Inspector of Police. The seven were William Forristal, Jerpoint; Thomas Ryan, Bonnybrook; James Ryan, Castlegarden; Denis Murphy, Thomastown; James McKenna, Thomastown; Denis Fitzgerald, Thomastown and Michael Callanan, Ballylowra. The Thomastown courtroom was crowded with supporters of the defendants and they made a loud and banging uproar when showing their disgust with the court proceedings. The magistrates ordered the courtroom to be cleared. In the melee that followed the court protesters swept William Forristal, Thomas Ryan and James Ryan, three of the accused, along before them and out of the courtroom. When the R.I.C. men in the court found that the three prisoners were missing, the magistrates immediately issued warrants for their arrest. But the sympathetic protesters had already safely shepherded them away and they could not be found.

The remaining four prisoners, Murphy, McKenna, Fitzgerald and Callanan were removed to Thomastown Police Barracks and a special court took place in the dayroom of the barracks. The chief magistrate addressed the prisoners:

‘I either have to remand each of you in custody to the Petty Sessions in Thomastown on 1st. July or remand you on bails of £10 and two sureties of £5 to appear again at the Petty Sessions. Are you prepared to enter bail.’

James McKenna replied on behalf of himself and the other prisoners, ‘We will not give bail. We don’t recognise your authority at all.’

‘Very well! You are remanded in custody,’ replied the magistrate.

At three o'clock that evening British military and R.I.C. arrived in Thomastown in a motor lorry for the purpose of conveying the prisoners to Waterford Gaol. Previous to the departure of the lorry the police proceeded to clear the streets in which the barracks was situated and while this was in progress a number of minor scuffles took place between the R.I. C. and the local people. Fortunately the good sense of the protestors prevailed and no baton charges were made. As the people dispersed before the advance of the policemen a number of men and women entered the open doors of the shops and private houses near the barracks. When the police ushered the four prisoners towards the military lorry the people rushed from the shops and houses and pushed their way towards the prisoners and began to shake their hands. James McKenna stood up in the lorry and called out to the crowd around him, 'Keep the old flag flying'. As the vehicle was driven away, the people loudly cheered and waved republican flags.

The trial of the seven defendants was fixed for Tuesday, 1 July before two Removable Magistrates – the local Justices of the Peace were not considered sufficiently trustworthy to be permitted to undertake the responsibility of deciding what was in fact a minor issue of collecting funds without a permit for the Dáil Éireann Self-Determination Fund. Four of the accused who had attended the preliminary hearing and who had refused to give bail had been committed to Waterford Gaol and were scheduled to arrive at the Thomastown Courthouse from Waterford at 11am. The other three prisoners, William Forristal, James Ryan and Thomas Ryan who had absconded during the preliminary hearing and had been 'on the run' since, to the surprise of many, turned up of their own free will at the courthouse and were immediately taken into custody by a local policeman. They were then held pending prosecution and trial.

A very important aspect in regard to this trial was the fact that it took place six months after the results of the 1918 General Election were announced. The Sinn Féin party had achieved a remarkable victory in that election gaining 73 seats out of a possible 105 seats for the whole of the 32-County Ireland. Subsequently, on 21 January, 1919, these 73 elected Sinn Féin deputies had set up Dáil Éireann as a result of the support given to them by the majority of the Irish people. Dáil Éireann had an undisputed mandate to make rules and laws on their behalf. The British authorities who were prosecuting these seven Sinn Féin members had no authority to do so and were refusing to recognise the lawful will of the people.

On this day, 1 July, 1919 the normal population of the town was augmented by a considerable number of people from outside districts who had come to



31. *Seán O'Mahoney, a native of Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny, later Sinn Féin representative for Fermanagh South in the 1918 General Election. (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland).*



32. *William Forristal, Jerpoint Church.*



33. *Edward McSweeney, Mayor of Kilkenny.*



34. *Thomas Ryan, Bonnybrook, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny.*

Thomastown to transact their business as this was a fair day in the town where farmers sold their cattle, pigs and horses in the open street during the early morning. Aware that the trial of the Sinn Féiners was scheduled for that day, they remained on to watch developments and to show their sympathy for the prisoners.

The preparations made by the British authorities were on a scale so elaborate as to suggest to a casual visitor that a state of war prevailed in this pleasant and peaceful town so beautifully situated on the banks of the Nore. Military and police occupied the town from early morning. About 50 men of the Lincoln Regiment quartered in Kilkenny Military Barracks, in charge of two officers, were drafted into Thomastown on the 10.30 a.m. train from Kilkenny. On arrival at their destination they were marched to the courthouse where a cordon of military with loaded carbines and fixed bayonets was immediately drawn across the street at either end of the courthouse. A number of soldiers also took a position at the corner of Market Street and Low Street. They made no effort to prevent the free movement of the people through the streets and the military appeared to be lethargic in discharging their duty.

Around 40 to 50 members of the R.I.C. also mobilised in the town and they were drawn from Kilkenny and outlining police stations. They also took up positions in the vicinity of the courthouse. They were in charge of District Inspector Whyte of Thomastown and District Inspector Studdert, Castlecomer. District Inspector Whyte fussed here and there and gave the impression from his movements that he was the man in charge of all operations

Most of the houses were bedecked with Irish Republican flags of green, white and gold and some American flags were also conspicuous. A large number of people congregated as near as they could get to the courthouse. A group of young girls took up a position on the opposite side of the street and made several voice contributions including the singing of '*A Soldier's Song*' and other Sinn Féin choruses mingled with cries of 'Up the Rebels'.

The motor lorry conveying the prisoners and the armed escort from Waterford Gaol arrived two hours after the scheduled time. The lorry had been delayed in Ballyhale owing to the petrol supply running out and District Inspector Whyte decided to despatch two R.I.C. members from the main body on bicycles to Ballyhale, each armed with a tin of petrol. Soon after, however, they returned to their base in a dispirited mood. They reported to the District Inspector that a crowd had gathered at the corner of Market Street, Thomastown and had refused to let them pass. Headed by District Inspector Whyte, a body of police marched to the corner of Market Street and Low Street. When they arrived there they were greeted with derisive cheers but no violence of any kind was used by the

people. In less than a minute after the arrival of the police the District Inspector ordered a baton charge and the closely-packed crowd scattered in all directions. They were pursued by the police swinging their batons and soon after that several casualties were reported. Andrew Ryan, a farmer from Bonnybrook, brother of Thomas Ryan, one of the defendants, was felled to the ground by a fierce blow of a baton. The back of his head was wounded and bleeding and his coat was covered with blood. He lay on the ground stunned and concussed. A couple of friends came to his assistance and, with their aid, he was carried a short distance to the house of the district nurse, Miss Doheny, who kindly rendered first aid.

Amongst others who received nasty baton blows were Michael Hearn, Jerpoint; John Aylward, Baunskeha, an aged farmer and John Neill, Ballyhale. These men were also conveyed to Miss Doheny's residence. Dr P. J. Murphy the resident medical doctor was away on holidays but fortunately, Dr P. Heffernan, county tuberculosis medical officer was in Thomastown on that day on official business. Mr E. T. Keane, editor of *Kilkenny People*, and Chairman of the Kilkenny City Sinn Féin Club, was also present in Thomastown that day and he asked Dr Heffernan to have a look at Andrew Ryan's injuries as they were the most serious. Dr Heffernan obliged but it was some hours before Mr Ryan was in a fit condition to be removed to his own residence and he had to rest there for some time before he was fully recovered.

The R.I.C. police then returned to the courthouse and just at 1p.m. the lorry conveying the prisoners arrived and loud cheers from the crowd of people near the courthouse greeted their approach. The prisoners responded heartily to the welcome. On entering the courthouse they were integrated with the other three prisoners who had absconded at the first hearing but had turned up for this session of the court. The body of the court rapidly filled and several policemen were placed in strategic points amongst the public. District Inspector Whyte occupied a commanding position in the body of the court.

As soon as the magistrates Messrs. Ryan R.M. and Hornibrooke R.M. took their places on the bench the order 'Hats off' was given. The prisoners continued to wear their hats which were at once removed by the police. The public also refused to remove their hats which were roughly removed by the police. This course of action caused some confusion and uproar and Mr Ryan, the magistrate, gave a second order, 'Clear the court'. The public showed no inclination to obey the order but the police commenced to enforce the ruling. They began to hustle the people who resented this treatment. Finding it almost impossible to get the people to leave, the R.I.C. whipped out their batons and assailed the people all around them. A clergyman, who was standing amongst the people, had a newspaper in his hand which was splashed with blood that gushed from a wound

that a man standing near him received when he was struck with a baton. Amongst those who were injured in the melee in the courtroom or in the hall while the public were being hustled out of the precincts of the court were John Fennelly, farmer, Oldtown; Michael Travers, Castlemarket and Denis Kelly, Castlemarket. It was alleged that Travers was knocked down in the hall of the courthouse and beaten with batons about the head and the face. In this baton charge, Commandant James Roughan, of the Callan Battalion was severely batoned by the R.I.C.⁶

The courtroom having been cleared the case against the defendants was called and evidence taken. During the proceedings the crowd outside cheered almost continuously and sang '*A Soldier's Song*' and other rebel choruses. When order was restored the Crown Solicitor opened the case for the prosecution.

'The defendants', he said, 'are charged by summons with having taken part in an unlawful assembly for the purpose of making a collection of money without having a permit.'

He continued by saying there was a considerable sum of money on the collection table and James McKenna had a book in which he entered the names of subscribers and the amount of money each subscribed. A local R.I.C policeman had warned them that they were doing an illegal act and could not collect money in a public place without a permit but they paid no heed to the caution.

'We are sick of the proceedings,' one of the defendants stated.

'We are not taking any interest in it at all,' declared William Forristal.

The chairman of the court addressed all the defendants and asked if they had anything further to say.

'We don't recognise this thing at all. It is a fraud,' answered William Forristal again.

James McKenna angrily retorted, 'You have no authority whatever to try us. The only authority we recognise is Dáil Éireann elected by the free will of the Irish people last December when they put into practice the principles of self-determination enunciated by President Wilson - - -.'

Denis Fitzgerald exclaimed to the magistrate, 'and don't think you will frighten us either.'

The magistrates then retired and after a short consultation, Chief Magistrate Ryan said they had decided to convict and the order was that the defendants be detained until the rising of the court. As the court almost immediately rose the defendants were discharged soon after and were welcomed loudly by their friends gathered outside.

Later on a party of R.I.C. policemen came from the courthouse and cleared the streets. The majority of the people had by this time dispersed. One man, Michael

Gardiner, Cuppenagh was on his way out of Thomastown after completing his business when he was struck by a policeman's baton.

Shortly after the release of the prisoners the Thomastown band turned out and paraded the streets followed by a large crowd. A public meeting was held in the Market Square. Denis Murphy returned thanks on behalf of himself and his fellow-prisoners for the welcome accorded to them. Mr E. T. Keane who had done his best on the prisoners' behalf all during the day said, 'Militarism was not dead in Thomastown as the performance of the police in Thomastown that day had shown.' He congratulated the people of Thomastown on the splendid spirit that they had manifested and their restraint under great provocation.

The Thomastown Sinn Féiners had given a great display of passive resistance to brute force in defence of the first Dáil Éireann brought into existence by the free will of the Irish people. But the struggle was only beginning and before its end two natives of the area, Nicholas Mullins of Thomastown and Peter Freyne, Inistioge were to give up their young lives for the same cause .

REFERENCES

1. Seán O'Mahoney was later elected an Abstentionist Sinn Féin representative for Fermanagh South in the 1918 General Election.
2. Michael O'Hanrahan was destined to play a prominent role in the 1916 Rising as a result of which British authorities executed him in Kilmainham Gaol on 4 May 1916.
3. *Kilkenny People*, 1907.
4. *Ibid.*, 29 March 1916
5. B.M.H., 'Witness statement of Séamus Babbington, Carrick-on-Suir', statement no. 1595
6. B.M.H. 'Witness statement of Thomas Treacy, Kilkenny', statement no. 1093.

CHAPTER 7

Call To Arms

The Irish War of Independence began on 21 January, 1919, on the same day as Dáil Éireann was first convened in the Mansion House, Dublin. Séamus Robinson, Seán Treacy, Dan Breen, Seán Hogan, and five other men ambushed a cart, containing a load of gelignite for quarrying at Soloheadbeg, Co. Tipperary, which was being escorted by two members of the R.I.C. Called upon to surrender, the two policemen raised their rifles to fire at the ambushers and were themselves shot dead.

Since 1916, hundreds of young men, who were members of the Irish Volunteers, had submitted to arrest and imprisonment. Republicans, all over Ireland, had been subjected to searches and raids and deprivation of many civic rights. The Volunteer force was a revolutionary army, composed of daring, young and spirited Irishmen and, no doubt, their restraint had to break. In regard to the moral aspect of attacking members of the British Forces, these young men held that the holding of Ireland by a foreign army of occupation was a continual form of aggression which justified an attack on British Forces at any time. It was generally felt in Ireland, after the Sinn Féin victory in the 1918 General Election, that a point had been reached at which armed action against British forces would be justified.

The Volunteers were reminded that Dáil Éireann, in its message to the free nations of the world, had declared a state of war existed between Ireland and England which could never end until the British military invader evacuated Ireland. A few days later after a meeting of the Volunteers' Executive they were advised that this state of war:

justifies Irish Volunteers in treating the armed forces of the enemy – whether soldiers or policemen – exactly as a National Army would treat the members of an invading army. England must be given the choice of evacuating the country or holding it by foreign garrison, with a perpetual state of war in existence.

Two days after the new Dáil Éireann had proclaimed, on 10 April, 1919, that there was in Ireland at that moment only one lawful authority and that authority was the elected government of the Irish Republic, Dr Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe said:

The fight for Irish freedom has passed into the hands of the young men of Ireland – and when the young men of Ireland hit back at their oppressors it is not for an old man like me to cry “Foul!”

The 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade Irish Volunteers, made every effort to be prominent in the ensuing struggle. In August, 1919, the Dáil decreed that every member of the Irish Volunteers must swear allegiance to the Irish Republic and to the Dáil. From then on the Irish Volunteers became known as the Irish Republican Army, the defensive force of the new Dáil Éireann. Jim Roughan was the first Commandant of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. Together with Father Delahunty, he made every effort to arm the battalion for the armed struggle which was about to take place to win political freedom for Ireland as defined in the declaration of independence, adopted by the Dáil deputies during the first session of parliament. During the Spring of 1919, the activities of the Volunteers were concentrated on attempting to secure arms and explosives, with which the growing force of I.R.A. volunteers was not adequately supplied. Father Delahunty knew Michael Collins well and he made many trips to Dublin to get arms and ammunition from the headquarters of the Irish Republican Army in Dublin. Other methods were used to get arms and often rifles were purchased from individual British soldiers willing to accept payment for handing over their rifles to members of the I.R.A.

Acting on orders from I.R.A. headquarters in Dublin, the I.R.A. companies of the 7th Battalion collected rifles and shotguns from the inhabitants in their own areas. I.R.A. parties called to the houses for them and they were generally handed over voluntarily. Having collected them, they put the guns in dumps and maintained and preserved them. The Mullinahone Company put the guns under the roof of the local church. The parish priest, Canon O’Meara, never knew that the guns were there nor did any other priest in the parish. (The guns were there

until the night before the Ninemilehouse ambush when the local volunteers climbed by ladder to the top of the church and removed them from under the roof. They were never put back there again as each volunteer kept his own rifle or shotgun after that.)

In certain areas some inhabitants, farmers and householders, who did not agree with the policies of Sinn Féin, refused to give their rifles or shotguns voluntarily to I.R.A. parties. In these cases the I.R.A. entered, searched and raided the houses for guns and forced the occupants to surrender their arms to them. The Dunnamaggin Co. ran into some difficulties while collecting arms in their area. The raiding party consisted of Pat Holden, Dinny Treacy, Denis Lahart, Bob Coady, Lyda Holden, Pat Walsh, and Jack Dunne. A Unionist, named Smyth, who lived in Kells, refused to allow them in. They forced their way in and while two of the party held this householder on the floor, the others searched the house and took the gun. During the search, Pat Walsh saw a photograph of King George hanging on a wall and he tore it down and put his foot through it. Later on the raiding party called to a house near Kells creamery, occupied by a Protestant landowner named Mr Tibby and his grown up son. When Mr Tibby saw them approaching his front door, he fired at them with his shotgun through his upstairs window. He wounded Denis Lahart in the thigh and Denis had to be carried away by the other raiders to T. B. Cahill's in Kilbricken. Dr Patrick Phelan of Callan was sent for and he took the pellets out of Denis Lahart's thigh and he recovered. Denis was the first member of the 7th Battalion to be wounded in the War of Independence.

CHAPTER 8

The capture of Hugginstown barracks

PREPARATION

It became clear in 1920 that other methods would have to be tried to arm the I.R.A. battalions sufficiently well to carry out an intensive armed struggle against British forces. It was decided to attack R.I.C. barracks throughout the country and to capture the arms from each of the barracks taken. The officers of Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. decided to take an early initiative and attack an R.I.C. barracks in their own area. They spent some time endeavouring to choose the most suitable barracks for the purpose, one which would be in a secluded spot and not within close proximity to a military or other police barracks. Tullaroan R.I.C. barracks was first considered and when this location was rejected, Cuffesgrange R.I.C. barracks was mentioned as an alternative target, before Hugginstown R.I.C. barracks was finally chosen as the barracks to be stormed. Hugginstown village was in the middle of the Carrickshock district and very near Bóisín na gCloch where a bloody engagement between peasants and police took place on 14 December, 1831, which had a decisive effect on the Tithe War.

Jimmy Lalor, Vice-Brigade O/C, cycled to Hugginstown and scouted the area. He met the local I.R.A. officers, Willie Farrell and Nicholas Carroll in secret. These local officers told him that there were five R.I.C. constables and one sergeant stationed in the barracks. Sergeant Neilon was in charge of the barracks at the time and his wife and young family resided with him in the same building.

Farrell and O'Carroll showed him the lay-out of the barracks and he saw that positions could be taken up in the front and back and that the barracks could be entirely surrounded. Jimmy Lalor also noted that it was possible to mount a ladder in the space beside Cleary's licenced premises and get on the roof of the barracks from the ladder. Tom Treacy, the Brigade O/C, and Jimmy Lalor decided to mobilise the 1st Battalion, which was centred in Kilkenny, and the 7th Battalion, to carry out the attack. Both the Brigade officers held a meeting with Jim Roughan, the 7th Battalion Commandant, and the officers of the Hugginstown Co. in Roughan's house in Ahenure. The local officers heard what preparations had to be made and returned to Hugginstown to put them into operation. The time and manner of attack was discussed and the extent of the involvement of the 7th Battalion in the planned engagement was communicated to Jim Roughan. John Halloran of the Hugginstown Co. I.R.A., an ex Irish Guardsman, who had taken part in World War I, took charge of all the local planning.

This was the first major engagement of the Kilkenny Brigade and it was important that it would be successful, otherwise morale in the Brigade would suffer. At this period of the Irish War of Independence, the I.R.A. in Co. Kilkenny had general orders to avoid taking life when possible. They were still gentle revolutionaries and, in framing their plan of attack, the Brigade officers kept in mind that Sergeant Neilon's wife and young family lived in the barracks. It was decided to use explosives and gunfire; the Brigade officers also decided to mount a roof attack in order to take the building as quickly as possible and to get away before reinforcements would arrive from either Kilkenny or Waterford.

Explosives were essential and Kilkenny Brigade was fortunate to have a daring explosives expert, Joe McMahan, in their ranks at the time. He was like the man from 'God knows where' as he had arrived in Kilkenny from County Clare a short time previously to instruct the various battalions and companies in the use of explosives. He made all the bombs required for the Hugginstown attack in Peter De Loughry's foundry works in Newbuilding Lane just off Parliament Street, in the centre of Kilkenny. Shotgun cartridges were filled and gun-powder was made by Dan Stapleton, a chemist in Kilkenny at the time, behind Joe Sweeney's house in Troyswood, about three miles on the Freshford side of Kilkenny City. The gelignite was given to the explosives section of the Battalion by Mick Grace and 'Jinx' Sullivan who worked in the Kilkenny quarry and Mick Grace told them how to safely heat it before moulding it into a bomb. Joe McMahan was helped by Billy Oakes and Pat Corcoran. The gelignite was stored in a dump in Dicksboro and looked after by Billy Oakes. Pat Corcoran, a 1916 internee, designed and carved a pattern of a Mills bomb used by British forces in World War

I and this helped them to make their own grenades in like fashion. Some of the bombs were made of wheel boxes. When the bomb was fired, there was a tail of heavy cloth on the bomb to make sure that it landed on its detonator. The striker then exploded the bomb. (Pat Corcoran did not live long after the Hugginstown barracks attack. He died on 18 August 1920, in Jervis Street Hospital, Dublin, after a brief illness.)

When the bombs were ready, they were transferred to O'Briens, Viper, Kells, and some to Michael McBride's premises, Garnaman. McBride was a blacksmith by trade. From there they were brought to Hugginstown by Bob Coady, Dunnamaggin, using Denis Treacy's common cart and a jennet belonging to Carrolls, Dunnamaggin. The journey to Hugginstown was made on a cold, raw, snowy March, evening. Mick Whelan, Hugginstown, helped Bob to hide the bombs in Joseph Halloran's haggard about 25 yards from Hugginstown barracks. They were hidden in a pit of mangolds and taken from there on the night of the attack.

Tom Treacy, Jimmy Lalor and the other officers of the 1st Battalion sent the mobilisation order around by word of mouth to volunteers in Kilkenny, and to the rural areas of the battalion in Bennettsbridge, Ennisnag, and Kells. The Ahenure, Mullinahone, Coolagh, Dunnamaggin, Callan and Hugginstown companies got word from the officers of the 7th Battalion. Amongst those who reported for duty were the following:

- Kilkenny:** Tom Treacy, Jimmy Lalor, Joe McMahan, Tommy Murphy, Martin Mulhall, Tommy Nolan (Outrath), Mick Oakes, Martin Cassidy, Michael Ryan, 'Feg' Whelan, Leo Dardis, Michael McSweeney Jnr.
- Bennettsbridge:** Danny Murphy, Johnny Greene (Barronsland), John Dollard, Ned Gooley, Ned Gorman (Woollengrange).
- Ennisnag:** Andy Maher, Tim Hennessy, Jack Dwyer, Denis Dunne
- Kells:** Mick Brennan (Newtown), Michael McBride (Garnaman), David Kealy (Kellsgrange), Martin Shea (Garnaman), Jim Hanrahan (Garnaman), Denis Keane (Garnaman).
- Ahenure:** Jim Roughan, Paddy Ryan, Michael Gibbs, Bob Cahill, Mick Dowling, Dick Finn, Jack Myles, Pat Walsh, Trenchmore, and Pat Phelan, Physicianstown.
- Mullinahone:** Paud Egan, Jimmy Rawley.
- Coolagh:** Jimmy Leahy, Maurice Coady.
- Dunnamaggin:** Pat Walsh, Pat Holden, John Hickey, Bob Coady, Pat Mulrooney.

- Callan:** Lyda Holden.
- Hugginstown:** Willie Farrell (Ballinknock), Danny Kelly (Harristown), Nicholas Carroll (Tóin an Bhaile), Ned Halloran (Hugginstown), John Halloran (Hugginstown), Bill Walsh (Ballaght), Tom Barron (Sheepstown), Jack Sweeney (Sheepstown), Watt Barron (Sheepstown), Bill Lynch (Coolmore), Mick Whelan (Kilcasey), Michael Murphy (Brownstown), Jim Walsh (Ballaght), Ned Walsh (Carrickshock).

All assembled in their own company areas on Monday night, 8 March, 1920 and cycled to Hugginstown. Most of them had only shotguns and they hid these in sacks and tied them to the cross-bars of their bicycles. They did not travel in one group but in singles or pairs at different intervals in order to avoid attracting any special attention. They started in daylight but, as many of them reached Hugginstown, darkness was falling. Guides from the local Hugginstown Co. met them as they approached the village and brought them to the assembly point which was situated in Carrickshock Boreen where the Battle of Carrickshock took place in 1831.

At that time the fight was between peasants and police. Now, amongst these sixty odd men assembled to take Hugginstown R.I.C. barracks, there was a different cross-section of people represented. Most of the rural freedom fighters were sons of large independent farmers and the volunteers from Kilkenny City were mostly white-collared clerical workers, shop assistants, and highly skilled tradesmen. Michael Davitt, Charles Stewart Parnell and the policies and activities of the Land League, helped by a sympathetic British Prime Minister, William Gladstone, had contributed to the economic and social improvement of many of the farmers of Ireland. But here were men, who were normally, at that time of year, busy from dawn to dusk working on their farms, about to risk their lives and their personal freedom for the Irish Republic, first proclaimed by Wolfe Tone. They were joined in Carrickshock Boreen by urban volunteers who were far better educated than their former counterparts. They had been to school with the Gaelic League, the G.A.A., the Christian Brothers and Diocesan Colleges. Many of them from both rural and urban backgrounds, had heard from their forefathers of the 1798 Rising; Robert Emmet; William Smith O'Brien; the Young Irelanders and Ballingarry in 1848; James Stephens, the Kilkennyman who organised the Fenians, and the Manchester Martyrs. The 1916 Rising and the execution of the leaders that followed had a profound influence on all of them. These were the traditions and events which brought them to this lonely boreen on this bleak March night.

ATTACK

The attack had been well organised and already individual volunteers had started to perform the special duty allotted to them for the night. Lyda Holden of the Callan Company was first into action. He had been instructed by Jim Roughan to cut all phone communications between the barracks and the outside world. He had been given a wire-cutter by J. J. Dunne of Callan and now he was cutting telegraph wires everywhere between Callan and Hugginstown. He travelled by bicycle and he climbed the tall poles on the main roads and on all the by-roads as well. He did his task so well that when the attack started, Sergeant Neilon failed in his efforts to contact Kilkenny or Waterford for reinforcements. Tim Hennessy, Jack Dwyer, Andy Maher, and Denis Dunne were commandeering a motor car from Dr O'Brien of Stoneyford to carry away the expected capture of arms, ammunition and explosives after the attack. After taking the car, Jack Dwyer, who was a mechanic by trade, started and drove it in the direction of Hugginstown, accompanied by Tim Hennessy. Denis Dunne and Andy Maher who had revolvers and they took up positions on the Waterford side of Stoneyford R.I.C. barracks with orders to fire at the Stoneyford R.I.C. constables if they moved towards Hugginstown during the attack.

Tom Treacy and Jimmy Lalor urged the big group in Carrickshock Boreen to move into their positions quietly and silently and unknown to the police in the barracks as the success of the attack depended on the element of surprise. The Kilkenny Company took up positions behind a wall in front of the barracks on the opposite side of the road, together with the Kells and some of the Dunnamaggin Company. The Bennettsbridge contingent occupied a shed opposite in Jimmy Tovey's yard. The Ahenure, Mullinahone, Coolagh groups and some of the Hugginstown party were directed to a position to the right of the barracks. They were there to prevent the R.I.C. from making a getaway through a door leading into Carrickshock Boreen.

Noiselessly, the rest of the Hugginstown Company now extracted the bombs from the pit of mangolds in Joseph Halloran's haggard and placed a ladder against the left-hand side of the barracks from the space beside Cleary's licensed premises. A bombing party had been chosen. Joe McMahan, Mick Oakes, Martin Cassidy, Tommy Murphy, and Michael Ryan, all from Kilkenny City, were to mount the roof from the ladder, remove slates and drop bombs into the building below them. One big danger facing them was that the garrison might direct their fire upwards through the roof at them but this was a chance they had to take. Joe McMahan, the leader of the bombing party, had spoken to the whole attacking party in Carrickshock Boreen and had warned them all to shoot low at all times

because of the danger that the bombing party might be caught in their own men's fire. Tom Treacy had a megaphone and he took up his position behind the wall, which fronted the barracks, ready to command the whole operation. Jimmy Lalor was beside him and Martin Mulhall moved up beside Jimmy. All the groups had taken up their positions so quietly that the police inside were completely unaware of what was happening.

Inside the barracks the clock was approaching 11.30 p.m., the time set for the attack. Constable O'Donoghue had gone to bed. Constables Dockeray and Conroy were in the dormitory with Constable O'Donoghue. Constable Tighe and Ryan were in the newly fortified dayroom which had just been fitted with steel bullet-proof shutters. Sergeant Neilon was with his wife and family in the sergeant's rooms. The six R.I.C. members were vastly outnumbered by the attackers outside but they had the advantage of a well-fortified barracks. Constable Dockeray was retiring from the force that night and up to 10 p.m. the sergeant and the other constables had been chatting with him in Cleary's premises beside the barracks. There they had mingled with the locals in lively friendly banter before returning to the barracks at 10.30 p.m.

All the members of the garrison were Irishmen doing their daily task of policing the local area. They realised that their work had become political to a large extent but the majority of them had no conscientious objection to this fact. They represented British law in Ireland and they would remain loyal in their enforcement of it. Some of them felt frustrated as they had no control over the fact that their work had become political but they knew no other job and they had families to rear and look after. A small minority hated their role in the political climate of Ireland at the time and some of these helped to keep the local I.R.A. volunteers out of possible military traps by discreetly warning them to be sure to be indoors early on certain dark nights.

In the minds of the attackers, who awaited the signal to commence fire, the R.I.C. were suppressing the will of the Irish people for complete freedom. The English Government was determined, as Professor MacNeill declared in the Dáil, 'to make the police supreme in Ireland.' The reason that they were attacking Hugginstown R.I.C. barracks that night was to frustrate the R.I.C. efforts to be 'the eyes and ears of the enemy' in this, the most serious conflict ever for Irish freedom.

Tom Treacy looked at his watch and shouted through the megaphone to his fellow I.R.A. attackers, 'commence fire'. The silence of that March night was shattered by one single volley of shotgun fire followed by another loud order by Treacy to his men to cease fire. He then shouted to the garrison, 'You are under siege and you are requested to surrender.'

Inside the police barracks thirty-eight year old Constable Ryan rushed up the stairs to warn the others, shouting, 'Get ready boys, we are being attacked.' Constable Charles O'Donoghue jumped out of bed and rushed downstairs. Constables Tighe and Conroy took up positions to fire through the front windows. Constable Ryan, who had received expert tuition in explosives at a special course in Waterford, collected a box of bombs downstairs and rushed upstairs with them. Instead of surrendering, the sergeant and the constables commenced firing through the windows. The sergeant removed his family from the bedroom and Constable Ryan opened the window in the room and began to hurl Mills bombs out through the window in the direction of the I.R.A. attackers behind the front wall. He also threw some out the loophole at the right hand side of the barracks at the attackers positioned near Halloran's farmyard. Tom Treacy, seeing that there was no offer of surrender, ordered his men to commence firing again. Fire was directed at the windows and at the loopholes in the walls of the barracks to prevent the R.I.C. inside from effectively firing at the attackers. Shattering noises of exploding bombs rent the night air as Constable Ryan's grenades, falling short of the wall on the other side of the street, exploded on the ground without effect.

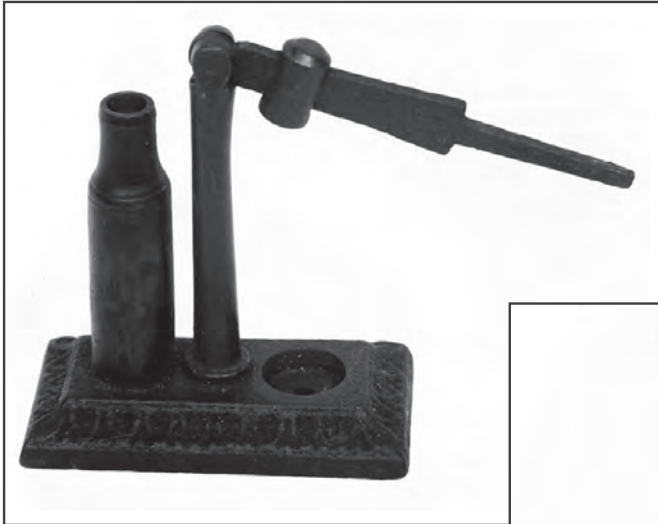
Joe McMahon jumped into action. He mounted the ladder quickly and got onto the roof. He went along the roof like a cat, breaking holes in the slates with a sledgehammer. He called for some bombs to be brought to him by the rest of the bombing party. The Hugginstown Co. was at the right-hand side of the barracks passing the bombs across from Halloran's haggard; Tommy Murphy handed McMahon a small bomb. McMahon threw it down into the building through the hole in the roof. It failed to explode. Mick Oakes handed him another bomb and this time it ripped through the ceiling of the kitchen and exploded. Martin Cassidy brought up a bomb with him and went down to get a second one. As he came up the ladder, an R.I.C. man fired through a gaping loophole at him and almost shot him. Below on the ground, Paud Egan, John Hickey, and Pat Holden were amongst those carrying bombs to Michael Ryan who was passing them further up the ladder. A bomb was thrown at the back door of the barracks and the loud explosion that resulted blew it open as if it had been struck by lightning. The women and children inside the building began to scream loudly with fright. Their cries could be heard outside. Treacy shouted through the megaphone 'if ye have women and children in there yet, get them out. We're going to blow ye up.' He gave the R.I.C. five minutes to get the women and children to safety. When there was no sign of surrender from the barracks after this interval, Tom Treacy quickly passed word around to his men to fire again. McMahon threw another big bomb into the building through a hole in the slates. Then he shouted from the roof, 'if ye don't surrender, I'll use bigger bombs and blow the barracks out of it altogether.'



35. Dunnamaggin I.R.A. Company. Front Left: John Dwyer, Pat Holden, Denis Lahart, Denis Treacy, Lawrence Forristal, Paddy Power.



36. Carrickshock Memorial Committee.



37. Machine for capping and uncapping cartridges.



38. Machine for packing cartridges with gunpowder.



39. Hugginstown prisoners after hunger strike in Wormwood Scrubs.
Front Row: John Carroll (2nd from left); Mick Loughman (5th from left);
Ned Halloran (6th from left); Nicky Carroll (7th from left).
Back Row: John Halloran (2nd from left); Willie Farrell (3rd from left);
Watt Barron (5th from left); Jim Walsh (6th from left); Tom Barron (7th from left).



40. R.I.C. and British military taking possession of Jimmy Lalor's car at Friary Street, Kilkenny.



41. Seated (from left): Tommy Kerwick, Jimmy Carroll and Lyda Holden (standing), Callan



42. Ned Aylward.



43. Lyda Holden in escort for Archbishop Mannix in Callan.

Inside the building Constable O'Donoghue closed his eyes as he saw a bomb coming through the slates, and crashing through the ceiling into the kitchen. He doubled himself up on the floor as it exploded breaking a hole in one of the sidewalls. He then heard Constable Ryan moaning and crying, stumbling downstairs by himself and falling on the dayroom floor. As he fell he called out to the sergeant, 'Sergeant, I am done. They got me through the window.' Constable O'Donoghue went into the dayroom and saw blood flowing on the floor. Constable Ryan's arm was completely shattered. The wounded man was asking the sergeant to get him some medical assistance and a priest. Constable Dockeray was with him at the time, tying a sheet around his badly injured arm. Sergeant Neilon, who was also bleeding from a slight facial injury, then decided that further resistance was futile. He went to an upstairs window and shouted out to the attackers, 'we surrender.'

The attackers outside received the offer of surrender with a sigh of relief and a deep feeling of satisfaction. Too often in past Irish history, it was the freedom fighters who had surrendered. Tom Treacy gave a loud order to all his men, 'cease fire on all sides.' Sergeant Neilon called again, 'we need a priest and doctor for a wounded colleague. 'Ye can come out with hands up and get a priest and doctor.' answered Tom Treacy.

Sergeant Neilon retorted, ‘if we go out with our hands up, will ye fire on us.’ McMahon then roared from the roof, ‘come out with the rifles, ammunition, and bombs and leave them on the road. We tell ye that ye’ll be safe.’ Constable Tighe complied and appeared on the road outside with six rifles, two revolvers, a big quantity of ammunition, and a box of Mills Bombs.

There were no Verey lights in the barracks. These were fired high into the sky to summon help when a barracks came under attack. With the other lines of communication also cut, the barracks had become completely isolated during the siege. It was 1 a.m. on Tuesday morning when the remainder of the R.I.C. garrison came out with their hands raised over their heads. Martin Mulhall and Tommy Nolan jumped over the wall and kept them covered until McMahon came off the roof. Tom Treacy then released them to get a priest and doctor for their wounded colleague.

AFTERMATH

The I.R.A. attackers had then to get out of the area quickly. Tim Hennessy, and Jack Dwyer were expected to arrive in Dr O’Brien’s car to take the booty away. However, on their way, the car skidded into a dyke and did not arrive in Hugginstown on time. The attackers took a cream coloured pony out of a stable belonging to Mrs Leahy of Coolmore and carted the captured arms away. Danny Murphy drove the pony to Stoneyford as fast as he could and Martin Mulhall, Joe McMahon, Tommy Nolan and Johnny Greene cycled to Stoneyford beside the pony and cart to be certain that the badly needed arms and ammunition arrived there safely. Tim Hennessy, Jack Dwyer and Andy Maher took the arms from the cart at Stoneyford. They carried them across the hill and up the Lowland Road to an old factory belonging to Pilsworths on the King’s River at Annamult. They put the rifles and ammunition between two large bales of hay in the loft and dumped the home-made bombs in a clump of blackthorns in a corner of a field. The arms and ammunition were there for about two months. Orders were sent then to hand them over to Bill Carrigan and Jack Harte from the Clara Battalion for use in an armed engagement about to take place. The Kells Company came to Ennisnag about a week after the capture of Hugginstown barracks and took away the home-made bombs.

Back in the captured barracks the injured constable was attended by Rev. Father Hoyne C.C., Hugginstown, who administered the last rites of the church. Dr Marnell of Kilmoganny arrived about 3 a.m. and rendered medical aid. Constable Ryan’s arm was almost completely severed. The bones of the arm and forearm were shattered and the artery was completely cut. The doctor stayed until 6 a.m. and

succeeded in stopping the bleeding. Although he did all he could to save the wounded man's life, Constable Ryan died shortly afterwards, leaving a wife and two young children to mourn his loss and he was interred in Ballybricken, Waterford. At an inquest held the following day, the jury found that Constable Ryan died from shock and haemorrhage caused by a high explosive but there was no evidence to show where the explosive came from. It was generally thought that Constable Ryan was throwing a bomb at the attackers through the window of the upstairs room when it prematurely exploded and blew his hand and arm away.

The barracks was left in semi-ruins. The windows in the front were badly smashed and the only window in the rear, the kitchen window, was shattered also. There was a large hole in the roof of the building and there was an aperture in one of the side walls. The outoffices, which were surrounded by iron sheeting, were riddled with bullet holes. Inside the barracks there were burst sandbags all over the floor and policemen's caps were scattered in all the rooms. After the attack the R.I.C. vacated the barracks. The local Hugginstown Company bombed and burned it on Ascension Thursday at the end of May, 1920.

There were many arrests made by the R.I.C. after the capture of Hugginstown Barracks. In the Kilkenny area, Tom Treacy, Jimmy Lalor, Tommy Nolan (Outrath), and Mick Loughman (who was not in the attack on Hugginstown Barracks), John Joe Byrne, a nephew of John Lowry, hardware merchant, Rose-Inn Street, Kilkenny and Pat O'Keeffe, an assistant in a licensed premises in Parliament Street, were arrested at the end of March. In the Bennettsbridge area, Ed Gorman, (Woollengrange); John McGrath, manager Thomastown Creamery; Thomas Kealy (Thomastown) and James Walsh, Ballinaboola, (President of Bennettsbridge Sinn Féin Club) were arrested. Amongst those apprehended in the Hugginstown area were Edward Raftis (Knocktopher); Willie Farrell (Ballinknock); Thomas Barron (Sheepstown); Watt Barron (Sheepstown); William Lynch (Coolmore); Ned Halloran (Hugginstown); John Halloran (Hugginstown); Nicholas Carroll (Tóin an Bhaile); Jim Walsh (Ballaght); Bill Walsh (Ballaght); Danny Kelly (Harristown); Michael Murphy (Brownstown); Mick Whelan (Kilcasey) and Jack Carroll (Tóin an Bhaile) who, though working in Fethard, was arrested in Tipperary Town. A blacksmith from Ballyhale, named Dinny Gorman, was also apprehended, although not in Hugginstown at all on the night of the attack on the barracks. He was arrested because one of the I.R.A. attackers was heard by the police shouting during the attack, 'keep down your head, Gorman.' The attacker was referring to Ned Gorman, Woolengrange, who was participating in the onslaught at the time, but the police arrested Dinny Gorman of Ballyhale, thinking that he was the man in question.

Tom Treacy, Jimmy Lalor, Tommy Nolan, Mick Loughman and John Joe

Byrne were released during May. Lalor and Byrne had been on hunger strike for twelve days in a Belfast jail while Treacy and Loughman had been on hungerstrike with the Hugginstown prisoners for a longer period in Wormwood Scrubs.

Of the Hugginstown prisoners Michael Murphy (Brownstown) and Bill Walsh (Ballaght) had been first brought to Kilkenny jail, when arrested, and transferred afterwards to Cork prison. Tom Barron, Watt Barron, Nicholas Carroll, Ned Raftis, Jack Carroll, Jim Walsh, Ned Halloran, John Halloran, Willie Farrell, Danny Kelly, Dinny Gorman, Bill Lynch, and Mick Whelan were already in Cork Jail. After a week there, they were brought to Belfast on a gunboat. When they were being transported to Crumlin Road Jail by lorry, Unionist supporters threw stones and rotten eggs at the lorries. Michael Sheehan of the 3rd. Tipperary Brigade was O/C of the prisoners and he began a hunger strike for prisoner-of-war treatment for I.R.A. internees in the jail stating that the fight would be continued inside as well as outside. After two days on hunger-strike, 100 prisoners were transferred by destroyer boat to England and taken by train to Wormwood Scrubs. Others, including Jimmy Lalor, Tommy Nolan and John Joe Byrne from Kilkenny, James Kealy (Thomastown), Dinny Gorman (Ballyhale), Michael Murphy (Brownstown), Bill Walsh (Ballaght), and Ned Raftis (Knocktopher), who were left in Belfast, continued the hunger strike which ended six days afterwards when the hunger-strikers were unconditionally released.

The republican prisoners in Wormwood Scrubs prison in London had also demanded political treatment and had been refused. On 21 April, 175 of them went on hunger strike just as Tom Treacy and Mick Loughman from Kilkenny and Tom Barron, Jack Carroll, Watt Barron, Nicholas Carroll, Jim Walsh, Ned Halloran, John Halloran, Willie Farrell, Danny Kelly, Bill Lynch and Mick Whelan, all from the Hugginstown area, arrived in that prison compound. The Wormwood Scrubs prisoners had already smashed every door in the prison as well as all the furniture in the cells. When the new arrivals from Belfast joined the hunger strike they were first tempted to break their fast when the choicest of foods were offered to them by the prison authorities but when this attraction had no effect on them, the prison officers gave them plenty of salt and water to drink as they requested.

During the hunger strike, Irishmen and Irishwomen, who gathered in great crowds around the prison, praying and watching for news, were savagely attacked by a gang of English youths. The police made no attempt to check the attackers and the British Government seemed to condone the attack. 'The young men of London,' a spokesman for the Government said, 'naturally showed their resentment at hearing people extol those whom they believed to be murderers.' As the prisoners weakened they were sent to St Mary's Infirmary, Highgate,

London for medical attention. However, the hunger strike ended after 21 days when the prisoners were promised unconditional release. The County Kilkenny prisoners had to spend some time recovering in St Mary's Infirmary before they were fit to be discharged. Before leaving the hospital, the matron addressed the group and said: 'we had been told you were a bunch of murdering savages but we now know, having met you that you are a crowd of gentlemen.'

When Jimmy Lalor and John Joe Byrne returned from Belfast Jail on 17 May and Tom Treacy and Mick Loughman arrived from Wormwood Scrubs on 31 May, they received a warm reception at Kilkenny railway station from Aid P. De Loughry, mayor of Kilkenny, and Father Matthew, guardian, Capuchin Friary, Kilkenny. St John's and St Patrick's bands met them and they paraded to the Parade where addresses were delivered by Father Matthew, Aid Peter De Loughry, Aid J. W. Upton, George O'Dwyer, Coon, and Michael McSweeney, Kilkenny.

The Hugginstown fife and drum band met the Hugginstown hunger strikers at Ballyhale railway station and led a huge concourse of excited people in parade formation to Hugginstown village where they received an enthusiastic reception before a huge bonfire in the centre of the village. There followed an all-night celebration in this republican stronghold before the hunger strikers eventually retired to the quiet shelter of their comfortable rural homes. The local ballad-maker, Paddy Carroll, did not forget to sing their praises:

The Barrons and the Carrolls
And Lynch from sweet Coolmore
Were amongst the Irish prisoners
That came from Erin's shore.
The Walshes, Raftis and O'Gorman,
From historic Ballyhale
Stood up for Irish freedom
In Wormwood Scrubs Jail
Mike Murphy too from Brownstown
His name I will not fail
To pin it down with high renown
With the prisoners of Scrubs jail.

The R.I.C. went searching for Joe McMahon in Paddy Leahy's and Furnis's in Patrick Street, where he worked as a coach builder, on the morning after the capture of Hugginstown Barracks but he was not in either place. They kept these houses in Upper Patrick Street under surveillance for some time and eventually Joe McMahon returned at a late hour one night and went to sleep in Paddy

Leahy's house. The R.I.C. had spotted him going into the dwelling and a posse of armed police surrounded the house. Joe McMahon saw the danger and, barefooted, he got out the back window, scaled a very high wall, went through the grounds of St Patrick's De La Salle School and made his way through the fields to Mulhalls, Danville. Martin Mulhall got up quickly and let him in. The R.I.C. had been close on his tracks until they came to the high wall but none of them had the ability or the agility to get over it like McMahon. His escape had its sequel in a police investigation in the city, as a result of which, two police sergeants were given unfavourable records. Joe McMahon knew that he was being watched night and day. Martin Mulhall brought him over through the fields to Tom Kearney's, The Racecourse, which is about three miles outside Kilkenny City. While there he got orders from I.R.A. headquarters to go to County Wexford. Tom Kearney drove Joe McMahon out of County Kilkenny in his pony and trap under the cover of darkness. As he drove by the outskirts of Kilkenny, McMahon lay on the floor of the trap with a revolver in each hand, and determined to use them if the occasion arose. At all costs he was going to evade capture.

Joe McMahon stayed in County Wexford for a short time, acting as an explosives instructor, and then he went to County Cavan to act in the same capacity. While he was testing a new type of bomb in August, 1920, in the Breffni county, the bomb blew up in his face and killed him instantly. The dead freedom fighter was buried in Kilmaley, Co. Clare on Tuesday 24 August 1920. All the shops in Ennis were completely shuttered when his funeral passed through the town. Over one thousand volunteers marched in the funeral cortege accompanied by eleven priests. County Clare-born, Joe McMahon, had all the hallmarks of a tough freedom fighter. Previous to his arrival in Kilkenny, he had been incarcerated in Belfast Jail in 1918, where he participated in the hunger strike under the leadership of Austin Stack M.P. which won for the internees the right to be treated as political prisoners. McMahon was also a lover of the Irish language and he always addressed a fellow I.R.A. volunteer with the words 'Dia is Muire dhuit' before breaking into conversation. In a great many cases in the Irish War of Independence, the daring paid with their lives for their fearless exploits. Joe McMahon was a daring freedom fighter who was to share that tragic fate.

Hugginstown barracks was the third R.I.C. barracks in Ireland to be captured by the I.R.A. From the time Hugginstown barracks was attacked, the I.R.A. began the policy of capturing isolated R.I.C. barracks. The British government reacted by closing all rural R.I.C. barracks because of their vulnerability. Once vacated, the local I.R.A. units burned them down so that the R.I.C. could never

again return. In April and May of 1920, I.R.A. units in County Kilkenny burned down barracks at The Rower (15 May), Inistioge (4 April), Bennettsbridge (12 May), Loughbrack Callan (13 May), Corbettstown (13 May), Johnstown (22 May), Clomantagh (3 April), Gathabawn (Easter Sunday morning, 4 April), Kilmoganny (4 May), Kilmanagh (12 May), Killamery, Glenmore, Tullaroan, Railyard, Paulstown (28 May) and Freshford R.I.C. Barracks was closed on Thursday, 26 August 1920. The R.I.C., ‘the eyes and ears’ of the British Government, were being driven from rural Ireland into the towns and the cities. The districts where these barracks stood were no longer occupied by Crown Forces and there was no longer police surveillance on suspected I.R.A. volunteers. The I.R.A. was gradually gaining military control over rural Ireland.

CHAPTER 9

Kilkennymen help out in Tipperary

RESCUE AT KNOCKLONG

Soloheadbeg surprised the British by its intensity and startled the country at large. Seán Hogan's escape at the station of Knocklong shocked British authorities by its audacity. Seán Hogan had been arrested early on the morning of Monday 12 May at Meaghers, Annfield, near Thurles. Hogan had been removed soon after his arrest to Thurles R.I.C. Barracks by police van and he was there identified as one of the much-sought Soloheadbeg band. The result of any trial on Hogan could have only one result and the British government would be only too glad to consign him to the hangman. Hogan was transferred to Cork prison by train under an armed escort of one sergeant and three R.I.C. constables. Treacy, Robinson and Breen, helped by five Galbally men, boarded the train at Knocklong station and snatched Seán Hogan from his well-armed guard after a desperate gun-battle.

Breen had nearly been killed in the rescue attempt. On leaving the station, he was semi-delirious with pain and barely on his feet because of weakness and loss of blood. He was shot through one of his lungs and right-arm. He had a hazy recollection of being helped from the station and across the roadway by an Irishman in the British Army, named Fox, dressed in khaki uniform, who had previously cheered for the Irish Republic while the fierce gun-battle raged on the train. Seán Treacy had suffered a severe wound to his throat. The bullet had

loosened his tooth as it penetrated into his mouth. As he made his escape he said that he had to hold his head up with both his hands but he was able to walk and run though he felt that he was going to die.

The R.I.C. escort had fought a brave and stubborn fight. Sergeant Wallace had wrestled with Seán Treacy for five minutes in a life and death struggle before the sergeant was fatally wounded. Constable Enright had been shot dead earlier as he put the muzzle of his revolver to Seán Hogan's neck when the struggle began in the train compartment. It took Breen and Treacy two months to recover from their wounds. The rescue of Seán Hogan had been successful but at a high cost. Two men, Edward Foley and Patrick Maher, were executed by hanging in Mountjoy, 21 months later, having been found guilty on murder charges arising from the rescue of Seán Hogan. Foley had been one of the five Galbally men who had taken part, though unarmed, in the daring exploit, but Maher, though an active volunteer, had not been there at all.

The small railway station in Knocklong, Co. Limerick, on the main Dublin-Cork railway line, had achieved long-lived fame as the ballad of Seán Hogan became famous that summer:

The news has spread thro' Ireland and spread from shore to shore
Of such a deed no living man has ever heard before,
From out a guarded carriage 'mid a panic-stricken throng
Seán Hogan he was rescued at the Station of Knocklong.

(The same Seán Hogan was later to lead his Tipperary Flying Column into West Kilkenny to help the Seventh Battalion Flying Column there to increase the level of I.R.A. activity against British Forces in that county.)

For two months the British hunted the big four Tipperary men so well that Treacy and his three comrades were fugitives in County Tipperary, County Limerick, County Kerry and County Clare. Seán Hogan and Seán Treacy spent a fortnight of that period staying secretly in Cahills, Cappahenry, near Callan, where later the Callan Flying Column constantly found refuge.

When Breen and Treacy had returned to health in late summer, 1919, they decided to go to Dublin with Séamus Robinson and Seán Hogan to discuss the whole position with Dublin Headquarters. It was decided that the four men should stay in the capital city for some time and take part in the Dublin activities of Michael Collins and his intelligence squad in I.R.A. headquarters. The four leaders of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade returned to their native county in Spring, 1920. When they returned they brought with them a young officer from I.R.A. Headquarters in Dublin whose name was Ernie O'Malley. He was to act as I.R.A.

organiser in County Tipperary first and then in County Kilkenny. County Kilkenny was ahead of Tipperary at this time in the 'scorched-earth' policy in regard to R.I.C. barracks because of the capture of Hugginstown barracks and the number of unoccupied barracks burned and destroyed. The Tipperary leaders immediately set to work to attack R.I.C. barracks in their own county.

ATTACK ON DRANGAN BARRACKS

The officers of the Third Tipperary Brigade decided to attack Drangan barracks at the end of May, 1920. Drangan is in east Tipperary, near the County Kilkenny border, about eight miles from Callan. Local I.R.A. companies in County Tipperary were asked to send as many armed men as possible to report to Haydens, Parsonshill on the night of 3rd, June, 1920. Seán Hogan called to Jim Roughan, Commandant of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, communicating a request to him from Seán Treacy to send a section of well-trained riflemen to assist in the attack on Drangan R.I.C. Barracks. Members of the Ahenure Company of the Callan Battalion were playing a hurling game on the same day in Cahills, Cappahenry, when Jim Roughan called and asked for volunteers to go to attack Drangan barracks. From the 7th Battalion Jim Roughan, Ned Aylward, Bob Cahill, Paddy Ryan, Michael Gibbs, Dick Finn, Paddy (Foxy) Maher, and Lyda Holden agreed to go. Seán Treacy also asked Jim Roughan to arrange to have all the roads to Drangan in his border battalion area blocked, including the Kilkenny-Callan road, in order to impede any probable reinforcements going to Drangan from Kilkenny. Seán Treacy also requested to have the Mullinahone Company I.R.A. encircle Mullinahone R.I.C. barracks but not to open fire unless the Mullinahone R.I.C. constables or military left Mullinahone to attempt to relieve Drangan.

There was a full muster of the Mullinahone Company under Jimmy Raleigh and they took up positions around Mullinahone Barracks. Jackie Brett from Mullinahone with his cousin, Jack Gardiner from Poulacapple, acted as despatch riders between Mullinahone and Drangan, so that those laying siege to Mullinahone barracks and those attacking Drangan barracks could keep in touch with each other about developments in either place. Ned Halley and Paddy Cody of the Ballyline Company met Jim Roughan on the night previous to the Drangan barracks attack and he gave them orders to block the roads in the Kilmanagh area that night. Together with other members of the company they knocked trees and blocked roads to prevent reinforcements coming from Kilkenny. Ned Halley then got in touch with Mick Maher of Ballylarkin and they blocked the Mullinahone road near Clashbeg at Catherine Phelan's public house. Pat Phelan,

Physicianstown, and Mick Maher stood on guard while the others used the saws to cut the trees.

Lyda Holden assembled with the others at Cahills, Cappahenry to go to Drangan. On the way to Drangan, Roughan got word, by despatch, that the main road from Kilkenny to Callan was open. Lyda was selected by Jim Roughan to go back to block the road and guard it. Lyda picked up some of the Callan Company, including T. B. Cahill, and they collected saws and then went to Tullamaine, two miles on the Kilkenny side of Callan. They knocked some tall beech trees across the road and stayed there all night guarding the road blocks at Tullamaine hill. By the time that the attack on Drangan barracks began, every road into Drangan was blocked, except the road to Cashel, which was left open for the use of the local population. Paud Egan of Poulacapple was the only member of the Mullinahone Company I.R.A. who took part in the attack on Drangan barracks. During that day, which was the feast of Corpus Christi, local elections were being held and Paud had been speaking to Lar Breen, a brother of Dan, in Mullinahone and he had told Paud about the planned attack on Drangan barracks that night. Paud had gone home, got down the new rifle which he had got from Hugginstown barracks, put it in a sack, tied it to the cross-bar of the bicycle and had set off for Drangan.

The officers of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade decided on a roof attack on Drangan R.I.C. barracks. Séamus Robinson, the Brigade Commandant, had asked Edmond Grogan and Paddy Hogan of the Cashel Battalion if they could get a hose in Cashel, which, he explained, would be used for pumping paraffin oil on to the roof of the barracks. On the evening of 3 June, Paddy Hogan, Tom Taylor and Edmond Grogan took a hose from the railway station in Cashel and brought it to Drangan, leaving it at Haydens' house in Parsonshill. Jim Roughan, Bob Cahill, Ned Aylward, Paddy Ryan, Michael Gibbs, Dick Finn and Paddy (Foxy) Maher from the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, cycled to Drangan but, as they reached the village, they heard a volley of rifle fire coming from the direction of the barracks and they dismounted from their bicycles and took cover beside the road.

The attack on Drangan barracks differed in many ways from the attack on Hugginstown barracks. In the first place the element of surprise was lost. When the volunteers began to take up their positions under the direction of Nicholas Moroney, the Adjutant of the 7th Battalion, Tipperary Brigade, the dogs of Drangan village began to bark and howl unmercifully and this din put the R.I.C. garrison on their guard. At 11.30 p.m. they sent out an armed patrol to investigate the uproar created by the dogs. This patrol, consisting of Sergeant Robinson, Constable Glennon, and a Black and Tan named King, saw some

armed civilians in Mick Slattery's hayshed and fired on them. The I.R.A. party in the hayshed replied to the patrol's fire but one of their numbers, Bill Dwyer, was shot in the wrist but it was not a serious wound. The attackers in the hayshed captured Sergeant Robinson and held him until the attack was over. The other policeman and King, the Black and Tan, got away and rushed back safely to the barracks though King had a narrow escape when a bullet grazed his forehead.

Sergeant Sullivan was now in charge inside the barracks and he had seven other constables under his command. The constables inside took up firing positions beside the sandbagged and loopholed windows and fired volley after volley in the direction of the hayshed. The attackers there, and in other positions surrounding the barracks, replied to the fire. The Callan contingent, then under cover on the outskirts of the village, was met by a local scout from the Drangan Company I.R.A. and led up to the street where they met Seán Treacy. He had a big parabellum in his hand and he directed them to the rear of the barracks. They had to make a dash, under fire, across a road, one by one, to get to their firing positions. The Battalion Commandant, Jim Roughan, Ned Aylward, Bob Cahill and Paddy Ryan, together with Captain J. Foley of the 7th Battalion, Tipperary Brigade, opened fire on the loopholes in the back wall of the barracks. The loopholes were slits about ten inches high and four inches wide on the outside. Out of these the besieged garrison protruded their rifles and fired out under good cover. The attackers drew heavy fire on themselves from the barracks and, as they had very little cover where they were, they were forced to withdraw to a sunken ditch further back. The police then sent up the Verey lights. into the night sky, appealing for help from the barracks near at hand. These lights illuminated the whole attacking area and as the gunners at the rear of the barracks moved back for cover, they had to creep on the ground in intervals between each two big flashes of light. They eventually reached the dyke and they stood behind tall bushes at the side of the ditch and replied to the volleys of flashing bullets coming from the besieged barracks. Their purpose was gradually to advance to the back door, break it down and make a speedy assault into the building when resistance from the garrison became weak.

Captain J. Foley of the Drangan Company was beside Bob Cahill and firing continuously at the loopholes in the barrack wall. There was a small house behind them and the bullets coming from the barracks were hitting the walls of the building with a rasping sound and ricocheting back. Suddenly Bob Cahill saw Foley fall to the ground and grip his shoulder tightly. 'I think I'm hit, Bob,' he moaned, 'but what the hell difference, if ye take the barracks.' Bob saw the blood on the back of his shirt. He felt around his shoulder with his fingers and one finger went into the very hole where the bullet was and he could feel the flat

bullet inside. It had flattened out when it hit the wall. Commandant Tom Donovan of the 7th Battalion, Tipperary Brigade had approached Dr Conlon of Mullinahone previous to the engagement and had asked him if he would treat any volunteer who might be wounded in the attack. Dr Conlon had willingly consented. Dr Conlon had come to Mullinahone from Sligo. Afterwards during the War of Independence and all during the Civil War which followed the Truce, Dr Conlon never failed to come to the aid of a wounded I.R.A. volunteer when requested and, during that time, he seldom received any monetary reward for his services.

Paddy Ryan took Foley back down the field to Dr Conlon but, as they went, they had to fall flat on the ground several times as heavy fire was coming from the police at the rear of the barracks. Dr Conlon removed the bullet from Foley's wound when they got to his house and he soon recovered though he could not return to the fight that night.

Roughan, Aylward, and Bob Cahill kept up the fire from the rear of the barracks. They were surprised at the intensity of the volleys emanating from the police garrison and it was clear that the eight R.I.C. men intended putting up a stout resistance. They felt the temporary absence of Paddy Ryan and Foley in the strength of their fire power. Just then they heard a rifle barking to their left and when they looked across they discovered that Paud Egan from Poulacapple had come to their assistance when he had seen Paddy Ryan helping Captain Foley across the fields to Dr Conlon.

As the night passed, the firing stopped at times but then resumed after an interval. Ned Aylward had to give his rifle a rest now and then as he felt it getting hot in his hands. Jim Roughan fired while Ned rested his gun and then Aylward resumed firing as Roughan rested his weapon. The small garrison was still fighting stubbornly and keeping the attacking riflemen down under cover and unable to advance any nearer the back door of the barracks.

As daybreak approached, the attackers became apprehensive about their position. They feared that they might not take the barracks at all. They could now clearly see Seán Treacy, Séamus Robinson, Tom O'Donovan, and Ernie O'Malley in the morning light as they feverishly hacked away at the roof-top slates with sledgehammers. Earlier in the night, they had burst in to a bicycle repair shop beside the barracks and they had quickly gone upstairs and had broken a gap through the ceiling on to the roof which was a storey lower than the roof of the barracks. From the roof they had pulled up a ladder behind them. They placed the ladder on the roof of the bicycle repair shop and put it against the gable-end of the police barracks. Seán Treacy then got down off the roof and directed fire from his parabellum at a loophole which gave the police inside the

barracks a view of the attackers as they climbed on to this ladder. His firing was so much on target that it prevented the police taking any accurate aim at the attackers, as they mounted the ladder. Seán Treacy had made mud bombs which were manufactured by moulding a blend of yellow clay, provided by John McGrath of Springfield, Ballingarry, round a stick of gelignite and attaching detonators and fuses. The advantage of the mud bombs was that they would stick to the slates on the roof or the sides of the walls inside the barracks when dropped or thrown inside. In this way they would cause maximum damage to a roof or a building when they exploded and they would not fall harmlessly off the roof on to the ground. Seán Treacy had a supply of these and he dropped them on to the slates of the roof first where they made bigger holes when they exploded and then he threw more of them further down into the building causing loud explosions inside.

Inside in the bicycle repair shop, Tom Donovan had started a hand-pump which sprayed paraffin oil from a barrel on the floor of the bicycle repair shop on to the roof of the barracks. Séamus Robinson then went on to the roof of the bicycle shed and placed the hose from the pump through a hole in that roof and extended it from there to the roof of the barracks. A pole was attached to that portion of the hose which stretched over the barrack roof in order to keep it steady and to direct the nozzle of the hose on to the part of the roof further from the shop. Edmond Grogan, who was in a firing position in front of the barracks, saw the pole becoming detached from the hose and crashing on to the street, straight in front of the barracks. Ernie O'Malley shouted to him, 'We must get that pole back.' Edmond crawled out on all fours under fire, grabbed it and hauled it back. After that the paraffin oil began to pour on to the roof of the barracks and into the building itself. Seán Treacy threw mud bombs and some oil-soaked rags in after the oil. These set the roof of the barracks on fire and it began to spread through the building. The police still resisted stubbornly and the I.R.A. attackers now doubled up on their fire power as they realised that this was their last chance to take the barracks as dawn was breaking. As the flames spread through the building, the ammunition inside the barracks began to explode. With the sound of exploding ammunition ringing in their ears, the freedom fighters became more confident as they realised that the staunch garrison could not hold out much longer. The firing from the loopholes at the rear of the barracks began to fade and this gave the opportunity to Jim Roughan and the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade attackers to move in closer to the barrack wall until they were right up at the back door. Ned Aylward, Bob Cahill and Paud Egan heard digging sounds within and took it that the police were boring their way out to another house which was adjacent. These tough and dour defenders were not defeated

yet! Aylward, acting on impulse, fired through the door in the direction of the digging sounds and soon after the hammering noises ceased.

The roof of the barracks was now burning fiercely and even the attackers could feel the heat of the leaping flames on their faces. They breathed a sigh of relief when they saw a white flag being thrust gradually through a window of the barracks. The police had tied a white flag to a rifle as a signal to the I.R.A. attackers to cease fire and negotiate a surrender. O'Malley informed them that their lives were in no danger. He ordered them to throw their rifles out the window and to come out with their hands raised above their heads. Out they came through the bullet-scarred openings in the half-demolished ruins, headed by their leader, Sergeant Sullivan. Their clothes were stained with the grey dust of falling mortar and their faces were wet with perspiration from the heat of the hot flames. Their eyebrows, eyelashes and hair were scorched from contact with the intense heat emanating from the burning building. Paud Egan turned to Bob Cahill, his fellow comrade from the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade and remarked in admiration of their valour, 'Weren't they a right hard crowd of men to beat.' Séamus Robinson and Seán Treacy took their names and released them, giving them a warning not to be caught fighting against the armed forces of the Irish Republic again.

Immediately after the surrender, Ernie O'Malley gathered some men around him, including Edmond Grogan from Cashel, and they rushed in to the burning building to salvage what ammunition they could before it exploded in flames within the building. O'Malley and Edmond Grogan found a large wooden box of .303 ammunition and, as they carried it out, a piece of burning rafter fell and hit O'Malley on the back of the neck, giving him a pretty nasty burn. One of the police, - a Black and Tan named King - had a slight wound over his right eye and Edmond Grogan gave him first-aid and bandaged him as well as he could.

The contingent from the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade was examining the captured rifles, carbines, shotguns, revolvers, ammunition and Verey light pistols on the road, with a view to getting a few of the captured weapons for their own battalion, but Ernie O'Malley came along and told them to put them down as they would be distributed at the next meeting of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. The members of the Callan Battalion were disappointed later when they received no share of the captured booty from Drangan R.I.C. barracks. However Paddy (Foxy) Maher brought home a pair of handcuffs from the County Tipperary village! He was speaking to one of the R.I.C. men after the surrender and the policemen gave him a pair of handcuffs as a memento of a gallant battle between two sets of Irishmen who, unfortunately, were on different sides of the fence in yet another chapter of Irish history.

The fight had lasted seven hours. The eight R.I.C. men had fought a brave and stubborn fight, even though they were vastly outnumbered. No reinforcements came to their aid although they had sent up Verey lights. Although they had the shelter of the barracks, the cover of the walls and loopholes and plenty of ammunition, all the I.R.A. attackers greatly admired their fierce and dogged courage and were surprised at the length of time it took to dislodge them.

Only when the building was in flames over them and collapsing on their heads, did they surrender. The barracks was a burning shell when the attacking party dispersed on their bicycles and rode away into the early morning mist on that bright June day, many of them about to start an ordinary day's work on their farms.

This was the last barracks that the members of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade were to attack during the War of Independence. Many of the rural areas were now in the hands of the I.R.A. and the fight from that on moved into a further stage as the forces of the Crown began to withdraw back into the large towns and cities of the country at large.

CHAPTER 10

A Change of Fortune

DEATH OF TOM DONOVAN

With many R.I.C. barracks captured in the area of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade and with vacated barracks burned to the ground, the police and military were moved into populated centres like Kilkenny, Callan and Mullinahone. In order to ambush enemy forces, the I.R.A. had to change from the policy of attacking R.I.C. barracks in isolated areas and try and entice British military forces to leave these urban centres in their Crossley Tenders. This they found a most difficult problem to solve as often British forces suspected a trap and did not come out at all or got information about the location of the ambushers and, by using different roads, succeeded in surrounding the ambushers instead.

In the Kilkenny-Tipperary border area the local I.R.A. battalions, who set the ambushes, usually had big numbers of men involved and this in itself was sometimes a disadvantage. The bigger the number of persons mobilised for an engagement, the greater likelihood of a mistake or a leaking of information. These men returned home after the military engagement and tried to evade the attention of the R.I.C. and British military by carrying out the ordinary daily duties of their occupations as if nothing unusual had happened. This was the general operational mode of the I.R.A. in the second phase of the War of Independence.

In the last six months of 1920, the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade worked independently but in close association with the 7th Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade, located close to them on the other side of the Kilkenny-Tipperary border. In August, 1920, they planned an ambush for Gleeson's Cross, Kilvemnon. A big

number of men from both battalions mobilised at the site of the proposed ambush. An armed party first stopped and robbed the local postman on his rounds between Mullinahone and Cloneen. They hoped, when the alarm was raised in Mullinahone that the military would come out in their Crossley Tender to investigate the capture of the mails and to pursue the I.R.A. party responsible. Commandant Jim Roughan, who commanded the Callan Battalion, and Commandant Tom Donovan, who was in charge of the Tipperary Battalion, put their men in ambush positions on both sides of the road. Many of the Kilkennymen had never been in firing positions before and they nervously eyed the road in front of them expecting to see a lorry load of British forces approach at any minute.

However, the British commander in Mullinahone did not bite the bait. He sent word to the military stationed in Fethard to investigate the matter. They came out a back road which went behind the ambushers. The military saw the I.R.A. ambushers in position and they opened fire on them. The I.R.A. replied to the British attack but during the opening volleys found that they were in a hopeless firing position as they had no cover from the unexpected direction of the military fire. Realising how perilous their situation was, they soon disengaged and retreated. Amongst the Tipperarymen in Kilvemnon that day was thirty-year-old Denis Sadlier who was killed accidentally by one of his own men near the end of the War of Independence. All the companies of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade had members in this ambush, including Jackie Brett and Seán Quinn from the Mullinahone Company.

Tom Donovan, commandant of the 7th Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade, always enlisted the assistance of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade in any attacks he organised on the Kilkenny-Tipperary border. Donovan planned an ambush for Wilford Cross, just inside Co. Tipperary for Monday, 4 October, 1920. He got in touch with Jim Roughan of Callan and Roughan willingly promised his assistance. A big contingent came together in Wilford on that Monday morning at 6 a.m. and men were present from all seven companies of the Callan Battalion - Mullinahone, Ahenure, Callan, Kilmanagh, Coolagh, Ballymack, and Ballyline. Again they tried to entice the military out from Mullinahone when Donovan's men burned hay in Boyles of Prospect, Drangan. Tom Donovan had all his men on the Killenaule road and the Callan volunteers were in position on the Ballydonnell road. They waited all day Monday until finally the military came to Boyles but they did not come from Mullinahone, as expected, but from Killenaule. They left Boyles quickly and returned to Killenaule on a road that Donovan had not covered with his men. Donovan then saw that the military would not pass by his ambush position at all but would travel by Wilford Cross which was nearer the location of the Callan men. He sent an urgent despatch, by

an I.R.A. cyclist, to Jim Roughan to get his men to Wilford Cross as quickly as possible to intercept the British forces approaching in their Crossley Tender. Jim Roughan and Ned Aylward led the hundred men under their command up to Wilford Cross on the double but, when they got there, they found that the military had passed by, minutes earlier, completely unimpeded. They had come down the Crohane Road and had by-passed the whole ambush area.



44. Military engagements in the three phases of the War of Independence 1919-21.

Tom Donovan and Jim Roughan, together with all the volunteers who had mobilised, left Wilford that evening with deflated spirits. They had spent all night going there and had waited a whole day in ambush positions but the enemy had slipped through once again for a second time without the I.R.A. making contact with them. It seemed that either their tactics were wrong or the military were being informed of I.R.A. plans in advance.

The young and impetuous Tom Donovan did not live long after the abortive Wilford ambush. His Drangan Battalion fellow officer and great friend, Mick Burke, had been captured in Moyglass by a party of British soldiers under the command of a British officer named Van Houten. Burke was being taken to Killenaule in a military lorry when he tried to pull the pin out of a bomb, which he had in his pocket, so that he could throw it in the direction of the soldiers while he attempted to jump to safety himself. The British military jumped on him to prevent him pulling the pin out of the grenade. When they got to Killenaule the military party, under Lieutenant Van Houten, gave him an unmerciful beating. Tom Donovan heard of the beating from Burke's aunt as Burke was very badly marked, and bruised beyond recognition when she had seen him the following day in Killenaule. Donovan felt very hurt that Mick Burke had suffered this terrible ill-treatment and this feeling was exasperated at the end of October 1920 when Mick Burke came off his ninety days' hunger strike in Cork Jail at the request of the Acting President of the Republic, Arthur Griffith, and he was so weak that he was not expected to live. Terence MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, had died in Brixton prison the day before after 74 days on hunger strike, and few could understand how Burke had languished for 90 days. However, Tom Donovan was certain that Burke was going to die, although he survived against all the odds. Donovan learned the name of the officer in charge of the military party who arrested Burke and he thought he owed it to Mick to shoot Van Houten.

Donovan choose 31 October 1920, as the night to ambush a patrol of British soldiers in Killenaule with the aim of shooting Van Houten in the process. He picked this night as it was the eve of Kevin Barry's execution in Mountjoy jail in Dublin and he wished to demonstrate his protest and the indignation of all the border battalions at the execution of this eighteen year old, who was captured after a manly fight with British forces in Dublin in which six soldiers were fatally shot. Some of the Killenaule Company I.R.A. warned him that this was a foolhardy enterprise as there were up to 300 soldiers and police stationed in Killenaule at the time but Donovan would not listen to anyone. He walked up the centre of Killenaule that night with Paddy Ryan of Fethard and Paddy Clancy of Drangan. He left Dinny Sadlier, Bill Johnson and Seán Hayes on the outskirts

of the town to cover the retreat. Donovan, Ryan and Clancy sheltered in a doorway, expecting Van Houten and a party of soldiers to pass that way on their nightly visit to their favourite licensed premises.

Van Houten and his close friend, Sergeant Preston, were in the barracks and they heard that Donovan was in Killenaule and guessed his intentions. Van Houten and Preston were expert marksmen and ‘they could shoot rabbits off a lorry with revolvers, even as it moved’. Van Houten dressed in civilian clothes came down the street with Preston, both fully armed and ready to fire. Donovan was in a hall door with Ryan and Clancy. He did not recognise Van Houten because of his mode of dress. Van Houten and Preston passed by him but then they immediately turned back on Donovan and his two comrades and opened heavy fire on them. Donovan fell to the ground wounded but while he was on the ground he fired with his own gun and wounded Preston in the hand. Four bullets entered Donovan’s stomach but he was still alive. Ryan was shot in the calf of the leg and could barely walk and Clancy had a wound along his back near his spine, but he could still manage to run. Van Houten and Preston, fearing that fire would be opened on them from the other I.R.A. volunteers in the town, quickly dragged Donovan behind them by the feet up to the barracks. When they found that he was not yet altogether dead at the barrack gate, they fired again, aiming this shot at his forehead. Donovan lay motionless after that. Clancy and Ryan ran down the street, as best they could. ‘Run, lads,’ they shouted, ‘Tommy is dead and we’re wounded.’ The British military came out of the barracks and raked the street with heavy gunfire. Bill Johnson, Dinny Sadlier, and Seán Hayes gave Ryan and Clancy covering fire to get them out of the town. They were taken to Tobins, Knockelly, where a doctor was summoned by Seán Walsh of Fethard and they recovered from their wounds.

Tom Donovan was a mechanic by trade. His father hailed from Cork, and his mother from New Birmingham (Glengoole). Van Houten later raided the house of Mick Burke’s aunt and during the raid he referred to the death of Tom Donovan. ‘He was a courageous man,’ he said, ‘When we had wounded him and he was on the ground, he wounded my sergeant.’ Tom Donovan was mourned in the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade also. The members of the battalion had been on active service under his command on three previous occasions. He was known to them all and they thought of him as one of their own battalion who gave them courage and constant inspiration.

It was around the same time as the Wilford abortive ambush that Seán Treacy, accompanied by Seán Hogan, called to Callan on his way to Dublin. They needed help to get to the capital city and J. J. Dunne arranged to drive them there. After chatting with Commandant Jim Roughtan of Ahenure and Michael Grace of

Callan, Dunne, Treacy and Hogan set off in a small 1915 Ford car. A Webley revolver and a parabellum were held concealed in the hands of Treacy and Hogan, who were both concealed beneath a travelling rug. They took the Carlow road which went through Naas. As they passed through Dunlavin village, J. J. Dunne turned round a bend in the road and almost collided with two Crossley tenders, full of Auxiliaries. Dunne reversed the car, turned on the road and took a shortcut through a demesne which brought the car out on the main road some miles ahead where there was no military activity. The rest of the journey was without further incident and J. J. Dunne brought them safely to Dublin and then returned to Callan.

It was the last time that J. J. Dunne was to see Seán Treacy. Treacy's mind was full of plans at the time for the formation of the first Flying Column in County Tipperary. He hoped that he would be the one to first lead it into action. Treacy discussed the whole Flying Column scheme with I.R.A. Headquarters with great enthusiasm and worked out the details with Collins and McKee. It was the chief military reason which brought him to Dublin on this, his last, visit.

Seán Treacy was engaged at this time to May Quigley and planned to marry her on 25 October, her birthday. May's mother knew of the engagement but May had not discussed the wedding with her father as he did not approve of Seán Treacy, or of the military fight for freedom that was being waged by Treacy and his comrades. Treacy's personal reason for going to Dublin on this occasion was to meet May and arrange the wedding details. He did see May in her aunt's house in Merrion and she was delighted to see him arrive in his newly purchased trench-coat and looking the picture of health. However the wedding was not to be. Seán Treacy was surrounded and vastly outnumbered by British military and secret agents in Talbot St., Dublin on 14 October 1920, and shot dead outside the Republican Outfitters. He fought a lone and brave battle and it required a full lorryload of British soldiers and four secret agents to eventually gun him down. Seán Treacy's plans for the formation of Flying Columns lived on after him and reached fruition in early 1921, in County Kilkenny, having being tried out successfully in the East Limerick Brigade area and in the South Tipperary Brigade area from the end of October, 1920, onwards.

CHAPTER 11

Sinn Féin Courts and the Black and Tans

Strong civil resistance by Sinn Féin against British rule in Ireland greatly reinforced the activities of the I.R.A. and complemented the military campaign. Dáil Éireann, in a further effort towards achieving self-government, decreed the establishment of courts of justice and equity under its jurisdiction on 29 June, 1920. Austin Stack, Minister for Justice, lost no time in setting up courts all over Ireland. The courts, civil and criminal, operated in 1920 in twenty-seven counties, including five counties in Ulster. The withdrawal of the R.I.C. from rural areas to the towns left the countryside bereft of policing. Soon the lawbreakers saw the opportunities - criminal activity increased including cattle rustling and petty thieving. Parish Courts were established in the area of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, as part of the national network of Dáil Éireann Courts. These courts met in secret and, though there were no prisons under the jurisdiction of Dáil Éireann, a republican police force was set up to enforce their decrees. The majority of the Irish people gave these courts recognition and allegiance.

In the Callan area, Michael Shelley was chairman of the Parish Court. Ned Aylward was appointed clerk of the court because he was considered to be a very highly educated young man, as he had gone to within a week of ordination in St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny, before leaving the seminary. J. J. Dunne and Jim Roughan were other officers of the Court. The courts were held in different places and were regularly switched from one house to another, after Sinn Féin Courts were proclaimed as illegal assemblies and local R.I.C. personnel were asked to disperse them and arrest their officers.



45. *Mr & Mrs Bob Cahill, Cappahenry.*



46. *Mr & Mrs Pat Egan, Poulacapple.*



47. *Paddy Maher (Foxy) Ballylarkin, Callan.*



48. *Tom O'Donovan, Glengoole,
Co. Tipperary.*



49. *J.J. Dunne, Callan.*



50. *Gus Delaney, Kilkenny.*



51. *2nd Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. L. to R. Pat Walsh, Donaghmore, Johnstown, Thomas Noonan, Woodsgift, Michael Ryan, Graine, James Dunne, Urlingford, Paddy Drennan, Islands, Paddy Connell, Boher, Crosspatrick.*



52. Patrick Ryan, Ahenure.



53. Jim Egan, Poulacapple.



54. Group of soldiers from Devonshire Regiment, Callan with hostage James Gethings repairing bridge at the Cross of Graigue, Kilmanagh, 1921.



55. Fr Ferdinand, Dan Breen and Dick Dalton.



56. Martin Mulhall, Kilkenny.



57. Danny Murphy, Bennettsbridge.



58. John Greene, Barronsland .



59. One of the last parades of Old I.R.A. on Easter Sunday c. 1970. Front Row L. to R., Tom Kearney, Bill Leahy, Tom Dowling. Second Row L. to R., Billy Oakes, Billy Dowling, Dash Walshe. Third Row, Ned Mulrooney. Fourth Row, John Millea.

Cattle had been stolen from Cashins, in Poulacapple, Mullinahone, and the culprit had been caught by the Republican Police. A Sinn Féin Court was held in Finns, Coologue and the judges were Shelley, Dunne and Roughan. The court found the accused guilty and ordered him to surrender the money he got for the cattle to the jurisdiction of the court. The cattle rustler did so and obeyed the ruling of the judges. Officers of the court went to the man who purchased the stolen cattle when he was traced to Nenagh, Co. Tipperary. They were able to repay him what he paid to the accused for the cattle and regained possession of the stolen stock, which they immediately returned to their original owner without loss.

There was another petty case of fowl stealing from small farmers and cottiers in Ahenure. The Republican Police were informed and Jim Roughan, Michael Gibbs, Paddy Ryan, and Bob Cahill went after a suspect. They traced a man to a disused house but he got out the back door as he saw them approaching. They went different ways after him to arrest him. Bob Cahill cycled as far as Kilbride and waited there. He heard a noise in front of him and saw the escapee breaking through a ditch about a hundred yards from him. Bob ran and caught him before he could race away again. He was tried by the Republican Court and ordered to leave the district before the following morning. He was not seen again around Callan for a long time.

Pat Holden, Pat Mulrooney, Bob Coady, Denis Treacy, and Phil Keefe, Dunnamaggin were Republican Police in 1919. They did duty at the important Republican Court held in Callan at which Michael Shelley, J. J. Dunne, and Ned Cuddihy of the Islands acted as officers. Two ex-British soldiers had stolen a double-barrelled shotgun from Tom Greene, Mallardstown. One of the culprits was arrested by the Republican Police in Dunnamaggin. Initially he refused to go quietly with them or recognise their authority but when they produced their guns and threatened to shoot him, he went with them and surrendered the stolen gun. They marched him into Callan for the court. He was fined £2 for larceny of the gun and the gun was returned to its owner. The Republican Police marched him back again to Dunnamaggin, under guard. As the officers of the court and the Republican Police, escorting their prisoner, were going into the Town Hall, Callan, where the court was held, two R.I.C. personnel were standing at Pollard's corner and two more at the opposite side of the street at Haydens, taking careful notice of the happenings. They were surprised to see the I.R.A. taking over their functions but they never approached or questioned them.

The Republican Courts sat nationwide and received such support from the Irish people, generally, that British Courts in Ireland had almost collapsed. James Creed Meredith, Arthur E. Clery, Cahir Davitt, Diarmaid Crowley, Hector Hughes, Conor A. Maguire and Kevin O' Sheil drafted the constitution and rules

of court. A more enlightened attitude towards women prevailed than in English Law and in one case involving an appeal by an unmarried mother for medical expenses, Judge Meredith, holding that English Law was retrograde in the matter, applied the Brehon Law Code and found in the girl's favour. The success and popularity of the Republican Courts alarmed the British authorities so much that they decided to suppress them in Autumn 1920. Officers of the Court and Republican Police were arrested and imprisoned and court documents were seized. The British Government was now faced with a huge threat from this mass civilian resistance and boycott of its legal system.

In July 1920 two men were captured by the Republican Police for stealing a silver vase from Major Humphrey in Talbot's Inch, Kilkenny. They were tried in the Sinn Féin Court in Kilkenny and they were sentenced to be detained in a secret location for a fortnight. Three republican police Gus Delaney, Harry Bateman and Patrick Loughman were detailed to guard them in a disused house in Thornback, outside Kilkenny City. One night they escaped and Bateman, Delaney and Loughman were ordered to search for them. While they were on the Bleach Road they stopped civilians enquiring if they had seen the absconders. One man who was out for a walk refused to answer any questions they asked. They told him that their authority came from Dáil Éireann, pointed revolvers at him and when he began to walk on from them Loughman said 'If any of us are arrested you will be shot.' He reported the matter to the R.I.C. They were all arrested later and charged before a field general court martial in Waterford. They were charged with riotous assembly and assault and on a second count of unlawfully assembling together for the purpose of acting as a police picket of the Irish Republic. They were found guilty on the first charge and sentenced to three years' penal servitude. They served, the sentence in Waterford, Mountjoy, Wormwood Scrubs and Pentonville prisons. They were released in February, 1922 after the Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland was signed.

On 18 August, 1920, the Graine Co. I.R.A., which was part of the 2nd Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade and whose battalion commandant was Paddy Talbot, Urlingford, decided to call on the local Church of Ireland rector in Balief, Clomantagh to ask him to surrender his shotgun by order of the Irish Republic. The clergyman was returning from Church when he was intercepted at his own gate by Michael Ryan, the captain of the local I.R.A. unit, Robert Campion, Michael Robinson, and Michael Burke. He was ordered to put up his hands and surrender his gun. He refused to do either. He stuffed his hands in his pockets in order to resist any effort to make him put his hands up. The I.R.A. party thought he was about to take a gun out of his pocket so they grabbed his hands and pulled him about roughly as a result of which his hands and his neck were

bleeding a little. Capt Michael Ryan took out a handkerchief and wiped the blood away. 'You're a little gentleman' he said, 'but the rest of you are not worth much.' He told them that he would not put up his hands and surrender his shotgun for man, the devil or the Republic. Michael Ryan fired a shot over his head and Michael Burke gave him a jostle with his shoulder which made him stumble and the keys of his house fell out of his hands. The keys did not fit the hall door, so the raiding party went to the back of the house where they were covered by the clergyman's son who stuck out a shotgun through a glass panel. On the command of Ryan, Burke threatened to force his way into the house if the minister did not open the back door and surrender the gun. In order to prevent further disorder, the Protestant clergyman agreed to give over the gun, and he called to his son to hand it out to the raiding party, which he did.

Later the clergyman reported the incident to the R.I.C. and within three weeks of the raid Michael Ryan and Mick Burke were arrested. Both were charged before a court martial in Waterford, on 21 December, 1920, on four counts, with riot and assault, with intent to rob and with common assault. Both refused to recognise the court, but they were found guilty, and sentenced to two years imprisonment. They were brought to Wormwood Scrubs by boat and train. After taking a bath, they were given prison clothes which they refused to wear. They were left naked in the detention room all day. It was midwinter and by night they felt so cold that they were forced to put on the prison garb. Shortly after that, Michael Ryan was sent to Bristol jail and Mick Burke to Shrewsbury prison and later to Worcester jail. They were not released until January, 1922.

It was in the Autumn of 1920 that the Black and Tans began to terrorise the civilian population of Co. Kilkenny and to engage the I.R.A. companies in methods of warfare, which were not in accordance with the regular rules of battle. This behaviour was not conducive to the maintenance of law and order and they created great resentment against the forces of the Crown in the districts where they operated. On Wednesday, 15 September, 1920, a party of Black and Tans in full fighting gear, Lewis guns being much in evidence, dashed around Kilkenny City on a military lorry, prominently displaying a large Tricolour, and holding up a huge placard which read 'This rag was captured from rebel bastards.' In the course of their speedy drive through the centre of the city they fired over the heads of people on the side of the streets, and men women and children scattered for shelter. On Friday 17 September, residents of Thomastown witnessed a party of Black and Tans passing through in a military lorry in the centre of which was observed two kneeling figures, presumably prisoners, the upper parts of whose bodies, including their heads and faces, were encased in sacks which were tied round the middle of their bodies with cat-gut.

In early September, 1920 the Dunnamaggin Co. I.R.A. of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade had planned to demolish the courthouse in Kilmoganny but British forces got word of the intended attack and were present in great strength in Kilmoganny that night. Word was sent to Ned Egan, Baurascoobe, who was the Intelligence Officer in the Dunnamaggin Co. I.R.A., of the British presence in Kilmoganny and he sent word to the Dunnamaggin I.R.A. party to come to his licensed premises for news. The party, led by Capt Pat Walsh, and including Denis Treacy, Pat Holden, Pat Mulrooney, Robert Coady and John Hickey, went to the premises to find out what was happening. As a result of their deliberations, the attack on Kilmoganny courthouse was called off. While they were in Ned Egan's premises two lorry loads of Black and Tans from Woodstock surrounded the public house. The Black and Tans pounded on the door shouting 'Come out you bloody swine', and John Hickey was beaten up with rifle butts when he answered the door.

The Black and Tans then entered the premises, cut the strings of Mrs Egan's violin and tied all the men they found there with the violin strings. They tied them thumb to thumb, and back to back, and then produced a rope and tied the seven men's heads together. An armed guard of two Black and Tans was then placed over them and the main party of Black and Tans set out for Kilmoganny in their motor lorries. They warned the group that they had tied up before they left, that if anything happened in Kilmoganny that night, and if any Tan was shot, they would return and shoot the whole lot of them. The Tans returned at about three o'clock in the morning and asked the armed guard had the prisoners given them any trouble. On being told that they had not stirred, they said that this fact had saved them from being shot. For the rest of the night the Black and Tans looted the premises and drank all there was in the public house: becoming intoxicated they flung the bottles which remained on the shelves down on the floor, breaking the lot. They then proceeded to wreck the public house. At 8 o'clock the following morning the Tans brought the prisoners out to Baurascoobe Cross, still tied, and, though very unsteady on their own feet, they mounted their lorries while keeping the prisoners under cover. They roared up the road in their Crossley Tenders and their shouting and laughter could be heard at the crossroads until they disappeared from sight.

Immediately after the distressing news of the death of Terence McSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, had reached Kilkenny on Monday morning, 25 October 1920, the Tricolour was hoisted at half-mast on the flagstaff of the City Hall. The national emblem had floated in the breeze for just a short time, when a party of Black and Tans entered the hall hauled down the flag which they carried away to their headquarters at Woodstock House, Inistioge. Two nights afterwards three

Black and Tans, who had drunk too much, paraded the streets of Kilkenny playing on a mouth organ such airs as ‘Rule Britannia’ and ‘God save the King,’ jostled people off the footpaths and shouted as they went, ‘to hell with the rebels.’

On Saturday night, 13 November 1920, about 50 Black and Tans arrived in Urlingford and took possession of the courthouse there. The police barracks was already occupied by a large number of R.I.C. policemen so that Urlingford was well fortified. The town of Urlingford straddles the Tipperary-Kilkenny border and an attack on the barracks by combined I.R.A. units from County Tipperary and County Kilkenny was feared. A week later on 20 November 1920, a large number of Black and Tans descended on the quiet village of Hugginstown, and visited the house of Joe Halloran Snr., a farmer whose two sons had been involved in the attack on Hugginstown barracks, and had participated in the hunger strike in Wormwood Scrubs, and who were then ‘on the run’. They seized the father and his 19 year old son, Josie, and enquired where these two men were and during the interrogation one of the Black and Tans shoved his revolver into young Halloran’s mouth. When they got no information they brought them outside the house, blindfolded them and put them up against a wall. Then shots were fired at them, presumably over their heads, after which the bandages were removed from their eyes. The armed auxiliary police then searched the licensed premises of Clearys and of HoIdens in the village.

About midnight on the following Monday, Black and Tan forces again appeared in the village, and once again called to Hallorans. This time they only found Joe Halloran Snr. in the house, but again they took him out, blindfolded him with a silk handkerchief and put him standing with his back to the door of Matt Keefe’s house. They found his young son, Josie, staying with his cousin, Margaret Phelan, further down the village, opposite the old church. He was taken out and brought to a house close by belonging to a family named Jackman. They searched Jackman’s house and said that they had a charge against the owner of the house, and that it would be better for him to give up having anything to do with Sinn Féin. They blindfolded Josie Halloran and put him standing with his face against Jackman’s wall. Immediately after, five shots were heard up the village in the direction of Halloran’s home and the demolished barracks. The Black and Tans told young Halloran that they had shot his father and that it would be his turn in a few minutes. He decided to ‘make a run for it’ although this was the worst course the boy could have taken in the circumstances.

Tearing the bandage from his eyes he made a dash for liberty and ran up the village towards Halloran’s house. A hail of lead from the guns of the Black and Tans sped after him. As he came to the cross in the upper part of the village, he wheeled to go down the road to the right but, there and then, he received two

bullet wounds - one in the shoulder and the other in the thigh. He continued to run, however, and he got round the corner and down portion of the road. As he turned in to the right from the main street he heard a cry from a Black and Tan, 'I'm shot,' The Auxiliary Police had accidentally shot one of their own men, a Lieutenant Skinner, in the hip and he was observed to fall to the ground. Josie Halloran continued to run, however, down the road to the right, scrambled over a fence and doubled back towards Carrickshock where he sheltered in the house of Kate Burke, a relative of his own. Dr Marnell tended his wounds and took him to his own house where he recovered from his injuries. After that he stayed with Mrs Ellen Hearne, Barrnadowan until after the Truce.

In the confusion which resulted following the bout of firing, Joe Halloran Snr. removed the bandage from his eyes and escaped silently back into his own house. Joe was one of the thousands of fathers and mothers who suffered all kinds of vile threats and ill- treatment when the Black and Tans called to their houses to enquire where were their missing sons or daughters. The regular British Officers and soldiers were courteous enough in their dealings with the public, but the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans handled the old people in an extremely rough manner and insulted them with their foul and filthy language. Many of these old people did not agree with the armed struggle at the time but the conduct of the Black and Tans changed their attitude to one of sympathy and support for their boys 'on the run'. At times these parents had to endure more from the marauding Black and Tans than their sons had to suffer out on the hillsides with the wandering armies called Flying Columns. But their sons, away from home, heard the stories of how their nearest and dearest were being treated by this indisciplined British force of Tans and the news steeled them in their fight and made them more ruthless and tough. They realised that they must win this time, not only for themselves but for all belonging to them, and for the country at large, as the consequences of defeat could be disastrous for all, taking into consideration all the atrocities that this Black and Tan force was capable of doing.

CHAPTER 12

Attack on Woodstock House Aborted

As the War of Independence progressed into the end of 1920, the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade suffered severe losses when some of its leaders were either arrested or were forced to go 'on the run'. Rev P. H. Delahunty C.C., Callan was arrested on Tuesday evening, 30 November, 1920. He was put into a military lorry, placed under guard and the party of British forces set off for Kilkenny. Another British military lorry had broken down between Cuffesgrange and Ballymack and was undergoing repairs by some army mechanics. They heard the approach of a heavy vehicle from the Callan direction, and they decided to signal to the oncoming lorry to drive slowly and take care passing them. For this purpose they flashed a lamp in the semi-darkness of the winter's evening. The oncoming lorry, in which Father Delahunty was under arrest by British forces, came on without heeding the signal. When the occupants of the lorry saw the flashing light they thought it was an I.R.A. signal to spark off a rescue attempt to seize Father Delahunty from their grasp and they brought their revolvers into play and fired in the direction of the light. The British mechanics on the road dashed to take cover. Two of them were wounded, one very seriously as a bullet pierced his lung. Both wounded men were removed to Kilkenny county infirmary for treatment. Father Delahunty was unharmed and brought to Kilkenny military barracks.

On Friday 24 December, 1920, at a court martial held in Waterford military barracks, Father Delahunty was charged with controverting the provisions of regulation 27 (Restoration of Order in Ireland Act) by having, without lawful

authority or excuse, a document in his possession in Callan on the 3rd day of September, 1920, containing statements, publication of which would be likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty. This typewritten document contained the following statements:

- (1) We can by generously and speedily subscribing to the Loan floated by Dáil Éireann make it obvious to the most dense that we stand to-day as stoutly behind the demand for a Republic as we stood last December when we swept the country in its favour;
- (2) The moment is particularly auspicious for such a declaration. The Irish claim to independence is to be heard by the senate of the American Republic. There, also, England has spread the lie that we meant nothing when we demanded separation from the empire of the despoilers.

On a second count Father Delahunty was charged with having in his possession a printed document entitled, ‘English Horrors in Irish Gaols,’ containing the following statements:

There are men drawn from all quarters of Ireland and their crime is the crime of loving the Irish Nation. They are in jail because they stand and voice the desire of the Irish people for the right of self-determination for Ireland that President Wilson entered the war to establish for all nations. Their demand is that of four-fifths (sic) of the people of Ireland, and so far from being regarded as felons in their own land, there are hundreds of thousands of their fellow-countrymen and countrywomen who are willing and ready to take their place - hundreds of thousands whose devotion to the spirit of freedom is not the less because militarism stalks, spurred and helmeted, through the land they love, because their streets and hamlets, are lined with a hundred thousand foreign satellites with trench helmets and massive guns, because their fellow countrymen, in peaceful meeting, can be bayoneted to death by brutal soldiers without a question being asked, because their comrades, men and women, can be torn from the bosom of their families in the dead of night and transported to English dungeons without trial by judge or jury - because all these things can be done in the name of Freedom.

On a third count he was charged with having a document purporting to emanate from an officer of an unlawful association – to wit, Dáil Éireann, that is to say:

- (1) Letter dated 13 October, 1919, headed ‘Dáil Éireann – Department of Finance’ and signed Mícheál Ó Coileáin, Aire Airgeadais.

On a further count he was charged with possession of a letter, dated 16 August, 1920, headed ‘Dáil Éireann – Department of Finance’ containing the following statement also signed by Michael Collins:

Enclosed herewith is a form which you might ask your friend to fill up in connection with the application for a permit. When this comes, I shall see that the Home Affairs Department attend to it as quickly as you require. I have not your previous letter by me at the moment, but I fancy you had another small amount in respect of the Loan in hands. Is this right or should I regard South Kilkenny as being completely closed. You will be glad to know that at the time of writing the Loan total exceeds £362,000.

Father Delahunty was charged on a fifth count with contravening Regulation 79 (Restoration of Order Act), that is to say, without legal authority or excuse, having in his possession a document indicating that he was an officer of an unlawful association, to wit, Sinn Féin, that is to say, a written letter enclosed in an envelope, addressed ‘Mr James O’Mara,’ containing the following statement:

Your son, Patrick, was fined £25 for the killing of Mrs Griffin’s horses, of West Street, Callan. He was found guilty of being the ringleader of the crowd. The sum was put on him in instalments of 10 shillings per week which he refused to pay. You must now lodge the full amount with Father Delahunty before Wednesday next. Do so for the safety of your son.

Father Delahunty refused to recognise the Court, but reserved the right to cross-examine witnesses. A police sergeant gave evidence of identification. He stated that Father Delahunty lived in West Street, Callan. He was a Roman Catholic curate. Witness always heard his house called the priest’s house. It was about 300 yards from the church at which he officiated, the Church of the Assumption. A military officer gave evidence of searching the house in West Street, Callan, occupied by Father Walsh and Father Delahunty. It was about 4 o’clock in the afternoon and Father Delahunty was not present. Father Walsh was present during the search. He found in various parts of the room on the first floor a quantity of papers. Another military officer said the papers were put into a sandbag with a little over £100 for which a receipt was given to the other priest.

Father Delahunty said at this stage. ‘I repudiate the last document in reference to James O’Mara, and I repudiated it at the time.’

Father P. H. Delahunty C.C. was at first convicted on all five charges and sentenced to two years with hard labour. He was then removed by military transport to Ballybricken Jail, Waterford. One month later, the hard labour portion of his sentence was remitted as was his conviction on the fifth charge of having in his possession the document in reference to James O’Mara, which he had repudiated. Father Delahunty was a good friend of Michael Collins and the third and fourth charges referred to the trojan work he did in travelling around Callan and Kilmanagh collecting for the Dáil Loan, which was entrusted to Michael Collins on 4 April, 1919, by Dáil Éireann, who spelled out the purpose of the loan in the national newspapers in the following terms:

The proceeds of the Loan will be used for propagating the Irish case all over the world: for establishing in foreign countries consular services to promote Irish trade and commerce: for developing and encouraging the re-forestation of the country: for developing and encouraging Irish industrial effort: for establishing a National Civil Service: for establishing Arbitration Courts: for the establishment of a Land Mortgage Bank, with a view to the re-occupancy of untenanted lands, and generally for national purposes.

Father Delahunty had been educated in St Kieran’s College, Kilkenny, and ordained in St Mary’s Cathedral in 1905. He served in St Mary’s Parish for six years and in Castlecomer for one year before going to Callan. Gus Delaney had known him in St Mary’s Cathedral, and now he met him again while they were incarcerated together in Waterford Jail. Father Delahunty’s birthday arrived and all the prisoners decided to give him a present. As they had very little money between them, they got the biggest school copy that they could lay their hands on and each prisoner penned a short quotation or verse of poetry in the copy and signed his name underneath. Father Delahunty was delighted with the present. During his imprisonment in Waterford Jail, the Callan clergyman had a billiard ball and a walking stick with a turn at the end of it which was brought into him. He made four holes in different parts of the exercise yard and he played ‘prison golf’ with the walking stick. In Waterford Jail he was not allowed to hear confessions as a prison chaplain performed this duty and a priest in those days had to request special faculties to hear confessions outside his own diocese from the bishop of the new diocese where he was domiciled. A group of prisoners asked him one day did he mind this and he replied that he was first and foremost a

priest and he regretted that he could not carry out his priestly functions, but he believed that the cause of Irish freedom was a right and just one and even if he had to face long imprisonment or even death, he would stand by them, his fellow-prisoners and by his people in their struggle to gain freedom.

Commandant Jim Roughan of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade was next to be taken away by the Auxiliaries. It was not his fault, he had always been most careful. No one from County Kilkenny could be blamed. Tom Treacy who was the O/C of Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. and Jimmy Lalor who was Vice O/C got orders from Richard Mulcahy, Chief of Staff, I.R.A. Headquarters in Dublin, to attack the Auxiliary H.Q. in Woodstock, Inistioge. The Auxiliaries had taken over Woodstock mansion from the Tighe family in August 1920, and had made it their headquarters, as it was situated in a strategic location which controlled the whole south-east. It was near the County Wexford border, about 16 miles from Kilkenny City, and 15 miles north of Waterford. Col Kirkwood was in charge of the Auxiliaries in Woodstock and there were many reports of prisoners being ill-treated while being interrogated there. A one-armed Auxiliary named Major Bruce, was alleged to have tortured many of the internees while they were being questioned.

Jimmy Lalor was sent to Inistioge to reconnoitre the area around the fortress. He was instructed to find out how many Auxiliaries were stationed there at the time but the perimeter was so well patrolled that he could not get close enough to make an estimate. Vice/Brigadier Lalor then got in touch with the local Inistioge Co. I.R.A., and they collected information on the amount of bread and meat being delivered and estimated that there were 45 Auxiliaries in Woodstock. Jimmy Lalor then reported to Thomas Treacy the Brigadier and both were ordered to meet the Chief of Staff in Dublin. Thomas Treacy had an interview with Richard Mulcahy at which Ernie O'Malley was present. Mulcahy introduced Ernie O'Malley to Tom Treacy as the officer in charge of the operation to capture the headquarters of the Auxiliaries in County Kilkenny. Tom Treacy was asked for detailed particulars of Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. and a general plan for the attack on Woodstock was discussed. It was decided that it would be a hard target to hit and that many simultaneous attacks would be required in the Brigade area, earlier on the same night, in order to have the Auxiliary force in Woodstock reduced before the attack, having been forced to the assistance of other garrisons under siege. Half of the brigade would be mobilised for the attack. The Chief of Staff then informed Tom Treacy that he would send down O'Malley to Kilkenny City, and that arrangements were to proceed locally in the meantime.

Jimmy Lalor was later interviewed by Mulcahy in Parnell Square, Dublin. He had with him the number of Auxiliaries he estimated to be in the Woodstock garrison,

and other details about the defences of the detention centre. When Jimmy Lalor stated that there were about 45 Auxiliaries in Woodstock, he was surprised when Mulcahy said that there were at least ten more there and that he had the name and address of each Auxiliary stationed in Woodstock on a file in his desk. The Chief of Staff then said that Ernie O'Malley was being sent down to Kilkenny soon to capture Woodstock. Just then Ernie O'Malley came into the room. They spoke of how he would travel to Kilkenny. O'Malley did not want anyone to meet him at the railway station in the city. Jimmy Lalor told him to meet with the Brigade officers in Stallards' cinema in Upper Parliament Street. He drew a map of the route for O'Malley directing him to Kieran Street and telling him to come into the cinema and they would be waiting for him there. Tom Stallard owned the cinema, and he was a strong I.R.A. supporter and a staunch member of Sinn Féin. O'Malley was to arrive on the following Saturday night. The Brigade officers were waiting for him but he did not come for a further fortnight.

In the meantime the military carried out a midnight raid in Kilkenny City and in the round-up, Tom Treacy and Jimmy Lalor were both arrested and taken to Cork prison and were later interned in Ballykinlar, County Down for the duration of the War of Independence. Both had led the Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. loyally and efficiently from 1916 and their greatest achievement had been the capture of Hugginstown barracks.

When the Brigade Commandant and Vice-Commandant were arrested the remainder of the Brigade officers assembled in the Gaelic League rooms in Lower Parliament Street on Saturday evening 4 December. The meeting had been called previous to the arrest of Treacy and Lalor and the purpose of it was to ascertain from the Battalion Commandants what arms and men were available to participate in the attack on Woodstock. Because of the arrest of the Brigade Commandant and Vice-Commandant, the meeting had the belated added purpose of electing new officers to take their places. Just before the business of the meeting started, word was brought that Ernie O'Malley had arrived at Stallards' Cinema. Commandant Jim Roughan of the Callan Battalion was sent to the cinema to meet O'Malley, and bring him down to the meeting. He was the only one in the brigade now acquainted with O'Malley as he had fought under him in the taking of Drangan barracks. Jim Roughan conducted O'Malley to the meeting.

Commandant Jim Roughan identified O'Malley to the Battalion Commandants as the organiser sent by I.R.A. headquarters to take command of the Woodstock attack. O'Malley listened intently to the particulars given by each battalion commandant in regard to the amount of men and arms available in each area for what was planned to be the biggest onslaught undertaken by the County Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. up to then. O'Malley wrote details in a notebook. The

meeting adjourned until the next day and this time it was arranged to meet in Stallards' garden on the outskirts of the city. O'Malley had left his guns in Dublin. Before he left the meeting he asked for a gun. He was given a Scott automatic in good working order.

The I.R.A. personnel then left the Gaelic League rooms as they heard a Crossley Tender coming to a halt in Parliament Street. If they were held up on the way out they were all primed to have the same story that they were attending a county conference of the Gaelic League to discuss the setting up of Irish night classes throughout the county. They all slipped out without incident. O'Malley slept in Stallards' cinema that night.

On Sunday 5 December, the re-convened meeting came together in a house in Stallards' garden on the outskirts of the city. A new Brigadier and Vice-Brigadier were elected because of the arrest of Treacy and Lalor. Alderman Peter De Loughry, who was Mayor of Kilkenny City, was elected Brigadier. The Brigade Quartermaster before the meeting was Edward Comerford, an Irish teacher, and he retained his position, and Brigade Adjutant was Seán Byrne and he also remained in that post. O'Malley was present and he wrote all the names into his notebook. It was arranged that O'Malley would inspect Woodstock and then he was to contact the Brigade Officers again. O'Malley suggested that he would stay with James Hanrahan in Cappagh, near Inistioge, but several of the I.R.A. officers present warned him of the danger of going to stay there as the house was under constant surveillance and subject to frequent raids by the Auxiliaries. The safest place for O'Malley to stay, in their opinion, was in Graiguenamanagh.

Ernie O'Malley in his book *On Another Man's Wound*, gives an account of his journey and sojourn in Inistioge, but much of what he wrote was hotly disputed later by members of Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. who came in contact with him during his short stay in County Kilkenny in December, 1920. The account which follows is firstly an account given to me orally, by the Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. members who were involved in this affair, and later passed on to me by them in written form. It is also based on facts gleaned from a field general court martial held in the military barracks, Waterford, where the Hanrahan brothers were charged with harbouring two men, having good reason to believe that these persons were staying with them for an unlawful purpose.

Before Sunday's meeting concluded an assistant was named to accompany O'Malley to Inistioge, at his own request, and this man was Ned Holland, who had been employed as a draper's assistant in the Monster House, Kilkenny for several years. Despite the warnings from the Brigade officers, as regards staying with Hanrahans in Cappagh, O'Malley told James Hanrahan that he planned to stay with him during the following week.

From Sunday evening until Wednesday of that December week, O'Malley stayed with Tom Stallard in Kilkenny City. Tom Stallard arranged for him to be taken to Stallards, Danville, one mile outside the city, on Wednesday at mid-day to meet Ned Holland and two Kilkenny volunteers, Bill Walsh and Dick Fleming, both from Ballinalina, who were to drive him part of the way in a pony and trap. At Stallards, Danville, he was supplied with six grenades which he took with him. Ned Gorman of Woollengrange drove him to Kilfane public house, and Ned Sutton drove him from there to Hanrahans, Cappagh through Mong. O'Malley accompanied by Ned Holland arrived in Hanrahans as darkness was falling. Cappagh was a mile from Insitioge on the Thomastown side. After having tea, he remained reading beside the fireside until bedtime.

O'Malley and Ned Holland slept in the same room. The next morning, Tom and Andrew Hanrahan rushed into the house and told James Hanrahan that the Auxiliaries were coming in the direction of the house. James reported the matter to O'Malley who was still in bed, but though he awoke quickly he settled back to rest again, apparently unperturbed. Ned Holland also warned O'Malley three times that morning that Auxiliaries were in the vicinity but O'Malley said that they would not recognise him. The Hanrahan brothers had been on scout duty all that morning, notwithstanding the fact that O'Malley had told them the previous night that he thought it unnecessary to do so. James Hanrahan also had a way of escape planned in the event of the house being raided by the Auxiliaries. O'Malley and Holland came down to breakfast at 9.30 a.m. Hanrahan's sister told O'Malley that Father Kearns was coming that morning to anoint her mother who was very ill in the house. Breakfast was then ready and while O'Malley and Holland were at breakfast, Hanrahan's sister reported that the Auxiliaries were raiding Cappagh farmyard which was half a mile away. O'Malley never moved.

An Auxiliary officer from Woodstock, acting on certain information received, led a search party of between 50 and 60 officers and soldiers in the direction of Hanrahans, Cappagh at 9.30 a.m. on Thursday, 9 December. They arrived in Cappagh at ten minutes past ten. When they arrived at Hanrahans' house, the officer was told that Thomas Hanrahan was the owner of the house. The Auxiliaries went into Hanrahans' yard where a workman named Colleton was chopping turnips in a shed. The officer asked him were any of the Hanrahans about and he replied that one of them was gone to fetch a priest for his mother and the other two were in a turnip field about 200 yards up the road. The officer and his party went to the turnip field, found nobody there and returned to the house. Some of them went straight into the front room of the house this time, and they saw three men seated to breakfast. Others rushed upstairs and began to search there. The officer approached one of the men at the table and found out

that he was James Hanrahan. One of the men at the table gave his name as Stewart. When asked what he was doing at Hanrahans, he said that he had come to see his aunt who was sick upstairs. James Hanrahan was surprised. 'Stewart' was Ernie O'Malley in reality and they had arranged the night before that if he was apprehended at any time, he would say that the purpose of his sojourn in Inistioge was to visit the Tighe estate to investigate the possibility of buying some timber there. As the officer was writing down the details, O'Malley looked down and saw that his notebook was open on the table and that the six grenades that he had brought with him and his maps were on the window. He furtively closed the notebook and pushed it to one side. The third man at the table gave his name as Holland and said that he was was in Inistioge for three or four days' holidays.

The officer was not satisfied with the replies of the two men. He ordered the other armed soldiers to move in closer as he proceeded to search them. O'Malley resisted him strongly and tried to push him away. The officer caught hold of the lapel of O'Malley's coat and O'Malley shot up his arm to hit him in the face. The officer blocked O'Malley's jab and swung a punch with his right hand which hit O'Malley on the jaw and knocked him to the floor near the window. As the struggle was going on between O'Malley and the officer, the other British soldiers covered Holland and Hanrahan with their guns. Two of the soldiers then pulled up O'Malley from the floor and, as they held him, the officer began to search him. On him they found a Scott automatic pistol, loaded and cocked. They also found some ammunition, in his pockets. They searched Holland and found a .38 German automatic pistol with 30 rounds of ammunition in clips and eight rounds of loose ammunition. They also found a supply of bombs of the Mills type with detonators attached, wire cutters, and about ten maps. One of the maps had pencil markings on it indicating the routes to and from the Auxiliary Cadets' camp in Woodstock. They also found a diary, written in code, and in the same notebook were notes referring to the movements of cadets in the district.

O'Malley, Holland, James Hanrahan and the workman Colleton, who misdirected them to the turnip field were arrested by this officer. John Hanrahan and Thomas Hanrahan, both brothers from Cappagh and Andrew Hanrahan, Brittas were apprehended by another officer. When James Hanrahan was asked why he sheltered the two strangers in his house, he replied that he would give anybody a night's lodging or a night's shelter if he was a soldier of the Irish Republican Army.

Father J. Kearns C.C. arrived at Hanrahans' house to anoint Mrs Hanrahan at the same time as the Auxiliary officer and O'Malley were locked in combat but, as he was carrying the Blessed Sacrament, he went straight up the stairs to Mrs Hanrahan. When he got there he found Auxiliaries searching the old lady's room,

but he told them to clear out as he wished to attend the sick. They went out without a word.

In the front room below, the Auxiliaries examined O'Malley's diary and one was heard to say, 'We have the lot.' They then said that they would burn the place. They set fire to the hay, straw, and outhouses. When Thomas Hanrahan saw that the animals were still in the outhouses he protested vehemently, 'Surely you're not going to burn them as well,' he shouted. The Auxiliaries removed his handcuffs and he was allowed to release the animals from their houses. The British military then said that they would burn the dwelling house. They emptied several tins of petrol on the bedding, furniture and floors to set the house on fire. They broke the windows downstairs to ensure a draught.

When Father Kearns had finished administering the Last Sacraments, the Auxiliaries carried Mrs Hanrahan out of the house on a mattress. As she was passing by her sons, who by this time were handcuffed and being shoved towards a lorry, the old woman raised herself up a little and was heard to say. 'Good-bye sons. Welcome be the will of God.' Mrs Newport and her son, Hugh, Protestant neighbours, who were landed gentry, arrived to take Mrs Hanrahan away. Father Kearns burst through the Auxiliaries to where Mrs Hanrahan was lying on a mattress and together with the Hanrahan sister and Mrs Newport and her son, Hugh, they carried her away from the scene. Mrs Hanrahan died shortly afterwards, but she had been ill for a long time before the Auxiliary raid. Hugh Newport returned and took away stallions which Thomas Hanrahan had released from the outhouses when the fire started, rounded up the scattered cattle and gave them food. The dwelling house though badly damaged was not destroyed by the subsequent fire.

James Hanrahan, John Hanrahan, Thomas Hanrahan, Andrew Hanrahan, and the workman Colleton were all tried before a field general court martial held in the military barracks, Waterford in February 1921 and all of them but James Hanrahan, Cappagh were found not guilty and released. James Hanrahan was convicted and subsequently spent terms in Waterford, Mountjoy, Portsmouth and Dartmoor prisons. Ernie O'Malley and Ned Holland were brought to Woodstock first and then to Dublin Castle. O'Malley was later transferred to Kilmainham Jail. At the end of January 1921 O'Malley, Teeling and Simon Donnelly escaped from Kilmainham and O'Malley resumed as an I.R.A. organiser. Ned Holland who was 23 years of age, at the time of his arrest was tried by court martial at Waterford, and sentenced to 10 years penal servitude.

The discovery of Ernie O'Malley's notebook had disastrous effects on the officers of Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A., and on the officers and men of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade. On Friday 10 December, the day after Ernie

O'Malley's capture, the new Brigadier, Alderman Peter De Loughry, who had been elected at the previous Sunday's Brigade meeting, where O'Malley was present and took down names in his notebook, was arrested at his residence in Parliament St., Kilkenny by forces of the Crown and conveyed in a military lorry to Woodstock House. The Quarter-master of Kilkenny Brigade, Edward Comerford, was arrested the same day. George O'Dwyer, Coon, who was to succeed Peter De Loughry as Brigade O/C was present at that Sunday meeting. He did not go home after the meeting but his home was also raided on Friday, 10 December, 1920, and on several successive nights but he was not sleeping at home.

The 7th Battalion Commandant, Jim Roughan who met O'Malley on the night he arrived in Kilkenny was also apprehended on Friday, 10 December. He was first taken to Woodstock and then to Dublin Castle where he was detained with O'Malley. There he suffered a severe beating at the hands of the Auxiliary Division of the R.I.C. in their attempt to extract information from him on I.R.A. plans in Co. Kilkenny. He was later transferred to Ballykinlar Internment Camp, Co. Down where he was held in custody until after the signing of the Treaty in December, 1921. Jim Roughan had been an active and inspiring leader of the 7th Battalion during all 1920 and his loss was sorely felt among his own men. But many more of the freedom fighters of the 7th Battalion were to be apprehended a month later due also to the notebook full of names discovered on Ernie O'Malley in Inistioge.

The third member of the big three of the republican movement in Callan, Ned Aylward, was arrested at this time also but he escaped from custody. There was an ex-British soldier living around Ahenure who could not find work, and he went to live rough around Trenchmore. He had no money and one Sunday morning he attacked Willie Dawson, an invalided old man who lived on his own in the area. He wanted to find out from Willie, where in the house he had his money, and when Willie refused to tell him, he tried to choke him. Just then he heard neighbours returning home from Mass and he rushed away. The matter was reported to the Republican police and Bob Cahill, Michael Gibbs and Ned Aylward went after him and caught him. He was charged before a Republican Court and sentenced to be outside the boundaries of Kilkenny by morning or he would be shot. Instead of getting out, he went to the R.I.C. barracks in Callan and reported the whole matter to the military authorities. Ned Aylward was not aware that the absconder had informed the Tans. On his way home at curfew time, soon after the incident, he was held up by the R.I.C. and accused of court martialling an ex-British soldier who had served his country well in France. Although Ned denied the charge, he was taken into the courthouse where the

British military were stationed and he was asked if he was a Sinn Féiner. When he told the military officer that he was a member of Sinn Féin and not ashamed of his association with the Republican movement, the whole party of military present punched him in the head and in the body until he fell on the floor. Twice he got up and tried to defend himself, but again he was felled with many severe blows. On the third occasion he fell, he stayed down longer and got his senses back fully. He could hear them shouting above him that they were about to kick his guts out. He peered up and saw that the door of the room was open. He made a quick charge through them to get to the door. They came after him but he swerved and some of them fell down the stairs. He ran down the stairs, jumped over the Tans who were sprawled on the floor, and got out into the barrack yard. The sentry shouted at him to halt and ran at him with his bayonet but again he swerved sideways and the bayonet missed, though it ripped his coat open. He ran out into the street and into Peggy Delaney's house. The soldiers charged down the street but passed Delaney's doorway.

He could not go home after that. He went 'on the run' as he knew he was a wanted man. He found that there was no point in being 'on the run' without forming a fighting unit. Paddy Ryan from Ahenure, and Jimmy Leahy from Poulacapple joined him first and they travelled around the country with Dinny Sadlier and Seán Hayes from the 7th Battalion, South Tipperary Brigade. They were armed with rifles and they did a lot of fowling and rabbit shooting. This shooting practice sharpened their eyes and made them excellent marksmen. Jimmy Leahy was appointed Commandant of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade in place of the arrested Jim Roughan, but he stayed 'on the run' with the service unit. After the Nine-Mile-House ambush this fighting unit grew into the 7th Battalion Flying Column, and both Ryan, and Aylward and Leahy were already deadly marksmen who rarely missed a target. They were eager for combat and as fit and sharp as stormtroopers.



60. *Woodstock House [Lawrence Collection]*



61. *Tom Kearney, the Racecourse, Kilkenny.*



62. *Jim McKenna, Coolagh.*



63. *John Dullard, Bennettsbridge.*



64. *Patrick Luttrell, Garryricken.*



65. *Insets of Tom Hennessy and Michael Dermody on their memorial outside Tullow Church, Threecastles.*



66. *Suppression of 'Kilkenny People' 1919.*



67. *R.I.C. military and civilians outside 'Kilkenny People' office 1919.*



68. *The 7th Battalion Flying Column at Garryricken House. L. to R. Jimmy Kelly, Ned Aylward, Neddie (Buckshot) Butler, Jack (Seán) Quinn, Pat Downey, Mick Gibbs, Paddy Luttrell, Paddy Ryan, Jack Brett, Mick Maher. Children, Barbara Luttrell in Ned Aylward's arms, Jim Luttrell in Paddy Ryan's arms. Girls L. to R., Mrs Jack Luttrell (nee Feeley). Bridie Luttrell, Mary Luttrell, Alice Luttrell (later Mrs Bill Cantwell).*



69. *Garryricken House.*



70. *The 7th Battalion Kilkenny Brigade Flying Column, March 1921. Standing at back L. to R., Ned Aylward, Paud Downey, Séan Quinn, Jimmy Kelly, Paddy Ryan. Kneeling in second Row L. to R., Neddie (Buckshot) Butler, Mick Maher, Michael Gibbs. Front on ground: Jackie Brett, Dog 'Nelson'*

CHAPTER 13

The Ninemilehouse Ambush

The London *Times* of Wednesday, 22 December, 1920, carried a report of the Nine Mile House ambush, which took place on Monday, 20 December. It is a true description in many respects but parts of the account are totally inaccurate and wildly exaggerated. The surprising aspect of the report is that this incident was given so much coverage in a paper which contained news reports from all over the world and given more space than was given to many similar but longer and more elaborate engagements in County Tipperary during the armed struggle.

The Nine Mile House ambush, or sometimes the Sliabh-na-mBan ambush as it is called, took place on Monday, 20 December, 1920. Nine Mile House is just barely inside County Tipperary on the main Kilkenny-Clonmel road, about six miles from Callan and a half-mile past the Kilkenny-Tipperary border. It nestles in a scenic area in the valley of Sliabh-na-mBan and wooded hills rise eastwards and westwards on both sides of the low road. Members from all the companies of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, together with volunteers from the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, participated in this ambush.

When the I.R.A. volunteers took up positions under Paud Egan and Ned Aylward of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, on Carroll's Hill and on the rocks at the back of the fingerpost, they expected to ambush two lorries of British military travelling from Kilkenny to Clonmel but instead a military cycle patrol consisting of nine soldiers, accompanied by two police, came along the road from Mullinahone at 2.45 p.m. Ned Aylward gave orders to his men to hold their fire until the cycle patrol was well inside the range of the two sections of ambushers. One of his men, however, accidentally fired a shot too early. When the cycle patrol

heard the shot, they jumped off their bicycles, threw them on the road, tore their rifles from the clips on the bars of the bicycles and got into a boggy field beside the road, from where they took cover. The two sections of the I.R.A. in ambush positions, opened fire on them and the members of the cycle patrol replied. The British cycle patrol then got away safely across the bog but one of the soldiers was wounded slightly in the hasty retreat. Word of the attack was sent to the police in Mullinahone, who in turn telephoned Callan and Clonmel for reinforcements.

HILL BATTLE IN TIPPERARY.

AMBUSHES OVER WIDE AREA.

ATTACKS REPULSED WITH LOSS.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

DUBLIN, Dec. 21.

Sensational reports of a pitched battle between soldiers and civilians in one of the wildest parts of Tipperary reached Dublin late last night. Although the military authorities regard them as exaggerated, it is evident that something on a larger scale than ordinary ambushes took place. Partly owing to a storm, and probably also to the deliberate cutting of wires, few details have yet been officially received.

There appear to have been a series of encounters on the borders of County Kilkenny and County Tipperary, between Callan and Glenbower. The district for miles round is mountainous and very thinly populated, and the few roads run up and down, winding their way between hills which at some points come almost sheer down to them.

The first ambush took place early yesterday at a spot known as Ninemilehouse, at the foot of Slievenaman. Here a cyclist patrol of troops were suddenly attacked. The soldiers, when they reached the neighbourhood of Ninemilehouse, were met by a burst of firing from rifles and revolvers, handled by a strong body of concealed civilians.

The fire was immediately returned, but the military were outnumbered. A communication was sent to Callan for reinforcements, and a relief party of police and soldiers left Callan later in the day. This quickly ran into another ambush near Garryrickin, where Lord Onslow has a shooting lodge.

Immediately shots were fired at the lorries the force descended and adopted skirmishing order. There was a prolonged encounter, and the civilians in ambush were beginning to weaken their fire. It was by this time quite dark, and firing was still going on, when a police party from Kilkenny arrived in a lorry and the firing concentrated on them. They dashed through, however, and took up a position a little further on under cover, from which they joined in the conflict.

SEVERE LOSSES REPORTED.

At the same time reinforcements were arriving from Clonmel. Those were attacked near Glenbower, where a long and strenuous encounter took place. The attacking party, according to rumours, suffered severe losses. From 10 to 15 are said to have been killed and 30 captured, but in the absence of reliable details these figures can only be accepted with reserve. It is, however, definitely reported from Kilkenny that the body of a sergeant of police is lying at Callan, and that another sergeant was taken to Kilkenny Military Hospital. He is expected to recover.



71. The report on Ninemilehouse ambush in 'The London Times'.

After the ambush, Paddy Ryan and Tom Maher took two of the eight captured bicycles, put their Martini Rifles into the clips and began to cycle home. At Aughatarra Bridge, about two miles from Callan, they ran straight into a military cycling patrol coming out from Callan. Twenty-two year old, Private Reginald Squib, a member of the British Army since 1918, was leading the British cycling patrol. The patrol was under the command of an army lieutenant. An R.I.C. policeman, named Constable Wm. Barrett, was cycling about 20 yards behind Squib. They saw two armed civilians approaching them who were still 300 yards away. They stopped, dismounted, and called on the two men to halt but they did not do so. They then opened fire on them. Paddy Ryan and Tom Maher were forced to throw their rifles and bicycles onto the road and get into the wood at Trenchmore. The British lieutenant got over the fence on the road to pursue Ryan and Maher through the fields and the wood. Before doing so, he ordered Private Squib to go on further along the road and to cut off the retreat of the two freedom fighters in that direction. Private Squib had gone on about 30 yards towards the bend of the road, when he saw Ryan and Maher close to him in the fields. He dismounted and opened fire on them. Ryan, who was a crack shot, returned the fire with his revolver. Private Squib fell to the ground and remained motionless. Constable Barrett crawled up to him, found him lying in a pool of blood and saw that Ryan's bullet had gone straight through his right eye. With help from other members of the military patrol, they removed him to Jack Hanley's cottage in order to give him first-aid treatment.

The remainder of the military party stayed there and went into the fields and the wood after Ryan and Maher. They opened up heavy fire as they pursued the freedom fighters further into the wood. Ryan and Maher took cover in briars and undergrowth and replied to the fire of the military as they retreated from one clump of trees to the other. The firing lasted a full hour but Paddy Ryan and Tom Maher knew the country well and they took off cross-country and eluded their pursuers. They re-grouped again with Pat and Mick Maher in Johnny Cahill's house in Cappahenry.

While the firing was going on, police reinforcements from Kilkenny, in charge of District Inspector Whyte and numbering about a dozen R.I.C. constables dashed out to help in a Crossley Tender. They arrived about 4.30 p.m. on this December evening, and in the darkness saw flashes of fire coming from a wood, not far from the road. Not knowing who was there they shouted 'Who's firing?' The soldiers in the wood roared back 'The Devons from Callan'. The Kilkenny police party mistook the reply, thinking that they had heard, 'The rebels from Callan.' Accordingly they opened fire on their own men in the wood with rifles and Lewis machine guns, thinking that they were I.R.A. men from Callan. The

Callan Devons in the wood replied with heavy and concentrated fire. They could discern the Crossley Tender from Kilkenny on the road and they subjected it to a veritable hail of rifle and revolver fire, thinking that the I.R.A. had captured one of their lorries. As a result of this outburst of fire, Sergeant Thomas Walsh of John Street R.I.C. Barracks, Kilkenny, received a bullet under the left eye, which passed through his head and killed him instantly. Sergeant Shannon received bullet wounds on the right cheek and right arm.

Later in the evening police in Clonmel received the call for help and commandeered cars in the town and rushed towards the scene. These reinforcements, coming from the County Tipperary side, were ambushed at Glenbower, which is about midway between Clonmel and Nine Mile House. Seán Hayes, Dinny Sadlier and Seán Walsh of the 7th Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade were joined by the ‘King’ Delaney, Jim Daly, ‘Pony’ Ryan, and others from the Coolagh Co. I.R.A. and, together, they attacked these reinforcements from the hills around Glenbower. The police took cover and joined in the battle. For a time the firing was intense. In the encounter one policeman was wounded. After a while the I.R.A. ambushers withdrew further up the hills, having suffered no casualties.

Sergeant Tom Walsh, who was killed, was unmarried and had been promoted only a short time before that. He was a native of Ballyragget. He was aged about 40 years and had over 20 years service in the force. Sergeant Shannon was brought to Kilkenny military hospital where he recovered. He was a native of County Mayo and was married and had a large young family. He too, was only promoted a short time before the Nine Mile House ambush. Private Reginald Squib was operated on successfully in Tipperary military hospital by Dr. T. H. D. Townsend, consultant eye specialist to the Southern command. On 23 April, 1921, Squib was awarded £2,000 for the loss of the right eye. This amount of compensation was levied on County Kilkenny at large. A court of inquiry held at the military barracks, Kilkenny to investigate the cause of the death of Sergeant Walsh came to the following conclusion:- (1) That Sergeant Walsh died of a gunshot wound. (2) That the wound was caused either by soldiers of the 1st Battalion, Devonshire Regiment accidentally in the execution of their duty, or by shots fired by rebel or rebels unknown and if this latter was the case this person (or persons) were guilty of murder.

Jackie Brett had played for the Tipperary Senior Football team at left full-forward against Dublin in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday when Mick Hogan was gunned down on the playing field by Auxiliaries, firing from sub-machine guns from the canal end of the field. From the time he returned to his native Mullinahone, he was a marked man as the British military and R.I.C. suspected

him of being involved in the I.R.A. Despite this, Jackie, a member of the Mullinahone Co. I.R.A., took part in the Nine Mile House ambush. On that night the Black and Tans went to Brett's Store in Mullinahone and they looted and drank all they could, broke up all the bottles they could lay their hands on, and threw almost all the goods in the store out on the road. They took £150 in cash from the shop. When Jackie Brett got back to Mullinahone from Nine Mile House with Bill Coady, they saw what was happening but they could do nothing about it but watch from the corner of the street. The Auxiliaries from Woodstock and the Black and Tans were looking for Jackie and he did not return home that night. In fact, he never again returned as the British military continuously came looking for him. Jackie was forced to go 'on the run' in order to avoid arrest and his family carried on the bar, grocery, hardware and corn store business for him.

The British military burned hay in Fox's, Killamery that night. They sent Verey Lights up from the middle of fields and from gaps and fences all over the Nine Mile House area in order to give themselves light to extricate themselves from the maze of fields in which they were scattered. The night sky was bright with the glare of the flares, and the whole area looked like a war zone. The body of Sergeant Thomas Walsh was taken to Callan Hospital where it remained overnight. On Tuesday evening as the remains were being conveyed to Ballyragget, the residents of the town were ordered to keep their doors closed and to stay indoors themselves. While the funeral was passing through the streets, the order was generally complied with.

Mrs Michael Ryan, the wife of a Callan publican, lived in Bridge St., Callan. Just before the funeral passed through Bridge Street, a customer called for a jug of milk. The cortege had just passed her premises when Mrs Ryan half opened the door to let the customer out. Suddenly a shot rang out and Mrs Ryan fell to the floor seriously wounded. The bullet had come from the direction of a Crossley Tender packed with Black and Tans, who were accompanying the funeral. Mrs Ryan was pregnant at the time. She was taken to Callan District Hospital where an operation was subsequently performed. She did not recover and died on the following Thursday night. Mrs Ryan was in no way a member of or sympathetic to Sinn Féin or the republican movement. She was on good terms with the police and British military and regularly served them drinks and refreshments in her licensed premises. The shot was fired by one of a group of Black and Tans who were not familiar with the town of Callan and had only come there for the night to escort the funeral to Ballyragget.

Christmas, 1920 came, and there was a lull in the fighting. British forces in the area of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade were smarting from the set backs they had suffered during the year in Hugginstown, Drangan and now Nine Mile

House, but they were planning a backlash for the New Year. The British troops were far away from home but they stayed indoors and celebrated the Christmas quietly in the cold atmosphere of an area which did not cherish their presence. The Irish people went to church and prayed for peace and a return to normality. Many an Irish father and mother remembered Pádraig or Séamus or Seán who was ‘faoi ghlas ag Gallaibh’ in many packed prisons in Ireland and Britain or ‘on the run’ in Irish hills for the cause of the Irish Republic.

‘Watching her boys come home at close of day,
A mother’s face will shine,
O, Virgin Mother, with such eyes we pray,
Welcome those boys of Thine.’

CHAPTER 14

Auxiliaries Ill-treat Prisoners in Woodstock

Early in January, 1921 there were many arrests in the area of the Callan Battalion. The Auxiliaries came up from Woodstock, and picked up Bob Cahill, Dick Finn, Peter Vaughan, Tommy Vaughan, Dick Hurley, Bill Coady, Tommy Carroll and Jimmy Raleigh. They went to get Paddy Ryan but they missed him as he jumped out a window when he saw them coming and he got away into the wood near his home.

They made a second raid and this time they struck at the I.R.A. members in Poulacapple. Crossley Tenders roared into Egan's yard at 2 a.m. on a January morning and British military drove in the door before them and rushed upstairs. They arrested Peter, Jim, Tommy and Charlie Egan, and Christy Gregg who worked for the Egan's on their farm. Jim Egan was an active member of the Mullinahone Co. I.R.A., and he had taken part in the attack on Drangan barracks and in the Ninemilehouse ambush. He had played at centre-half back for the Tipperary football team against Dublin on Bloody Sunday, 21 November, 1920. After the firing started he was moving up the right-hand side of Croke Park from the Canal End with Mick Hogan and they were between centre-field and the 21 yards line when they heard a prolonged burst of sub-machine gunfire and they flung themselves flat on the grass. As they lay there, Mick Hogan glanced up and saw that the cinder track, which encircled Croke Park at the time, was slightly lower than the grass playing pitch and would afford better cover from the flying bullets that were raking the grass near him. Both of them began to crawl in its direction. Jim Egan was moving in front of Mick Hogan when he heard Hogan mutter 'I'm done, Jim'. Jim Egan looked around just in time to see Mick Hogan

fall over on his back fatally wounded in the head and under the left shoulder. Amid a storm of flying lead, Jim Egan got Father Patrick Crotty, an Augustinian priest who was a native of Mullinahone, to give Hogan conditional absolution on the field.

Paud Egan, another great Republican volunteer of the same family, who took part in the capture of both Hugginstown and Drangan barracks, and commanded the largest section of freedom fighters in the Ninemilehouse ambush, was ‘on the run’ and sleeping away from home since the Sliabh-na-mBan engagement. He was sleeping out that night as was Jack Gardiner because they were taking precautions against arrest but Paud was due to return home at daybreak. Jack Gardiner went out to meet Paud who was on his way to his own house from Michael McGrath’s where he had been sleeping and Jack warned him. Paud stayed away from home that day but hearing that all the men folk had been arrested and that there was no one left to do the farm work except his ageing father, mother and sister, he returned the next day to give them a helping hand, thinking that the coast was clear. Unknown to him the Auxiliaries had left three of their members in civilian clothes keeping his house under surveillance. He was having supper when he saw the lights of the Crossley Tenders approaching. He got out the back window and ran to get into the fields but he was met by a dozen Auxiliaries fully armed who shouted at him to halt. He was arrested and brought to Woodstock. Without the men folk it was difficult for the Egan family to carry on but Peter and Tom were released after a month.

Jack Gardiner who was the youngest volunteer, in the Mullinahone Co. I.R.A. and had participated in the attack on Drangan barracks as a scout and as a rifleman in the Ninemilehouse ambush, eluded arrest for a short time but was eventually captured. Many arrests followed throughout the county in the first three months of 1921, and all were brought to Woodstock for interrogation as no definite charge was made against any of these internees. At the beginning of March, Jack Wall, Ned Glennon and Lar Glennon were arrested in the Threecastles area following the Friary St. ambush in Kilkenny on 21 February, 1921. They were taken to Woodstock as prisoners. On Sunday night, 6 March, 1921, William Forristal, Jerpoint Church, Thomastown was arrested by the Auxiliary Police and was brought to Woodstock. William Forristal was Sinn Féin chairman of Thomastown Board of Guardians and he was a brother of Rev Laurence Forristal of the Chinese Mission. No charge was preferred against him but, since he was a farmer, spring was an inconvenient time of the year to be taken into custody.

Harrowing tales of the treatment of republican internees were coming out of Woodstock. When the prisoners were brought to Woodstock, they were taken out of the lorries in the village of Inistioge, blindfolded and made walk up the hill

there. They were then put into a dark cellar in Woodstock House. They were forced to sleep on the flags and used their boots as pillows since they were given no blankets or bedclothes of any kind. There was a big heap of potatoes on one side of the stone chamber and rats came into the cellar at night and ate the loose potatoes on the floor. Many of the prisoners were put into this cellar, still handcuffed, and during the night they were awakened by the gnawing of the rats as they nibbled away at the loose potatoes near them.

It was part of the usual procedure practiced by the Auxiliaries to put the prisoner in a cell of his own and after a short time to introduce the notorious spy to him there. This man came from the West Kilkenny area and worked for the Auxiliaries in Woodstock. Bob Cahill was only a short time in his cell when the door was opened by one of the Auxiliaries and this thin gaunt man in disheveled clothing was half pushed, half kicked on to the cell floor beside Bob. Bob had been warned that if he was ever arrested and brought to Woodstock to beware of the Woodstock spy. The spy began to talk to him and said that he had just been arrested while he was coming down with Ned Aylward and Paddy Ryan and all the other active service boys from Callan to capture Woodstock House. Bob knew that this story was definitely wrong and he guessed that this man was the spy, so he was careful to let no important information about the Callan Battalion slip his lips. 'I hope they don't come tonight while I'm here,' said Bob, 'because I heard that they are a right tough crowd of terrorists.'

A few months later Jack Wall of Threecastles was in the dark cellar beside William Forristal of Jerpoint Church, Thomastown. Jack did not know about the spy but William Forristal warned him to be careful. Not long afterwards Jack Wall was put into a different cell with a different prisoner who looked as if he had been beaten up by the Auxiliaries a short time before that. After a while this 'ruffled' prisoner began to talk. He said that he was from the Callan direction and was there for a long time. When he found out that Jack was from Threecastles he asked him who put the Tricolour on Hennessy's coffin after the Friary St. ambush. Jack remembered what William Forristal had told him and he knew that he would have to bluff his way out. He said that there were people from all over the county at that funeral and he could not get a glimpse of the coffin that day, so dense were the crowds. The spy then asked Jack Wall if any of the Tipperary I.R.A. fellows played with the Tipperary football team on Bloody Sunday. Jack said that he lived in an out- of -the- way place and that he did not get the papers at all. He knew nothing about the Tipperary football team because the game he played was hurling. Shortly after this the cell door opened and an Auxiliary came in and grabbed the bruised and battered 'prisoner' and shoved and pushed him before him out on to the corridor.

When the Auxiliaries failed to obtain information by clever ruses such as the spy method, they sometimes tried questioning their prisoners under duress and torture. Paud Egan had experienced one such session when he had refused to give them any information. He was brought into a room upstairs and blindfolded. The Auxiliaries asked all types of questions about I.R.A. activities in the Mullinahone area and when they got no information they put a revolver to his head many times and threatened to pull the trigger. When this failed they punched him in the face and stomach and knocked him off the chair on which he was sitting. A second time they came to bring him to the torture room for further interrogation but Paud said to the officer who was escorting him, 'Hold on now. If you're any kind of decent man, you'll bring me out in the yard and shoot me.' 'Are you a Sinn Féiner?' asked the officer. 'I am,' said Egan, 'bring me out and shoot me now because you're not going to get any information out of me.' 'You're a brave man, Egan,' said the officer. 'Go back to your cell.'

The Auxiliaries had an appalling practice of bringing the manacled prisoners out with them in their lorries as hostages in case they ran into an I.R.A. ambush. This happened to Bob Cahill, Jack Gardiner, Mick Ruth of Kilkenny, Jack Wall, Ned Greene, William Forristal, Ned Glennon, Robby Carroll, Lar Glennon and to countless other County Kilkenny prisoners almost once every day during their confinement in Woodstock. Jack Wall was taken out of his cell one night at 7 p.m. and flung into a military lorry in which he found five other prisoners sitting back to back, three at each side. Nick Glennon, Jack Wall and Jack Greene, Cuppanagh, were at one side and facing the other way were Lar Glennon, Mick Ruth and Robby Carroll, a brother of Michael Carroll of Graiguenamanagh. Their hands were handcuffed and their legs were tied at the knees. Their own caps were taken off and Auxiliary caps were put on them. If an ambush did occur, and if they did not shout at their I.R.A. comrades to cease fire, they would be mistaken for Auxiliaries.

They were blindfolded leaving Woodstock but the cover was removed from their eyes when they got outside the village of Inistioge. The lorry increased speed and went towards Goresbridge at a terrifying pace. One of the Auxiliaries had a bottle of brandy and after drinking a mouthful himself, he passed it on to the others. Another member of the military party produced a revolver and pointed it straight at the mouth of each prisoner as he stretched forwards and backwards and moved the gun to each side, keeping it about six inches from their faces. He kept shouting threateningly, 'You're first,' 'You're second', as his gun passed each man's face. He kept them covered by putting his head on the railings of the Crossley Tender to keep his body firm and straight. Suddenly the lorry dipped into a large crater on the side of the road. With the jolt, the gun fired. The bullet

went into Glennon's mouth and came out above his right ear. Nick Glennon fell forward unconscious; blood came spurting from his mouth and it poured over Jack Wall's overcoat and jacket. The lorry sped on to Gowran Barracks where they lifted the still handcuffed unconscious Nick Glennon from the lorry and took him into the barracks.

An Auxiliary officer arrived in a Crossley Tender just behind them. He went into Gowran Barracks but quickly came out again and came over to the lorry where the hostages were still sitting. He asked the Auxiliary, who had been pointing the gun in the prisoners' faces, who had shot Nick Glennon and the Auxiliary replied that the shot had come from behind a wall at the side of the road. The officer then asked Jack Wall the same question and Wall pointed at the Auxiliary with the revolver in his hand. 'That man over there shot him'. The officer moved towards the barracks. The Auxiliaries in the lorry came towards Wall, and one of them said, 'Wall, you're a dead man. You'll never see morning.' The officer overheard the remark and he wheeled around again towards the lorry. 'If anyone tries to interfere with you Wall, before we get back, report it to me as soon as you arrive.' He went back to his own lorry then. The Auxiliaries were very quiet during the rest of the journey. The prisoners arrived back in Woodstock at 6 a.m. the following morning. Their arms were numb as a result of the long period that they had been left handcuffed. They had received no food since 4 p.m. the previous evening and that meal only consisted of an enamel mug of strong cold tea and two slices of bread.

Nick Glennon recovered completely from his mouth wound within three months of the shooting. It was thought at first that he would lose an eye but there was no serious damage done to his sight or his brain. He went farming to Australia later on.

Some of the prisoners like Jack Gardiner, Peter and Tom Egan were released from Woodstock within a month. But others like Bob Cahill, Jim Egan, Charlie Egan, Paud Egan, William Forristal, Jimmy Raleigh, Bill Cody, Dick Hurley, and Tommy Carroll, after being transferred from Woodstock to either Waterford or Kilkenny jails for a short period, were eventually interned without trial in Spike Island.

CHAPTER 15

The Friary Street Ambush

The Friary Street ambush occurred in Friary St. Kilkenny on 21 February, 1921. It was first mentioned at a Brigade meeting held over Delaneys' tailoring shop in Watergate, a few days before Christmas, 1920. George O'Dwyer of Coon had been elected Brigadier to replace Peter De Loughry who had been arrested early in December. He read a despatch from I.R.A. Headquarters in Dublin demanding more action from the city battalions and from Kilkenny Brigade in general.

Rations were transported daily in a wagon from Kilkenny military barracks to Kilkenny Jail which was situated just where St Francis Terrace and Father Murphy Square now stand. The cart was drawn by two mules and driven by a British soldier. It was accompanied by a patrol of British military. At this Christmas Brigade meeting it was mentioned as a possible target for attack. 'Who will be chosen for the task?' asked one of the city representatives. 'Country men,' O'Dwyer replied. 'They can do it with clean faces and without masks.' The organisation of the attack was left to Tim Hennessy who had been appointed Commandant of the 1st Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, and Tommy Nolan, Outrath, who had taken part in the capture of Hugginstown barracks. Tim Hennessy was a native of Threecastles and he was the manager of Ennisnag grocery stores. Another prominent participator in the Hugginstown barracks attack, Martin Mulhall of Danville, was enlisted by them to watch this ration party travelling from Kilkenny military barracks to Kilkenny Jail on every day of the week previous to the ambush.

Martin Mulhall noted that this British patrol made the journey every morning to the prison at around the same time always and turned into Friary St. at approximately 9.30 a.m. They always travelled in the same formation: two soldiers of the 1st. Devons made up an advance party, the main party consisted of the wagon pulled by two mules and driven by a military driver. It was accompanied by an N.C.O. and a private walking behind the cart and a rearguard party of two soldiers who walked with fixed bayonets and their rifles at the ready. Martin Mulhall asked some other city members of Kilkenny Battalion I.R.A. to scout Friary Street with him. They noted that when the advance guard was alongside Hacketts' public house at the top of Friary St. (now Dohertys'), the main party was just passing Gargans' stonecutting yard (still there), and the rearguard was then directly opposite the Capuchin Friary.

Martin Mulhall reported all this information to the Kilkenny Battalion officers and they formulated their plan of action. They decided to mobilise three rural companies of the 1st Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. for the action. Men from Kells, Threecastles and Bennettsbridge were to take part in the attack. The leader of the ambushing group was to be Section Leader, Jim Brien from Garnaman Co. I.R.A., Kells. The object of the attack was to disarm the troops and gain possession of their arms. The I.R.A. attackers would be allowed to carry loaded revolvers, but the order went out that they were to disarm all the members of the military ration party without firing a shot. The whole I.R.A. party would consist of 16 men which would allow two I.R.A. volunteers to tackle each soldier, leave the leader free to command and have another I.R.A. member there to take away the captured booty. The members of the Threecastles Co. I.R.A. would disarm the soldiers in the rearguard at the Capuchin Friary; the Kells group would deal with the main party at Gargans' stonecutting yard and the men from Bennettsbridge would tackle the advance guard at Hacketts' public house. It was arranged that the leader of the I.R.A. ambushers, Jim Brien of Garnaman Co. I.R.A., would blow a whistle to signal to his comrades to attack in unison. Even though all the I.R.A. volunteers were from 1st Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, most of them came from West Kilkenny.

Word was sent to the three I.R.A. companies on Sunday, 20 February to be in Friary St. at 9 a.m. on Monday morning and the plan of attack and the orders from the Battalion officers were relayed to the men. Paddy Lennon from Threecastles who was working in Smithwicks, High St., Kilkenny came out to Jack Wall, Threecastles, with word for Captain Tom Hennessy of that company. Tom, an extensive farmer in the area and brother of Tim Hennessy, the Kilkenny Battalion commandant, was out riding a hunter when the order came. Jack Wall met him a little later and told him that four men, who were not known in

Kilkenny City, were to go into Friary Street the following morning to take part in an attack to disarm the ration patrol. Wall told Hennessy that another messenger would meet him later with final briefings. 'I'll send no man to town', said Hennessy 'unless I go with him myself.'

Joe Lalor was sent to Ardaloo to tell Ned Dunne and Dick McEvoy to come down to Threecastles as Capt Tom Hennessy wanted them. Tom Hennessy asked them to take part in the ambush. They were given two revolvers. Jack Wall was sent to Michael Dermody's house. It was midnight when he called and Dermody had gone to bed but he got up and came back with Wall to Hennessy. They met the messenger from Kilkenny who gave final instructions and emphasised that they were to disarm the soldiers without firing a shot. 'Why not fire?' asked Dermody. 'No,' said Hennessy, these are the orders.' Dermody had a Bulldog revolver, but he did not have ammunition for it. In the Kells area, Section Leader Jim Brien, Garnaman Co., I.R.A., Kells, mobilised Michael Keane and Michael McBride from Garnaman, Michael Brennan, Thomas Walsh, Jim Torpey, Pat Holden and Paddy Hoyne, all from Newtown, and Jim Brien, Viper, to go with him into Friary Street and take up positions at Gargans' stonecutting yard and after that to rush out, tackle and disarm the main body of soldiers. It was necessary that all groups from the three ambush positions would attack simultaneously and Jim Brien was to watch that the full British ration party had reached all the specific points in the street before blowing his whistle to call all into action.

Ned Gorman of Woollengrange met Danny Murphy in Bennettsbridge and told him on Sunday morning that the Friary St. ambush was planned for the next day and that he was to go to a meeting on that Sunday afternoon in Stallards' garden in Danville in connection with the attack. Danny could not go that afternoon but he asked Ned Gorman to go to the meeting and he would get in touch with him that night. That night Danny went over to Gormans' house across the river. All the volunteers selected for the ambush were there, Johnny Greene (Barronsland), Ned Gooley, Paddy Murphy, and Dick Fitzgerald. Ned Gorman told them that they were detailed to be at Hacketts', Friary St. the next morning to disarm the advance guard of the ration party. 'There's not to be a shot fired in order to save the town from being burned by the Tans after the ambush,' he ordered. 'Do they want us all to be shot?' asked Danny Murphy. 'I am only bringing you out instructions,' said Ned Gorman, 'they said that the rifles the soldiers are carrying are not loaded.' 'The Kilkenny crowd should give us credit for having an ounce of, sense,' said Murphy. The Bennettsbridge contingent did not agree with the order not to fire. 'How many rounds of ammunition have you?' Ned Gooley said to Murphy. Danny Murphy fingered rounds of

ammunition in his pocket, but he only had a few bullets. 'We'll use that ammunition, if it is necessary,' said Gooley.

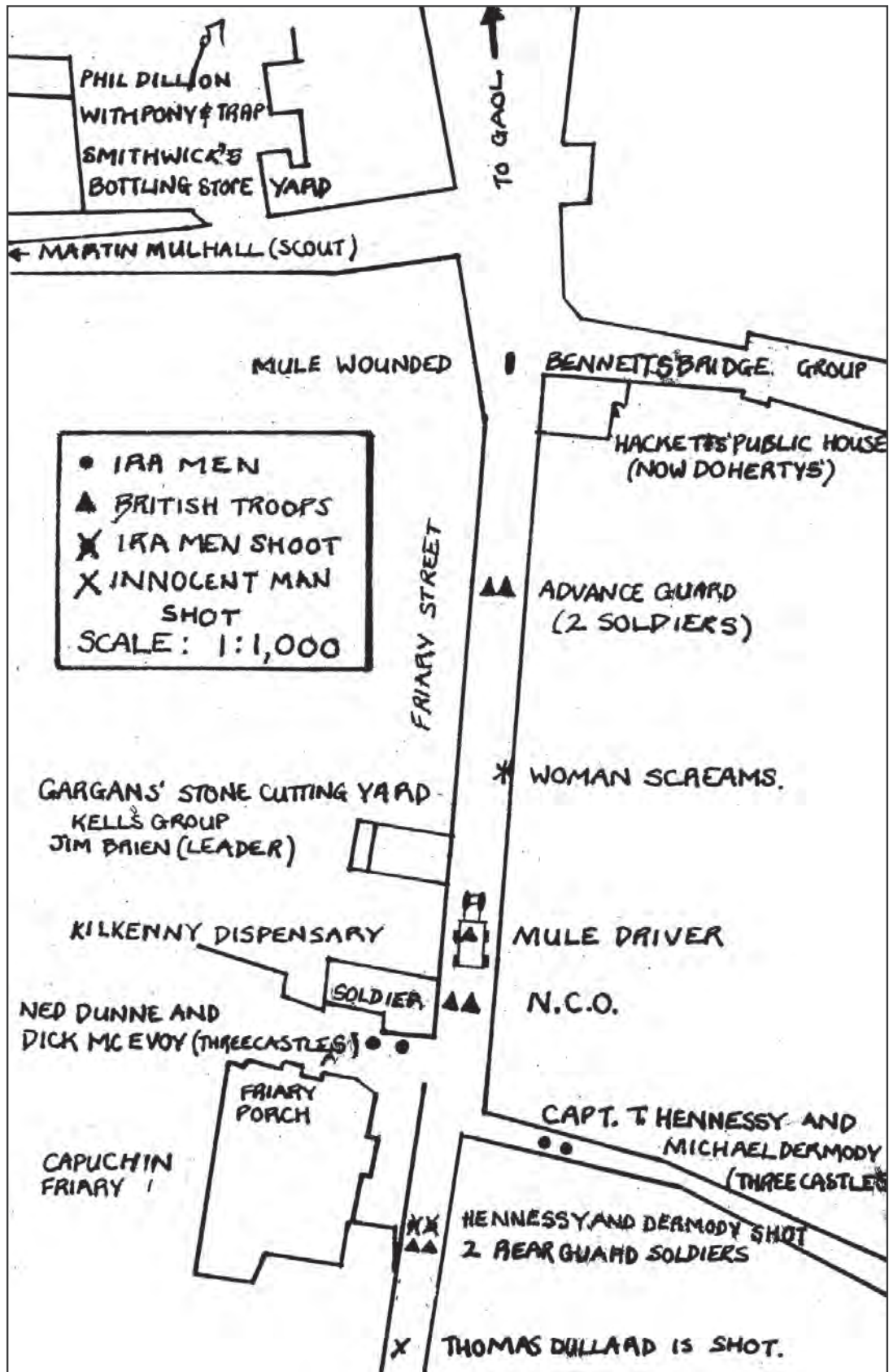
They discussed and formulated the rest of the plans. Danny Murphy, Greene, and Gooley, all veterans of the Hugginstown barracks attack, were to go into Friary St. with Paddy Murphy and Dick Fitzgerald. Only Danny Murphy, Ned Gooley and Dick Fitzgerald had revolvers. Paddy Murphy and Johnny Greene were to be at Hacketts' corner, one reading a newspaper and the other leaning on a bicycle in order not to attract attention. Murphy, Gooley and Fitzgerald, who would be armed, were to rush out of Hacketts' and hold up the advance party of the British military ration party when the whistle for the attack was blown; Paddy Murphy and Johnny Greene were to get the arms across to Smithwick's Bottling store yard where a pony and cart would be waiting to take away the captured booty.

On Sunday evening Tom Kearney of the Racecourse and Tim Gaffney got a pony and trap ready and drove to Dillons', Cuffesgrange. Phil Dillon led the pony and trap into the yard of Smithwick's Bottling Store, just off Friary St., on the morning of the ambush. Here he waited for the captured guns to be deposited by the ambushers into the trap. After that he was to drive out the Callan Road where Tom Kearney and Tim Gaffney were waiting to receive them. Tom Kearney was, in fact, on a hillock in Shellumsrath since nine o'clock that morning scanning Walkin Street and the surrounding area with field glasses, so as to be able to spot the pony and trap as soon as it made off on its journey with the captured rifles. Bill Hurley and Jack Maher were waiting on the outskirts of the city with Tom Kearney and they too were tense and on the alert.

All the I.R.A. ambush party cycled into Kilkenny that day. The Threecastles group parked their bicycles at St. Mary's Cathedral and the Bennettsbridge and Kells contingents left them in the bottling store yard. Ned Dunne and Dick McEvoy went in and out of the Friary church as they waited for Tom Hennessy and Mick Dermody. Hennessy and Dermody arrived and they all talked together for a while on the middle of the road. They decided then to separate. Tom Hennessy and Mick Dermody went into Garden Row laneway at the opposite side of the church. Ned Dunne and Dick McEvoy went back into the Friary. They saw Father Patrick O.F.M. Cap praying near the end of the church. He nodded to them as they passed out again and Ned Dunne thought he saw him make the sign of the cross with his hand in their direction as if he was blessing them. Hennessy and Dermody peered down the street. It was now half-past nine. They felt nervous but eager, as it would not be long now before they would have to go into action themselves.

Danny Murphy, Ned Gooley and Dick Fitzgerald took up positions at Hacketts' public house. Ned Gooley and Danny Murphy were lying down at the jamb of the door, Fitzgerald was standing in behind them. Paddy Murphy and Johnny Greene were in position outside. The Kells group had gone into Gargans' stonecutting yard. Jim Brien, who was in charge of the operation, was there and he knew now that at any moment the British ration party would swing into Friary Street. Martin Mulhall was already performing his role in the attack. He had cycled over from John Street and met the ration party coming from Kilkenny Military Barracks. He had counted the soldiers and they were in the usual formation. They were a little behind time. He came on with them for a distance. He then mounted his bicycle and cycled ahead. He turned into Friary Street from High Street. He passed up by each party of his comrades in their outposts. He nodded to the first group of Threecastles men. He stopped at Gargans' stonecutting yard and reported to Jim Brien of Viper, Kells that the ration party was on its way and in the usual formation. He cycled on and gave a short salute for good luck to Paddy Murphy and Johnny Greene of Bennetsbridge as he cycled by.

In the meantime Dick McEvoy and Ned Dunne waited in the Friary porch. Dick McEvoy saw a door open on the opposite side of the street, facing Gargans' yard, and a woman coming to the doorway, stopping there and looking down the street. He felt like shouting at her to go in but it was too late. A corporation workman brushed by them into the church as he went to say his usual short morning prayers between coming home from work for his breakfast at 9 a.m. and returning before 9.45 a.m. The advance guard passed by. They were about 25 yards in front of the wagon. There were two soldiers immediately after the wagon. All the soldiers were marching with fixed bayonets and rifles gripped in front, ready for action. McEvoy and Dunne waited in silence for part of a minute. They stirred themselves to move and looked across towards Garden Row (the laneway to the former Regent cinema) and Hennessy and Dermody were coming out. They almost met in the middle of the road. They looked down and saw the two soldiers of the rearguard party coming. Their soldierly bearing was very casual as they were close together and chatting. They were short and stocky in appearance. 'Not hard to topple,' thought Dunne. But they were further behind the main party than they had expected. Capt Hennessy, who was in charge of this group, immediately sized up the situation. The main party had not reached Gargans' stonecutting yard yet, and they were about to grapple prematurely with the rearguard. He must change plans, and quickly at that! 'Go on ye two lads, watch the two Tommies in front of ye. We'll take care of these two'.



72. Friary St. ambush site, Kilkenny City, 21 February, 1921.

Ned Dunne and Dick McEvoy went back on the footpath on the Friary Church side of the street. The wagon was about 15 yards ahead in the middle of the road. They glanced back. Hennessy and Dermody went straight down the side of the street on the left-hand side, let the two soldiers pass and turned to attack them from the rear. Dunne and McEvoy faced towards the two soldiers of the main party. No whistle sound! What was happening? As they moved forward a woman's shrill scream pierced the morning air. 'Soldiers, soldiers, you're being attacked.' The two soldiers in the main party heard the scream, made a quick swerve and turned. One took cover behind the low wall of the Friary and the other went down on one knee in a doorway. They saw Hennessy and Dermody grappling with the two soldiers for the rifles. Tom Hennessy got up off the ground. The soldier was on the road but he still had a hold on one part of the rifle. On the other side Mick Dermody had the other soldier knocked to the ground, but he was on his knees and about to rise. The two soldiers from the main guard, one of them an N.C.O., prepared to fire. They were crack shots. They covered Dermody and Hennessy in their sights. They fired four shots in all, in quick succession. The firing lasted less than a minute. The soldiers saw the two I.R.A. attackers fall to the ground. Only the two soldiers in the main party had fired. The advance party had not taken part in the engagement at all. The British Tommies in the rearguard were now standing up on the road, wondering how they had been so fortunate to miss the flying bullets.

The mule driver stuck his spurs into the mules, whipped up the animals and galloped the mules and the cart towards the jail. Danny Murphy and Ned Gooley had come out of Hacketts' hall door at the top of Friary St. when they heard the shooting. No whistle had sounded! As the mules, wagon and driver thundered by they both got down on their knees and fired at the fast-moving fleeting object. They hit the mule which fell at the Fair Green wall further up the road towards the jail and the cart and driver came to a halt.

Ned Dunne and Dick McEvoy had been closing in on the two soldiers in the main guard when these British Tommies turned back quickly, speedily jumped into cover and opened fire down the street. Due to the orders they had received not to fire at all, the fact that the whistle had not been blown, and the confusion that followed when the plan misfired, they both passed on by the soldiers who had done the firing and made for St. Mary's Cathedral to get away on their bicycles.

The Kells' group never moved out from Gargans' yard. Because Hennessy, Dermody, Dunne and McEvoy came out prematurely onto the street to carry out their attack, the British main guard never reached Gargans' stonecutting yard and the advance guard never got to Hacketts' public house. Jim Brien, Viper, never blew his whistle for all the I.R.A. attackers to jump into action together, as

the whole plan had misfired right from the beginning. Brien always held afterwards that he was correct in not blowing the whistle as in the confusion that resulted after the plan had misfired, more I.R.A. volunteers would have been killed on the street. After the firing the Kells group joined the Bennettsbridge I.R.A. party, got their bicycles out of the bottling store yard and made their way quickly out of Kilkenny City. Tom Kearney, waiting on the Callan Road for the captured arms to arrive heard the rifle shots from Friary Street. 'Begor!' he said to Bill Hurley, Jack Maher and Tim Gaffney who were with him, 'It's all over, none of them will come out alive.' They had planned to receive the rifles from Phil Dillon and bring them to Kellys, Aughtanee, Ballycallan, which was a very quiet farmhouse down a long lane off the road. Phil Dillon walked over from the bottling store yard, left the pony and trap there and nonchalantly went into a nearby public house for a drink. Tom Kearney's group saw two lorries of Black and Tans coming in the Callan Road and they scattered and reached home later.

Back in Friary Street the rest of the story was being acted out. The two soldiers from the main guard of the British ration party, who had fired down the street at Hennessy and Dermody, came out of cover and found two men lying on the street. They searched them and found a revolver in each of the men's pockets. The two men were Hennessy and Dermody and in each case, though their revolvers were fully loaded, they were unused. Tom Hennessy had been shot in the heart and had died instantly. Michael Dermody had a severe and serious wound on the side of his head, but he was still alive. Then the soldiers saw a third man lying twenty yards further down the street. He was also seriously wounded in the head. The whole of the right side of his skull was blown away. He was bleeding profusely from his head wound and there was a lot of blood under his head. He was Thomas Dullard from Upper Walkin Street. He was the corporation workman who had gone into the Friary Church to say a few quiet prayers on his way back to work. As he came out of the Friary, the attack on the rearguard of the ration party had begun and, in fright, he had run down the footpath towards High Street. The soldiers did not see him in the line of fire, but one of the four bullets released had ricocheted off the wall of the street, and had caused the huge gaping wound in his head. When the soldiers searched his pockets they found no arms.

Father Patrick of the Capuchin Friary had already anointed the three men. On the previous night an I.R.A. volunteer had called to him at the Friary, and had given him a message to be available in the Friary Church between 9 o'clock and 10 o'clock the following morning as his spiritual services might be needed in the vicinity. No sooner had the firing started than he was on the scene. Dr John Mitchell came out of the Friary Street dispensary where he was on duty that morning and bandaged the head wounds of both Dermody and Dullard.

Some of the Devons mistaking him for a civilian hit him with a rifle butt and left a scar on his head. A military ambulance arrived and brought the three men to Kilkenny Military Hospital. Tom Hennessy was dead. Thomas Dullard died shortly after admission. Michael Dermody never regained consciousness and died on his own and unattended, in the Military Hospital on Friday, 4 March, 1921.

AFTERMATH

An inquiry held later into the Friary St. ambush, by Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A., found that no one could be blamed for its failure. Because the plan misfired from the beginning, there was no alternative course of action that could have been put into operation at a minute's notice.

Thomas Dullard was buried in St Patrick's burial ground, Kilkenny and the attendance, which was extremely large and representative, included members of the Kilkenny Corporation and the Corporation employees' staff. Thomas Dullard was 37 years of age and left a wife and six children ranging in ages from 15 years to a baby of six months. He earned £2 and 5 shillings as an employee of Kilkenny Corporation and when acting on the Fire Brigade, he got 5 shillings a week extra. He was a good husband and father and out of his wages he gave his wife £2 per week household money.

The remains of Capt Thomas Hennessy were removed on Tuesday evening, 22 February, to Tulla Church, Threecastles and huge crowds from the city and county attended. The oak coffin was draped with the Tricolour. The funeral took place on the following morning. The chief celebrant of the requiem Mass was his brother, Rev Nicholas Hennessy C.C., Tullogher. Crown forces took steps to limit the cortege and prevent all but the relatives from taking part in the funeral. Dick McEvoy and Ned Dunne, despite being warned not to do so, attended the funeral and, with others, carried Hennessy's coffin on their shoulders from the church. A British military officer entered the grounds of the church, halted the coffin bearers and removed the Tricolour with which the coffin was draped. Immediately after the burial, his brother Tim Hennessy was bundled into a British military lorry, arrested and taken away. He was commandant of the 1st. Battalion, Killkenny Brigade at the time.

Tom Hennessy, who had lived in Killaree was 32 years of age. He was a most courageous freedom fighter who bravely tackled armed soldiers without drawing his own gun. He liked Irish and often spoke it. What Irish he knew, he had learned at an Irish night class in Threecastles, conducted by Master Power. He

was an extensive farmer and a true leader of his own company who would not ask anyone else to go into an ambush position unless he first went himself.

The remains of Michael Dermody were removed to Tulla Church on Saturday, 5 March, and interment took place in the cemetery of the church on the following day. A huge concourse of mourners attended from the surrounding districts and from all parts of the city and county. Before the funeral Jim Dermody was warned by the military not to have any demonstration of a military kind. Dermody was buried alongside Hennessy in the same grave. 'They fell bravely together, they should be buried together,' said Frank Mullan, a Derry man, who had come to live in Threecastles. The Tricolour was placed on the coffin. Michael had often sung 'Wrap the Green Flag round me,' and so it was at the end. Michael Dermody was 25 years of age. He had his passage booked for America and he was due to go there with his girlfriend when he was killed in the Friary Street engagement. All the five Dermody brothers, Jack, Jim, Pack, Denny and Michael were in the Threecastles Company I.R.A. Jim Dermody, Michael's brother, played in goal for Kilkenny in the historic All-Ireland final of 1931 when it took three games to decide the issue between Cork and Kilkenny. Cork won out finally. In the second game, Jim Dermody in goal was the star of the hour. He subsequently won two All-Ireland medals with Kilkenny in 1932 and 1933. One of Michael Dermody's great qualities was his courage. He was a well-built, strong young man but it was an act of bravery to confront, without flinching, a soldier with a rifle, armed only with strength and pluck.

Other arrests followed the Friary Street ambush. Tom, Richard and James Bateman were all arrested, but released. Raids by British forces resulted in the arrests of Michael Ruth, James's Green, and Seán Cullen, Patrick Street. John Bryan, Patrick Street was arrested at the Parade and taken by military escort to the Auxiliary Police headquarters at Woodstock. At a military court held in the courthouse, Kilkenny on Saturday, 26 February, Mr Larry De Loughry, Parliament St., Kilkenny who was a brother of Alderman Peter De Loughry, Mayor of Kilkenny, was charged on two counts of making a statement likely to cause disaffection to his Majesty, and withholding information from an officer of the Court. Mr De Loughry was fined £20. When asked to pay the fine he replied that he had not twenty pence, never mind £20. He was told that he would have a week to pay. Larry De Loughry replied that they would get no twenty pounds from him because he did not have it, and even if he did, he would not give it. A week later Larry De Loughry was re-arrested and was removed to Kilkenny prison for not paying the fine. Not one member of the I.R.A. party who participated in the Friary Street ambush was later arrested. The volunteers from Kells, Threecastles and Bennettsbridge all slipped away safely into the country on their bicycles.

BISHOP'S STATEMENT

His Lordship, the Most Rev Dr Brownrigg, Bishop of Ossory issued the following circular which was read in all the city churches on Sunday, 27 February, 1921.

A terrible tragedy, involving up to the present, the loss of two lives (one of them an innocent man) and seriously endangering that of a third, was enacted in the streets of this hitherto peaceful city on Monday last. This tragedy calls very strongly for some words from me, as your bishop.

In what I am about to say, you will take me as being mainly concerned with the moral aspects of the case, and from that point of view, I wish to declare that I cannot find words strong enough to condemn the folly, and the crimes of those who planned and attempted to carry out, the recent attack on the military in the streets of the city.

The Irish bishops have again and again declared that those who engage in these attacks run imminent risk of committing murder, to say nothing of the awful consequences to which they expose their innocent neighbours.

The latter result has been forcibly and tragically brought home to the people of Kilkenny in the recent instance, by the death of a worthy citizen, the father of six little children. I avail myself of this opportunity and feel sure you will join me, in tendering our deepest sympathy to the widow and the orphans.

The partisan, provocative and disastrous policy pursued by the Government in recent years in dealing with this country affords, according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, no justification for such deeds as shocked our city on Monday.

The history of the Church records that in persecutions similar to those which the devoted people of Ireland have now to endure, the people were accustomed to seek patience and strength to bear their trials, in prayer and the sacraments. The Irish bishops have frequently exhorted their flocks to have recourse to the same means in the present trying crisis. Let us hope that like efforts will be attended with like results in our regard.

It is an old saying that the 'darkest hour is that which precedes the dawn.' Let us trust and pray that the hovering clouds which at present overshadow Ireland, may soon pass away and that peace and rest may dawn on our afflicted country.

THE LOCAL PRESS

All during the War of Independence Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican army in County Kilkenny were fortunate to have the constant support of the two local papers, *The Kilkenny People* and the *Kilkenny Journal*. Mr E. T. Keane, Managing Director and Editor of the *Kilkenny People* was Chairman of Kilkenny City Sinn Féin Club. He seconded the nomination of Councillor William Cosgrave as Sinn Féin candidate in the 1917 By-Election and he worked extremely hard for his election. All through 1919, 1920 and 1921, his editorials supported the struggle for national determination and news reports in his paper drew attention to every atrocity perpetrated by Crown Forces in County Kilkenny. This was done despite the fact that the *Kilkenny People* had to submit all news items and editorials it proposed to insert in the paper to the censor, Major Bryan Cooper. They were forbidden to publish any passages deleted by the censor. The *Kilkenny People* was twice suppressed by the competent military authority in 1917 and in 1919. On Tuesday 12 August, 1919, a party of military and police, entered the printing works of the newspaper with orders to suppress its publication. They removed portions of the printing machinery and gas engine. The reason given for suppressing the *Kilkenny People* was that the issue of the newspaper for 2 August 'contained statements calculated to cause disaffection to his Majesty'. The particular statements referred to were certain passages, which had been deleted by the censor from proofs which were submitted to him by the editor, but which were subsequently printed by the *Kilkenny People*. The paper was suppressed from 2 August, 1919 until shortly after 5 September 1919, a matter of a month's suspension. The proprietors of the newspaper received official notification that the prohibition would be withdrawn and on 8 September, the parts of the machinery removed by the military were handed back to them.

During the War of Independence Mr E. T. Keane was arrested by an armed party of police and military at his residence, St Hilda's, Dublin Road, Kilkenny. On the same day Alderman James Nowlan, President of the G.A.A. was taken from his home at Bishop's Hill, Kilkenny and put under arrest. (On 4 May, 1916, Ald. Nowlan had been arrested when he stepped off the train from Dublin and he was lodged in Kilkenny Jail before being brought to Wakefield Prison, England from where he was released on 7 June, 1916). Both gentlemen were taken by train to Cork prison under heavy guard. Mr E.T. Keane was charged before a district courtmartial at Victoria barracks, Cork, with having in his possession a six-chambered revolver and twenty-five revolver cartridges. A police witness said that he searched Mr Keane's house and he found this revolver with

two of the chambers loaded. In a drawer he found another revolver. Mr Keane said that the revolvers he had in his house were there a long time and were antiques given to him long ago. AId. James Nowlan was charged with being in possession of a seven-chambered revolver and seven cartridges. AId. Nowlan said he wanted the revolver for protection as he was in the habit of carrying large sums of money.

Both E. T. Keane and AId. James Nowlan were sentenced to 28 days imprisonment. On the grounds of ill health, Mr E. T. Keane was released three weeks after his courtmartial. During the entire period of his imprisonment, Mr Keane was receiving hospital treatment. He had lost much weight and he was in a weak condition. AId. James Nowlan served the full 28 days before he was released. Nowlan Park, Kilkenny is named in his memory. E. T. Keane returned to continue to write his strong commentaries, criticising the military policy of the British government in regard to Ireland. In one of these well-written editorials he began by saying how he felt while in prison:

I know not whether laws be right
Or whether laws be wrong
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the walls are strong
And every day is like a year
A year whose days are long.

The *Kilkenny Journal* was equally strong in its support for the armed and political struggles then going on for national independence. This paper was outright in its condemnation of all Black and Tan outrages throughout the county. Despite the censorship restrictions imposed on it, also, by British military authorities, it published many of the nationalist poems written by local poets who sent them into the paper for publication.

On the run-through Ireland's story,
See the turf-fires fitful glow,
Shining faint across the valley
Light the wanderer through the snow.
Hear the grand-sire tell the Rosary,
And the mother's thankful sigh,
As, at length, the latch is lifted,
And she welcomes home her boy.

James W. Upton the editor of the *Kilkenny Journal* was the most prominent Sinn Féin orator in the county. He spoke at almost every Sinn Féin meeting held in South Kilkenny during the 1918 general election when James O'Mara was elected. Not only that, but he spoke in County Laois and in Waterford in support of Sinn Féin candidates in those areas. He wrote superbly composed editorials and articles in support of the republican cause and week after week he reported on the various ambushes, arrests and Sinn Féin meetings held in the cause of Irish freedom. It was a strange revolution that brought Jimmy Upton to a public platform, but when he arrived there, he gave willingly of his great talents for oratory and composition towards the achievement of Irish independence.



73. Unveiling ceremony of plaque to commemorate Friary Street Ambush.

CHAPTER 16

Garryricken

A life and death struggle was taking place in Ireland in the first six months of 1921 to gain Irish independence and force the British Government to take its armed forces out of Ireland forever. The Flying Columns of the I.R.A. continued to occupy remote areas in hilly parts of the country and used the cover of stone walls and ditches and the element of surprise to harass and attack British forces as they travelled in their Crossley Tenders and armoured cars from one town to another. The British authorities attempted to encircle the Flying Columns but the Republican active service units, knowing every track and field of the countryside and helped ingeniously and boldly by the people, were always able to withdraw into the hills from combat, having inflicted casualties on British Forces. The third phase of the war of independence had begun.

The 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. was forming its own Active Service Unit in January 1921, consisting mainly of I.R.A. members who could not return home for fear of arrest and who were permanently ‘on the run.’ As a consequence of the arrests in the Callan and Mullinahone areas following the Nine Mile House ambush, many more I.R.A. men left home. A small Flying Column was formed and Jimmy Leahy became the commanding officer. The other members were Ned Aylward, Seán Quinn, Paddy Ryan, Jim McKenna and Paddy Luttrell.

Jackie Brett went ‘on the run’ after his store was looted by the Black and Tans on the night of the Nine Mile House ambush. When he departed from home he teamed up, at first, with Ned Cuddihy of the Islands, and they both went to Dublin and like Seán Treacy and Dan Breen during 1920, they joined with the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. and took part in a number of military engagements in the

capital city. When Jackie Brett heard that a Flying Column was being formed in the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade area, he returned from Dublin with Ned Cuddihy and both he and Cuddihy volunteered for active service with the column. The active service unit of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade linked itself up with the 7th Tipperary Battalion Active Service Unit and they operated together for a while. They came together with Dinny Sadlier and Seán Hayes for some sniping attacks on police barracks and they separated again whenever they found this beneficial to both parties.

On Sunday evening, 6 March 1921, there was a large and representative 7th Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade council meeting held in an outhouse on a farm at Knockroe near Drangan. Present at that meeting were Seán Walsh, Coolenure, Fethard, commandant of the 7th Battalion, and other battalion officers, Denis Sadlier, Rathkenny and Thomas O'Carroll, Drangan. Amongst the company officers present were the following:

Company A (Drangan): Michael St. John, Priesttown; Martin Clancy, Balylusky; Patrick Hackett, Rathkenny; Ned Grace, Newtown.

Company B (Ballingarry) Joseph Farrell, Crohane.

Company C (Cloneen) William Ahessy, Rathkenny.

Company E (Moyglass) Richard Fleming, Coolmore; Maurice Walsh, Moyglass.

Company G (Laffansbridge) Denis Croke.

Knockroe is on the top of a steep hill and the house where the meeting was held was situated in a clump of trees. The hill and the house overlooked the main Mullinahone-Drangan Road, which was about 200 yards away. On the other side was another hill, Knockacura, with a thick clump of gorse on its summit. Between the two hills was a ravine also covered with furze. Word got to Mullinahone police barracks about the battalion meeting. There were three R.I.C. constables in Mullinahone who were friendly with the members of Mullinahone Co. I.R.A. Two of them were Constables Campbell and Maguire. One of the constables met Jack Gardiner and another volunteer in Mullinahone that morning and warned them. 'They're getting ready all morning above in the barracks,' he whispered. 'If you know of anything coming off, warn them.' Jack Gardiner and the other volunteer did not know of anything arranged in the Kilkenny Brigade area and thought that it was a false alarm.

British military came out from Mullinahone and surrounded the house where the meeting was going on. The meeting lasted for about half an hour, and before it ended Seán Walsh, commandant of the 7th Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade, who had succeeded Tom Donovan to that post, sent out one man to scout

around and he reported that all was clear. Seán Walsh was armed with an automatic revolver. None of the other officers had rifles or shotguns and most of them were unarmed. Seán Walsh went out to the doorway before anyone left and he was greatly shocked when he saw a party of British soldiers about to take cover behind a stone wall, not more than 15 yards from the outhouse door. He fired one shot with his automatic and this forced the soldiers to take cover for a few seconds. When Seán Walsh went to fire again, his automatic jammed. Dick Fleming, captain of the Moyglass Company, was beside Seán at that moment, but he was caught in a hail of fire, coming from a machine gun at the back of the stone wall and he fell dead in the doorway beside the battalion commandant. Walsh retreated into the house and ran to the back door. Already the other officers at the meeting had rushed out this door, and had headed for the cover of the furze and gorse in the ravine. Seán Walsh now headed after them. They ran into a hail of rifle and machine gunfire from the British soldiers at all sides of the besieged outhouse and rifle grenades exploded and churned up the field all round them. Martin Clancy and Patrick Hackett, both from Drangan, fell to the ground, mortally wounded, before they could reach the ravine. Denis Croke of Laffansbridge was wounded. Maurice Walsh, Commandant Seán Walsh's brother, ran back to see if he could assist Croke to get to the cover of the furze and the gorse, but both of them were captured by British forces. The remainder of the Battalion officers got into the ravine and later moved across country towards Cloneen and they were given food and shelter at Smiths' farmhouse at Garranguile.

On 10 March, 1921, the remains of Dick Fleming, aged 30 years, Patrick Hackett who was 23 years of age and 18 year old Martin Clancy were removed from Tipperary military barracks for interment. The three coffins were placed in a motor lorry. Following the lorry were two motorcars with the relatives of the deceased men. On the breastplate of Dick Fleming's coffin was the inscription:- 'Captain of the I.R.A. Died for Ireland.' The active service unit of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. went to the funeral on the following day, 11 March. They met some of the 7th Tipperary battalion in Killusty. Members of both battalions identified a 'foxy-haired' Auxiliary officer named Litchfield, who was stationed in Mullinahone barracks, as being responsible for the cold-blooded murder of Paddy Clancy near Drangan on 20 November 1920, and they blamed him also for the massacre at Knockroe when he ordered rifle and machine-gun fire and explosive grenades to be directed at the officers of the 7th Tipperary Battalion as they emerged, unarmed, from their meeting on the top of the hill at Knockroe. The two battalions decided to carry out a combined attack on the police and military barracks in Mullinahone in order to restore the prestige and

the morale of their men. Having made this arrangement, the Callan Flying Column went to Garryricken, once the dower house of the Ormonde family and decided to spend the night of 11 March, 1921, there.

GARRYRICKEN

Garryricken House was once a splendid structure surrounded by woods. It is situated off the main Kilkenny-Clonmel Road, four miles from Callan, over three miles from Mullinahone and about fourteen miles from Kilkenny. It is barely inside the County Kilkenny boundary and Poulacapple, County Tipperary, is only one mile across from it. The house is a good mile from the road and has a long narrow leafy avenue leading down to it.

In October 1919, Garryricken House became the property of the Earl of Ossory. Beside the large house there was a smaller and lower-roofed dwelling in which 32 year old John Luttrell, who was caretaker of the property, lived with his wife, Annie and three children, ranging in age from four years downwards and the youngest was a baby, six months old. Just 120 yards to the rear of these buildings and separated from them by a rick of hay and a high wall, was situated the Luttrell family farmhouse where John Luttrell's father and mother, his three brothers and three sisters lived. Aly Luttrell was the eldest daughter and Tommy and Jimmy Luttrell did most of the farm work. Jimmy was 21 years of age and Tommy was two years younger. Paddy Luttrell was a ploughman on the estate and in charge of a pair of horses.

Behind Garryricken House there was a grassy area and a set of outhouses crossing in front of the huge wall and adjacent to the rick of hay. These outhouses contained a cow byre and a barn. At the rear of these outhouses there was a field with some trees, which stretched as far as a very foliated area which, in turn, fanned out to the left and right, forming a thick wood on either side. The woods were very extensive, stretching as far away as three miles from the house.

Jimmy Leahy, Ned Aylward, Seán Quinn, Paddy Ryan, Jim McKenna and Paddy Luttrell, the nucleus of the Callan Flying Column, arrived hungry and exhausted at the Luttrell family farmhouse that night after the funeral of Fleming, Hackett and Clancy and they were made welcome by all the family. Aly made the tea and they sat around the fire playing cards. Paddy Ryan felt exhausted, however, after the long trek that day and he went upstairs and slept soundly in the same room as Jimmy and Tommy Luttrell. The rest were in no hurry to retire for the night and Quinn, as usual, enjoyed the light-hearted merriment and banter during the card game. There wasn't sufficient room in Jimmy Luttrell's

house to accommodate the whole flying column and they went across to Garryricken House to sleep for the night.

Garryricken House had not been occupied by the owners for 30 years previously. John Luttrell, the caretaker, who had worked for the owners for 19 years, occupied the lower but adjacent cottage. Two doors, leading from Luttrell's smaller house formed the means of communication with the main building. One of these doors was on the upper floor. It was about 3 a.m. on Saturday morning, 12 March, 1921, when Leahy, Aylward, Quinn, McKenna and Luttrell let themselves in to the main part of Garryricken House. During the card game they had met two local volunteers, Kearney and Cody, of the nearby Coolagh Co. I.R.A. and they had asked them to keep a lookout while they slept, in case British troops made a raid before the following morning. Leahy, Aylward and Quinn went to the rebels' room on the upper floor. This room was fitted by John Luttrell with a bedstead, a mattress and bedclothes and any freedom fighter 'on the run' was welcome to let himself into the room and sleep for the night. The bed was dressed every day in the rebels' room by the Luttrell womenfolk in case it was needed that night for a wandering freedom fighter 'on the run'. Because they were extremely tired, Leahy, Aylward and Quinn fell quickly asleep in the same bed. Paddy Luttrell and Jim McKenna went into the big house to go into Arthur's room on the bottom floor, where a bed had also been provided for men 'on the run'. They found the door locked but they went out again in the yard, opened the room window and climbed into Arthur's room through the aperture. John Luttrell and his wife, Annie, had retired to bed hours before that and both were unaware that anyone, at all, was sleeping in the big house that night.

Word was brought to Callan military barracks in the early hours of Saturday morning 12 March that most of the wanted men in the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. were sleeping in Garryricken House. A message was flashed to Kilkenny military barracks from the Callan military and police, requesting reinforcements. Around 5.30 a.m. a military and police party was ready to move out of Callan barracks. They went towards Garryricken through Coolagh. At Coolagh cross-roads, the police separated from the military. The R.I.C. travelled straight on and then swung to the left. After going for about 2 miles they crossed some fields and found themselves close to their sleeping prey. There they met British forces from Kilkenny and Callan, and they arranged ambush positions in order to surround the big house. Stretching around in a semi-circle in front of the house, was a sunken ditch, which gave the military excellent cover as well as being close enough to the big house to make their firing power effective. The attacking party at this stage was under the command of three people, District

Inspector Baynham of Callan R.I.C., a British military officer from Kilkenny military barracks and a corporal from the Devonshire Regiment. They deployed the remainder of their force of 25 soldiers and 12 police around the back of the house. The police covered the left-hand side, and the military the right-hand side

Kearney, the local Coolagh Co. I.R.A. scout, had felt very cold on that raw March spring morning and he made his way out behind Garryricken House to bring in some sticks to light a fire. British soldiers, in charge of the corporal from the Devons, grabbed him from behind, covered his mouth with eager hands to prevent him crying out and took him silently away from the precincts of the house. The other Coolagh scout, Cody, had left Garryricken earlier to go to a fair. British forces now had the element of surprise on their side. Everything was going well for them and there wasn't a stir around Garryricken House.

The military officer and District R.I.C. Inspector Baynham had a brief consultation, checked their watches and waited briefly for the watch hands to register 7 a.m., and then waved to their men to keep their heads down. District Inspector Baynham, together with the military officer and the British corporal confidently advanced to the caretaker's house and knocked at the door. John Luttrell put his head out the window above the door and he was ordered down to open up. On his way out of his bedroom he caught hold of his wife's arm and said in a low tone, 'Annie, run as fast as you can to the rebels' room and see if any of the boys are there.' He came downstairs, dressed only in a shirt and opened the door. District Inspector Baynham eyed him suspiciously.

'Luttrell, are there any strange men on your premises?'

'Not to my knowledge,' answered Luttrell.

'Luttrell, I know differently. We are going upstairs.'

With that the inspector, military officer, and corporal brushed by him into the hallway. They drew their guns and the D.I. pointed his in Luttrell's direction.

'You lead the way up the stairs, Luttrell.'

In the meantime Annie, his wife, had gone to the rebels' room and had discovered Leahy, Aylward and Quinn in deep sleep.

'Get up, quickly,' she called out. 'The Tans are outside.' They did not move at first but she caught them by the hair of their heads and dragged them out. 'Move,' she cried 'or ye'll get us all killed. The house is surrounded!' She hurried back to the bedroom. The word 'surrounded' registered on Aylward's ears. He jumped to his feet and dragged the other two onto the floor.

John Luttrell took his time going upstairs. He pretended to trip on the third step and he bent down with imaginary pain. When he got to the top, he saw his wife just wheel back into the bedroom but the others behind him did not see her. They searched the bedroom and the sitting room beside it and then they

went through the communicating door, which brought them into a long passage in the big house. The military officer and the corporal stopped at the doorway of the rebels' room and paused. The officer slid the lock noiselessly across and left the door slightly ajar. He motioned to the corporal to get ready. He steadied his gun in his hand and moved back in the passageway. He burst the door in before him as both he and the corporal charged into the room shouting 'Hands up.' Aylward turned quickly and fired at the figure crashing in through the doorway. There was a shot fired at him, straight into his face, he thought, but it missed him. He fell to the floor and opened fire. Quinn and Leahy were sprawled on the floor already blazing away at the two figures in the doorway. The British army officer and the corporal rushed back out of the room. The officer ran with the D.I. back towards the caretaker's small adjacent house and the corporal rushed further up the passageway of the big house towards the stairs.

Aylward rushed across and opened a shutter on one of the windows of the rebels' room. He saw the soldiers outside.

'We'll have to fight our way out,' said Leahy.

'Come on, lads,' Quinn agreed. 'We might as well die outside as inside.'

Leahy, Aylward and Quinn linked hands and said a short Act of Contrition together. They then made a burst for it.

District Inspector Baynham opened the window in John Luttrell's bedroom, put his head out and shouted to a fellow constable of his, who was under cover near this point, that there was a big number of armed men in Garryricken House. Leahy, Aylward and Quinn were now in the passageway of the big house. As they moved towards the caretaker's house, they could now see the District Inspector with his head out the window below them and directing his men where to go and what to do. Aylward and Leahy had only Colt automatics with them at the time, so both went back to the rebels' room and got their rifles. They came back to where they could see the District Inspector. They took careful aim. Shots rang out as they fired through the gable-end window. The mortar and portion of the brick around the window cracked off and fell to the ground. The D.I. flopped on the sill of the window. He put his two hands to his head and remained there for a second or two. The military officer went to his assistance and pulled him back into the room. John Luttrell, his wife and family were in the room. The military officer tried to get John Luttrell to help the wounded D.I., but John had two of the frightened children in his arms and he hesitated. When the military officer pointed his revolver at him, he helped to put the badly injured D.I. on to his own bed. Baynham was bleeding profusely from a deep neck wound but he was fully conscious. John Luttrell got a sheet, and tore a strip off it and bandaged the D.I.'s shoulder and neck. John Luttrell had a prayer to stop bleeding and he

said the prayer over him. The bleeding stopped soon afterwards. The District Inspector appreciated his help.

‘Luttrell’ said the D.I. ‘Have you any enemies?’

‘Well, I never did anything to anyone,’ replied Luttrell.

‘Well, it was someone that you know that brought this trouble on you,’ said the D.I.

The military officer remained with the wounded R.I.C. Inspector, and kept guard on that door.

Following the shooting of the D.I., fire was opened in the direction of the high gable-end window where the trio of trapped freedom fighters still were. Leahy, Aylward and Quinn decided that the best way out of the critical situation was to make a dash to get outside before the military settled down to a long siege process that would force them to remain inside. Aylward was unfamiliar with the layout of the house, and he asked Jimmy Leahy, who knew every inch of the place, to guide them in their dash to safety. Leahy brought them running along a corridor, which led to the opposite side of the house. As Aylward approached this point, he glanced down and saw the weak looking stairs that led down to the bottom passageway near the back door, which, in turn, opened out on the rear courtyard. The corporal in the meantime had also gone down to the same end of the house but was now on a corridor on the ground floor. He came to a point where there was a stairway on the left going upwards. Looking up the stairs, he saw the three freedom fighters moving from left to right. He called to them to halt but they immediately fired three or four shots at him. He replied by firing one round of ammunition and then he quickly headed for the door leading out into the courtyard at the back. When he emerged from the house he warned the soldiers outside that the house was crawling with rebels. He set up his Lewis machine gun in front of the house and prepared for a long drawn out engagement.

Paddy Ryan, the other member of the 7th Battalion active service unit, had gone to bed in the Luttrell family farmhouse at the rear of Garryricken House. Elderly Mrs Luttrell, mother of the household, was awakened by the cracking sound of the gunfire close by. ‘Get up, Aly,’ she called to her daughter, ‘the place is full of soldiers.’ Aly rushed to Jimmy Luttrell’s room and looked out the back window. ‘Get out, fast, Paddy,’ she called to Ryan. Ryan jumped out of bed and began to put on his volunteer uniform. ‘Leave that uniform with me,’ she ordered. ‘Put on Jimmy’s suit.’ She put the jacket of the uniform on herself, and hid the remainder of the garb under her coat. ‘Thanks, Aly,’ Ryan whispered as he gave her a short good-bye kiss, blessed himself, climbed through the back window and out into Luttrell’s yard where he took refuge behind a pier.

He spent a few minutes sizing up the situation. He saw the British corporal who had been inside the big house crawl about 25 yards through the back courtyard to get some Verey Lights. The corporal fired two of these in the air. He was fitting a third into the pistol when Ryan opened fire with his rifle. The corporal and a soldier, who had joined him to fire the Verey Lights, saw Ryan in a gateway. They returned the fire. Ryan disappeared from the gate to take up a firing position in another place. There was no wiser or tougher freedom fighter in Ireland than Paddy Ryan.

Once the corporal had taken to his heels and left the inside of the house, Leahy, Aylward and Quinn decided to risk all and make a dash out through the back door of the big house. Aylward was the first to charge headlong down the stairs. On reaching the first landing, however, he felt himself reeling forward, as from that down there was merely a ladder instead of a continuing stairs. His whole body lurched forward with the sudden break in his momentum but he saw a curved piece of iron tubing protruding from the wall. He grabbed the solid iron bar with both hands and this steadied him. His rifle fell from him and went clattering down to the bottom floor. He felt a sharp pain in his instep, which had caught in the first rung of the ladder, but he gathered himself together and half-stumbled, half-fell down the rest of the way to the ground below. As soon as he reached there he shouted up to the others, warning them that there was no stairs from the first landing down and telling them to watch out. He picked up his rifle from the floor but when he began to move he felt a jolt of pain in his right ankle, which forced him to limp as he moved further along the bottom passage. Jimmy Leahy and Seán Quinn reached the ground floor safely. Leahy indicated where the back door was, and now they slowed down, caught the rifles firmly in a ready position across their chests and moved carefully towards the exit, which led into the courtyard behind the big house. When they reached the back door, they glanced out into the courtyard. On the other side they saw Paddy Ryan firing at the police and British soldiers from behind a small gate near a protruding pier, just at a rick of hay at the right-hand side of the yard. They braced themselves and raced towards the pier behind which Ryan was firing. Ryan heard the thudding of running feet behind him. He turned back and raised his gun.

‘Paddy, Paddy,’ cried Leahy. Ryan smiled and lowered his gun.

Paddy Luttrell and Jim McKenna, who were sleeping in the room downstairs, were the last to become aware of the British onslaught. Paddy Luttrell awoke first and shook McKenna. ‘Get up, quickly,’ he roared at Jim. ‘There’s shooting going on everywhere.’ McKenna got up. It was not the first time for him to hear the cracking sound of concentrated rifle and machine gun fire. He had served honourably for three years with British forces in France during World War I.

When he returned to Ireland after the war, the local volunteers asked him to join the Irish Republican Army in their fight for Irish freedom and he did so. He had already taken part, as had Paddy Luttrell also, in the Nine Mile House ambush.

They both dressed hurriedly and grabbed their rifles.

‘How much ammo have you, Paddy,’ asked McKenna.

Luttrell searched. ‘Only four rounds,’ he replied.

‘Blast it!’ cursed McKenna. ‘I have only five rounds.’

They ran to open the door of the room they had slept in. It was locked, as it was the night before. With the house surrounded and heavy fire coming from outside, they could not chance crawling out through the window. They had to break a panel in the door with the butts of their rifles to get out because the door opened in and they could not force it out, as there was a strong jamb on the inside. When they came out the door, they made their way cautiously up the stairs to the rebels’ room where they knew Leahy, Aylward and Quinn had berthed for the night. When they reached this room they found it empty as the other three had gone already and were by this time in the back courtyard. Paddy Luttrell ran down the long corridor towards where his brother, John, lived, with the idea of getting out through the caretaker’s house. Jim McKenna followed. Suddenly they came to a quick halt when they saw the British officer, who had first entered the big house with the D.I., standing on guard outside the room where Inspector Baynham lay seriously injured. He had a revolver in his hand and he fired.

They flung themselves to the floor and crawled into cover in a doorway. The bullets rasped off the wall near them and lodged in the jamb of the door beside them, but neither of the two of them was hit. They fired five or six rounds at the officer but he ducked inside the room and remained there long enough to give them the chance to double back and make for the front door leading out to the sunken ditch, which encircled the front part of the house. They made a serious error in choosing the front of the house to make their getaway but they were not aware that the back of the house, where Leahy, Aylward, Quinn and Ryan were at that moment, was far less fortified by British forces than was the front. They came to the front door. They had very little ammunition left. They decided to test the firing power of the enemy before making a dash towards the sunken ditch. They fired a shot from cover towards the sunken ditch. All hell broke loose. Rifle and machine gun fire coming from the British forces surrounding the front of the house raked the mortar and the brickwork around them. Bits of mortar fell on them and pieces of timber from the door splintered around them. They were forced back into the hall.

‘Listen, Paddy,’ said McKenna, ‘We can’t go out there. We’ve hardly any ammunition left.’

‘We know our fate, if we don’t go’, replied Paddy Luttrell.

‘We might as well be shot here as hanged afterwards.’

Paddy Luttrell stepped towards the door again. McKenna followed him. Heavy fire was still coming from the sunken ditch. A policeman named Cooke, who was lying on the grass, about 20 yards from Garryricken House with his rifle to his shoulder, recognised Paddy Luttrell and shouted to him. ‘Go back, Luttrell, you haven’t a chance. You’ll be blown to bits.’ As the firing increased in intensity Paddy Luttrell turned back into the house again, and McKenna turned around as well.

‘No use going out there,’ said McKenna, ‘We’ll try the back.’

They ran back towards the back entrance. As they went down the passageway they saw the army officer who had fired at them five minutes earlier, approaching the back door also. He saw them at the same time and he opened fire on them with his revolver. They got down on one knee to reply with rifle fire. He rushed round a corner just as they pulled the triggers. They had no ammunition left now. They were beside the kitchen of the big house. They pulled the hasp off the door and went in. It was quite cold and they went about lighting a fire. There was nothing they could now do except remain quiet and pretend that they were ordinary visitors to the house who had got caught up in the morning’s gun battle and had taken refuge in the kitchen. Paddy Luttrell thought of the rifles.

‘We’d better dump these because if we are found with arms, we’ll be hanged’.

‘You wait here,’ he advised McKenna, ‘and I’ll bring them upstairs and put them under the floorboards. I don’t think that Cooke saw my rifle at all.’

Paddy Luttrell moved cautiously upstairs and he hid the two rifles under the floorboards in the room alongside the rebels’ hideout. He half-crawled, half-crept back to the kitchen. It was a cold morning and he warmed himself by the fire. Jim McKenna also felt the cold as he waited with Paddy Luttrell for the inevitable charge of British forces to flush out all the Irish rebels from Garryricken House.

After Leahy, Aylward, Quinn and Ryan re-grouped in the back courtyard they surveyed the scene as they kept the R.I.C. and British soldiers at bay with their rapid fire. Leahy knew every inch of where he was. He led his men into the door of a cow byre and through an exit door, which brought them out in a slightly wooded field behind Jimmy Luttrell’s outhouses. There was a stile opposite the exit door. Behind that stile, there was a fully-armed R.I.C. man from Callan. He aimed a barrage of rifle fire in their direction as if his life depended on it. They fired back at him and when they saw his cap fly up in the air, they thought they



74. Ned Aylward, Ahenure.



75. Michael Gibbs, Ahenure.



76. Jim and Ellie Leahy.



77. Spike used by I.R.A. for puncturing Black & Tan lorries.



78. Plaque in honour of deceased members of Dunnamaggin Co. I.R.A.



79. (a) .303 Lee Enfield Rifle; (b) Shotgun with side mounted hammer (used in Nine Mile House ambush); (c) Bandolier, each pouch contained 10 rounds (when full a bandolier contained 50 rounds); (d) leggings otherwise known as 'putties'.



80. George O'Dwyer.



81. Andy Forristal, Dunnamaggin.



82. *Glory Rovers Football Team, c.1924.*



83. *Ned Halley, Ballyline.*



84. *Michael Ruth, Kilkenny.*

had 'got' him. Leahy had just taken a step to move when a shot came from exactly the same position again. They realised then that he had pushed his R.I.C. cap up over the low wall on the top of his rifle in order to create the impression that he had been shot. He had planned to take the freedom fighters by surprise as soon as the first of them dashed from the exit door. He thought they were coming just then. The freedom fighters hesitated and he shot prematurely.

'Take it easy,' admonished Aylward. 'Fire again but fire lower this time.'

They all fired together, almost instantaneously. They heard a loud groan coming from the low wall, which was only 50 yards away. They waited to find out if firing would be resumed from the stile again, but there was no movement from there now.

'Let's go,' said Leahy.

They all dashed down the side of a hedge towards the end of the field. They could see the wall at the end of the field coming into view. Suddenly they were stopped in their tracks again when fire was opened on them from behind a tall tree almost in the centre of the slightly wooded field. The four of them had to halt, separate and rush for cover beside two other trees which were growing close to where they stood. The police carbine in Quinn's hands had become hot and he was finding difficulty in firing with it. He would like to have a sturdier, stronger rifle instead of his troublesome carbine, that is if he lived to fight another day. When the four of them fired at the spot from where the shots were coming, the hidden Tan in turn, moved out a little from cover and fired at the location indicated by the flash of their rifles. This went on for a few more seconds and every second of time lost, decreased greatly their chances of escape. Paddy Ryan was quickest to size up the situation. He saw Leahy and Aylward about to shoot but this time he held his fire. The Tan then poked out his rifle to reply. Ryan aimed and shot him dead through the head. The four straightened themselves up again and raced ahead in the direction of the wood at the bottom of the field. Seán Quinn wanted the Black and Tan's rifle badly. He veered across towards where the Black and Tan lay dead on the grass and he grabbed the shiny rifle from beside the Tan's side where it lay. As he bent down his pocket watch fell from his chest pocket although he did not know it at the time. He had bought the watch from Martin Gunn, and Gunn had scratched his name on it. This watch was found later in the day by British forces. Gunn was forced to go 'on the run' as a result.

The freedom fighters were not clear yet. Two British soldiers heard the firing coming from the wooded field. They ran down across an adjacent field to cut off the line of retreat. They fired one shot each at the escaping rebels from the corner of the field. They hit none of them and the escapees fired back at them. The

freedom fighters were now at the end wall, which they all scaled quickly. The two British soldiers had a view of the last I.R.A. volunteer as he went over the wall. He wore a long brown coat with a cap, a dark trousers with socks pulled up over its legs.

British forces back at Garryricken House had requested reinforcements from Kilkenny. They arrived at 10 a.m. The officer in charge of these fresh troops reconnoitered the house, split up his men and rushed the building. Some of the soldiers forced their way through the caretaker's wing, turned right and burst in through the kitchen door of the big house. They saw Paddy Luttrell and Jim McKenna sitting at the fire as they entered. The first soldier in, shouted 'Hands up.' McKenna put up his hands but Paddy Luttrell did not do so until he was prodded with the soldier's bayonet. The prisoners were reluctant to move but other soldiers arrived and they were shoved and pushed out into the hall. An angry mob of soldiers then came along the passageway and pushed the two prisoners into another room. There they physically attacked them, punching them with their fists and shaking them by their necks and shoulders. One of the British officers later admitted at the courtmartial that he saw Luttrell bleeding from the nose after this session. The captives were then taken outside and the British military brought the dead Black and Tan over to them on a ladder and forced them to have a good look at his wounds. He was a young man, well built and of strong appearance. His name was Riley and he hailed from Brighton in England. He had only arrived in Callan from the training camp at Gormanstown, Co. Meath, a few days previously.

Jim McKenna saw another policeman in the courtyard who had his shoulder heavily bandaged, but was not seriously wounded. He was the Callan policeman, named Moran, who had held Leahy, Aylward, Quinn and Ryan at bay for a time at the exit door to the slightly wooded field, by his fire from the stile at a critical time in their escape bid before being wounded himself. Aly Luttrell was outside Garryricken House when they brought out, Paddy her brother, and Jim McKenna. She was shocked when she saw her brother's face. His mouth and eyes were swollen and his face was covered with blood. He was unable to talk to her. She asked Jim McKenna where had they put the guns. 'In the storeroom,' he whispered. Jimmy and Tommy Luttrell, who lived in the Luttrell farmhouse, behind Garryricken House were brought out by British military, taken below the pond opposite their own house and were put standing against a high wall. They were given five minutes to tell who had been in the big house that morning or they would be shot there and then. When the five minutes had passed and they had not given any information, three shots were fired over their heads. Old Mrs Luttrell was inside the house. She thought that her two sons had been shot.

‘The Lord have mercy on Jimmy and Tommy,’ said the mother, ‘They’re over it all now and the Tans can do them no more harm.’

Her youngest daughter, Mary, shocked that her two young brothers might be dead, rushed to the window. She saw them at the high wall.

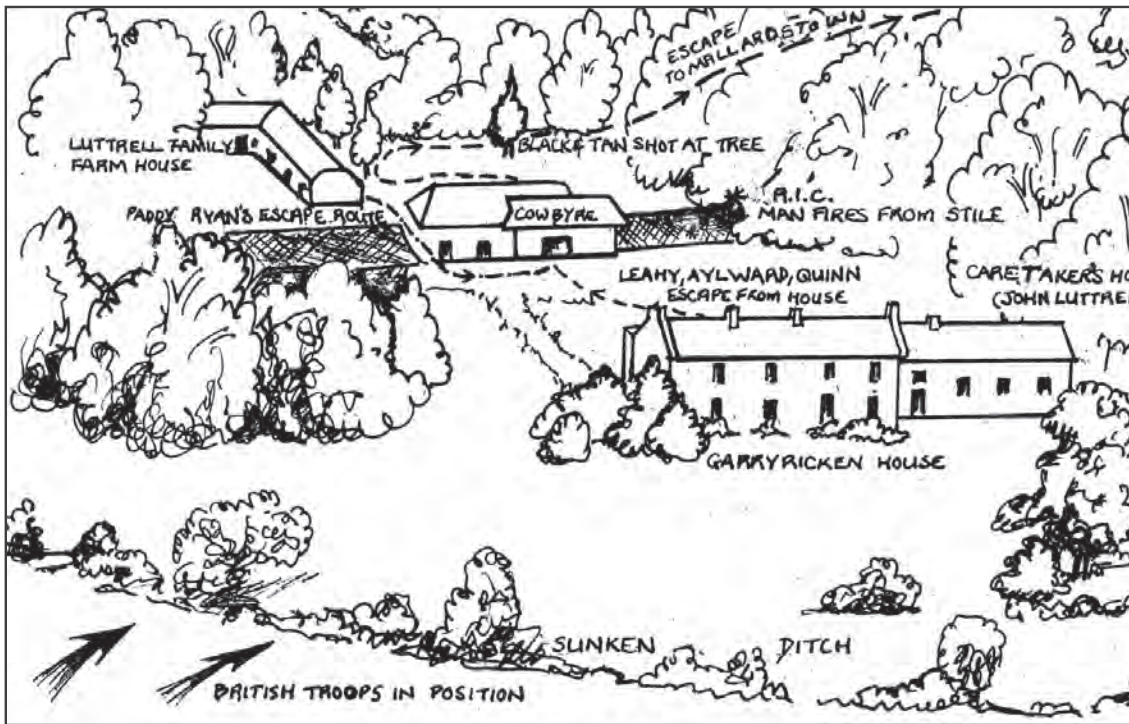
‘Mother, they’re alright,’ she said. ‘The soldiers are going away.’ The soldiers went away but they took with them Jim McKenna and Paddy, Jimmy and Tommy Luttrell.

As soon as they had departed, Aly and John Luttrell’s wife, Annie, went to the storeroom in the big house to search for the arms. They uprooted floorboards all over the storeroom, but they could not find the guns. That evening, about 3 p.m. a party of police under the Co. Inspector of the R.I.C., returned to Garryricken House to search the premises. In a room upstairs that Aly and Annie had not searched, they found two service rifles. They were both well oiled and in good condition. One was a short service rifle and the other was a long Lee-Milford rifle. One of the rifles showed clear evidence that it had been fired a short time previously. Following the discovery of the guns, John Luttrell was taken into custody. All male members of the Luttrell family were now in jail.

A post mortem examination was carried out on the dead Black and Tan, Constable Riley. The post mortem revealed a small superficial wound at the back of the left shoulder and a small entrance wound in the centre of the forehead. The dome of the skull and especially the right side was blown away. There was a small entrance wound in the stomach and a large exit wound in the right armpit. The cause of death was the destruction of the skull and brain. Constable Ernest James Riley was 26 years of age. He had been in the Royal Scots Fusiliers for seven years, and had spent over four years as a prisoner-of-war in Germany. He held the Mons Star and the British War and Victory Medals. His pay in the R.I.C. was £182 per year with £37.15s allowances. Constable Riley had sent his mother, who lived in Brighton, England, £2 per week. His mother was awarded £750 compensation for the death of her son.

District Inspector Baynham was brought to Kilkenny military hospital suffering from shock and haemorrhage due to a gunshot wound in the centre of the back of the neck, opposite the fifth, sixth and seventh cervical vertebrae.

The exit wound was above the left collarbone, which had a compound fracture. District Inspector Baynham was treated for his wounds in Kilkenny military hospital but never completely recovered. Captain H.L. Baynham was awarded £5,000 compensation for his injuries. He could not play tennis any more and he had once been the amateur athletic champion of Wales. Medical evidence was given that he was much disabled and there was a possibility of complete disablement in later days. Before the gun battle he was a Second- Class District Inspector earning £ 700 a year.



85. Site of gun battle at Garryricken House, 12 March, 1921.

Military Headquarters in Dublin issued the following communique:

At 6 o'clock on last Saturday morning, a mixed body of military and police were fired upon while searching Garryricken House, Callan. One policeman was killed and three men escaped taking their rifles with them. A District Inspector was wounded. Five men and some arms were captured.

Once Leahy, Aylward, Ryan and Quinn got through the wooded field at the back of Jimmy Luttrell's outhouses and over the wall which led into a wood at the rear, they were outside the military and police net. Leahy knew every tree and path through the wood and he led them away from the ambush scene. In the escape bid the freedom fighters had lost their boots, leggings and even bandoliers containing ammunition, which they were forced to abandon in the hasty rush from the big house. Now some of them were in their bare feet and others in stocking feet and travelling on rough ground. The military followed the tracks of stocking feet from the vicinity of where Constable Riley lay, through three fields, but they lost them there. Once at Aughtarra Bridge, Leahy, Aylward, Quinn and Ryan heard dogs barking in the wood behind them and thinking that bloodhounds were on their tracks, they walked in their bare feet through 'the canal' at the bridge with the intention of shaking off the scent. As the hours

passed they felt hungry and exhausted. They came to a dry pit near where Mrs St. Ledger lived. They rested in the pit for a while. They decided that Quinn would go up to the house to ask for a few mugs of tea. As he left to go to the house, the dogs began to bark close to them again. The barking of dogs in those days often signalled the approach of British forces in Crossley Tenders. He took the wiser course of returning to the pit without asking for the tea and they went on again. They kept going until they came to Sinnotts, Mallardstown and finally they rested in Hickeys, Danganmore, near Dunnamaggin, Co. Kilkenny.

Paddy Luttrell, Jim McKenna, John Luttrell, Thomas and James Luttrell were tried before a military court martial in Waterford on 13 June, 1921. All the accused were ably defended by Mr James Lynch K.C. from Dublin and Mr T. J. Mooney B.L. (instructed by Mr P. R. Buggy, Solr. Waterford). Due to the seriousness of the charges, I.R.A. headquarters in Dublin engaged Mr Lynch as senior counsel and paid all the other legal expenses. John, Thomas and James Luttrell were all acquitted and released. Paddy Luttrell and Jim McKenna were charged with levying war, being improperly in possession of arms and ammunition and failing to inform the authorities of the presence of armed rebels in Garryricken House on the morning of 12 March, 1921. Paddy Luttrell and Jim McKenna were found guilty on all three charges. There was a mandatory sentence of death for being improperly in possession of arms and ammunition. They were removed to Waterford prison and the sentence was to be put into effect later.

A rumour spread in Waterford Jail one day that they were to be executed on the following morning. In jail with them at the time was Rev Father John Loughrey C.C., Thomastown. He had been found guilty with John Minogue, merchant, Thomastown, and Patrick Ryan and John O'Neill of the same town on a charge of doing an act calculated to promote the objects of an unlawful association since they had met together at Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny for the purpose of furthering a trade boycott of Belfast goods in accordance with instructions received from Dáil Éireann, 'an unlawful association'. They were fined £10 each or in default, three months' imprisonment. They refused to pay the fine and all went to prison. Father Loughrey got special permission to see both McKenna and Luttrell on the night that the rumour circulated that they were to be executed. McKenna and Luttrell had heard the story also but they did not know if it was true or not. Jim McKenna said to Father Loughrey. 'I am not the first and I shall not be the last to die for Ireland.' The whole prison was tense waiting to know what was in store for the Garryricken prisoners. However, Luttrell and McKenna, were informed before the end of that week that they had been sentenced to penal servitude for life. They were released in January 1922 following the signing of the Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland.

The Garryricken House battle ranks amongst the great feats of the Irish War of Independence. When General Mulcahy, Chief of Staff of the I.R.A., read about it, he sent a message of congratulations to the Brigadier of the Kilkenny Brigade, George O'Dwyer. The 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, Flying Column was reaching maturity and displaying the toughness and the aggressiveness of a first-class active service unit. In that small group which was the nucleus of the Callan Flying Column there were I.R.A. volunteers with crack shots and they had gained valuable experience of tough guerrilla warfare.

Ballad maker James Cody of Callan lost no time in praising the great successful escape bid of Leahy, Aylward, Quinn and Ryan when he penned the words of 'Garryricken.'

In fast motors on they sped
While their prey were still abed
To entrap these they did try
Doors, they silently went through,
Then, guns rang out and bullets flew
And the Briton fell at Garryricken Wood.



*86. Richard Mulcahy,
Chief of Staff, I.R.A.
in the War of
Independence.*

CHAPTER 17

An Unfortunate Accident

After the tough and close encounter in Garryricken House, it took some time for the Callan Flying Column to recover. Some losses and disabilities had been suffered. Paddy Luttrell and Jim McKenna had been captured in battle while, Jimmy Leahy, the officer who had succeeded Jim Roughan as commandant of the 7th Battalion and who was also leader of the Flying Column, had escaped injury and death, but he was not feeling well after the desperate gun battle and subsequent successful escape. His concentration had weakened and he went to Dwyers, Bragaun, Tullahought to rest and recuperate.

When it was decided that Jimmy Leahy should go away to rest for a while, Ned Aylward, more or less, assumed the command by the unanimous consent of the other members. It was not a question of seeking for position or power, but when Leahy had to rest, Aylward carried on in his place. After Garryricken the Flying Column was out of touch with the Kilkenny Brigade Officers and George O'Dwyer, the Kilkenny Brigadier. O'Dwyer was forming his own Flying Column in East Kilkenny and was 'on the run' also. His active service unit was named the No. 1 Kilkenny Brigade Flying Column. At this time the Callan Flying Column was acting on its own as a freelance unit which carried on without specific orders from Brigade or any other authoritative group of the I.R.A. organisation. Ned Aylward became commandant of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade and leader of its renowned Flying Column without any formal appointment being made. This state of affairs lasted until April 1921, when Ernie O'Malley and Con Moloney, representing the then newly formed Second Divisional Staff, visited the Flying Column on the outskirts of Callan and ratified Aylward's appointment.

The depleted Flying Column, under their new leader, Ned Aylward, came together again in Cahills, Cappahenry as soon as things settled down after Garryricken. Only Aylward, Quinn and Ryan remained after the Garryricken gun battle. Fresh I.R.A. volunteers from the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade joined the Flying Column in Cappahenry. Michael Gibbs and Michael Maher came from the Ahenure Company, Paddy Torpey, Paud Downey, James Kelly, and Ned (Buckshot) Butler from the Callan Company volunteered for active service. Jackie Brett became a permanent, whole time member of the Flying Column from then on.

Soon afterwards the column decided to ambush the curfew patrol in Callan. They all left Mahers, Ballylarkin on a Saturday night and they went straight into West Street, Callan to wait for the curfew patrol to come out of the barracks. Ned Aylward was in charge of this attack in Callan. A Flying Column member went into Chapel Lane so that he could signal the approach of the curfew patrol to the rest of the attacking party but the patrol never left the barracks. The Flying Column was reluctant to withdraw and waited longer. Finally they opened fire on the barracks and the garrison replied with quick short bursts of rifle fire. After a short gun battle, the I.R.A. attackers withdrew, fearing the arrival of reinforcements from Kilkenny or Mullinahone.

Later, the Flying Column decided to carry out an ambush on the ‘foxy-haired officer’ named Litchfield and some of his fellow British soldiers in Mullinahone. Litchfield had been blamed for the killing of Paddy Clancy on the road near Drangan and for the massacre at Knockroe. On the 20 March, 1921, the Callan Flying Column moved into Mullinahone for the proposed ambush. Ned Aylward was again the officer in command. He had been informed through intelligence reports that the ‘foxy-haired’ officer would be in a public house in Mullinahone that night in the company of other British soldiers. It was reported that he often visited this public house to play the piano and have a few drinks. Ned sent a group of his men to a disused house opposite the public house. The ‘foxy-haired’ officer was expected to emerge from the licensed premises at closing time with his usual party of British soldiers and the orders given to the group in the disused house were to shoot him down on the street. Jimmy Kelly and Ned Aylward stood in a doorway near the public house with the intention of opening fire on Litchfield and his military party, if they escaped the burst of fire from the disused house. Ned placed another group of armed men, amongst whom was Michael Maher of Callan, at the back of Mullinahone barracks, with instructions to open fire on the barracks as soon as they heard shooting from the vicinity of the public house. The attack on the barracks was intended to keep the military and police indoors so as to give an opportunity to the Flying Column to get away from the scene of the shooting. Jack Gardiner was put on scout duty in order to relay messages from the column commander to the party surrounding the barracks.

Beside the old disused house opposite the public house, where the party of I.R.A. men were waiting for the 'foxy-haired' officer to emerge at closing time, a friendly R.I.C. man named Campbell lived. He was about 35 years of age and the local I.R.A. Battalion had nothing but the highest respect for him. He had never interfered with any of their members or activities but had helped them on occasions and had passed on warnings of impending attacks by Crown forces. Constable Campbell had just finished his supper and was preparing for bed when he heard a noise at the back of his house. It was quite dark at the time, but he decided to go out to investigate the disturbance. While in the yard, he traced the noise to the old disused house and he crossed over a low wall into another yard before going to the door of this outhouse.

Inside this unoccupied old house, the I.R.A. party was waiting in complete darkness for the 'foxy-haired' officer to emerge. Suddenly, and unexpectedly, they saw the uniform of an R.I.C. man in the doorway. They thought that things had gone wrong and that they were surrounded in the outhouse. They fired at the black R.I.C. uniform without recognising the face. Constable Campbell fell, mortally wounded. The shots were heard up the street at the barracks and the I.R.A. party there opened fire on the garrison, thinking that the 'foxy-haired' officer had been killed. The man they wanted to get stayed in the public house with his military party. The group of I.R.A. men in the disused house made off up the street. Ned Aylward and Jimmy Kelly left the doorway hurriedly and got out of Mullinahone. The I.R.A. attackers at the barracks kept up the fire for a short time and then left.

Mrs Josephine Campbell came out of her house as soon as she heard shots and she already feared that something had happened her husband. He was not in the yard and she crossed into the second yard and found her husband lying dead in a pool of blood at the door of the disused house. The Flying Column members met on the road from Mullinahone to Callan. To the surprise of the party who had opened fire on Mullinahone barracks, they now heard that the 'foxy-haired' officer had not been killed. When the Flying Column later became aware that it was Constable Campbell of the R.I.C. who had been shot dead, they deeply regretted this unfortunate occurrence as they had always respected the dead constable.

It was around this time and while Jackie Brett was on active service with the Flying Column, that the Black and Tans burned down his hardware store in the centre of the village of Mullinahone. Jackie was in Gardiners of Poulacapple when he heard that his store was burning. He could see the red flames engulfing the thriving business premises of his late father from Poulacapple but he could do nothing about it. That night, while his hardware store was still smouldering, he

made his way into Mullinahone by a back road, accompanied by Jack Gardiner, to view the charred remains. Disappointed, he returned to the Flying Column in Poulacapple. Michael Gibbs, a fellow comrade on the Flying Column, sympathised with him the next day because he thought he seemed somewhat depressed over the burning down of his store but Jackie Brett just smiled and put his arm on Micky's shoulder.

'Micky,' said Jackie, 'it's all for Ireland. Someday, when the fight is won, I'll build it up again.' Jackie Brett was not finished giving all for Ireland yet.

CHAPTER 18

The death of the Bloody Sunday footballer on the Flying Column

In the eyes of the Irish people the I.R.A. was the National army at the time and it was so regarded by every Volunteer, and by the Dáil, and was supported by a vote of money from that body. Nevertheless Eamon de Valera, who had been selected by Dáil Éireann as President of the Republic on 1 April, 1919, lost no time, after his return from America on Christmas Day 1920, in raising with Dáil Éireann the whole question of the formal and explicit acceptance of a state of war with England. This involved the question of the status of the I.R.A. He did not think it right that the Volunteers should appear to be in the position of working as irresponsible forces. He thought it absolutely necessary that the Dáil should let the world know that they took full responsibility for all the operations of their army. The Dáil empowered the President to make a public statement on the lines that he had indicated at whatever time he should deem most opportune.

Accordingly, on 30 March, 1921, President de Valera gave an interview to the representatives of the International News and the Universal Service in which he reviewed the establishment of the Republic and the title of its government to rule and to defend the Republic in arms. He said:

Five years ago men and women who knew the mind and understood the heart of our nation proclaimed this Republic. Within three years

their judgment was put to the test, was definitely passed upon and confirmed by an overwhelming majority in a national plebiscite.

The Republic of 1916, provisional and liable to question before the elections of December, 1918, was by these elections placed on a foundation of certitude unassailable either in point of fact or of moral right. Those who question the validity of the Republic now must challenge the foundations of democracy and the constitutional right of peoples everywhere.

We took office, knowing that the people wanted us to be a government in fact as well as in name. For example, one of our first governmental acts was to take over the control of the voluntary armed forces of the nation. From the Irish Volunteers we fashioned the Irish Republican Army to be the military arm of the Government. This army is, therefore, a regular State force, under the civil control of the elected representatives and under organisation and a discipline imposed by these representatives, and under officers who hold their commissions under warrant from these representatives. The Government is, therefore, responsible for the actions of this army. The I.R.A. is the national army of defence.

Mr. de Valera was asked if he considered the ambushing of the British forces justifiable.

‘Certainly,’ answered the President. ‘If the Irish nation and the Irish Republic as a state directly founded upon the consent and the will of the people is not entitled to use force to defend itself, then no nation and no state is entitled to use force. The English forces are in our country as invaders, on a war footing as they themselves have declared: in fact actually waging upon us not only an unjust but a barbarous war. Protected by the most modern war-appliances, they swoop down upon us and kill and burn and loot and outrage - why should it be wrong for us to do our utmost to see that they will not do these things with impunity? If they may use their tanks and steel-armoured cars, why should we hesitate to use the cover of stone walls and ditches. Why should the element of surprise be denied to us?’

Early in April 1921, the Flying Column left Cappaheny and moved to Castlejohn, which is just inside Co. Tipperary, but not far from Windgap, Co.

Kilkenny, and there they stayed at Philip Donovan's dwelling house. The active service unit was getting ready to move off from Castlejohn on 6 April, but first, Ned Aylward, the column commander, ordered an inspection of arms. All the members of the Flying Column went to their rooms in Donovans to clean up whatever weapons they had. Three of them were staying in the same room, Michael Gibbs, Paud Downey and Jackie Brett. Micky Gibbs was sitting on the stairs, cleaning his rifle as Jackie Brett passed by him, going up to his room. Always a lad for 'caffling', Jackie threw Michael Gibbs to one side with a push of his arms and they laughed heartily when Micky jocosely swore that he would 'throttle' him the next time that he did that. Ned Aylward and Jimmy Kelly passed by the stairs on their way out to the yard to get ready to put the Flying Column through a parade and drill session.

Jackie Brett went into his room and sat on the windowsill as he cleaned his revolver. He first took out the magazine, left his revolver on the windowsill beside him and began to clean out the magazine. At the time he was unaware that he had left a live bullet up the breech of the revolver. As he worked on he was in good humour and he began to sing a verse of 'Boolavogue.' Jack Donovan, a teenage member of the Donovan family, came into the room and began to converse with Jackie. During the conversation he took the revolver into his hand and began to finger it. Suddenly the Colt Automatic fired because it had a weak spring and neither young Donovan nor Jackie Brett realised that a live bullet was up the breech. Jackie collapsed motionless on the floor. The bullet had hit him at close range and had gone into the left-hand side of his chest and out again through his right shoulder. Ned Aylward and Jimmy Kelly heard the report of the shot in the yard. Kelly paused and heard no further sound.

'That shot has done harm,' he said to Ned Aylward.

Jimmy Kelly, who had seen service in France with the British army in World War I, and Ned Aylward rushed into the house and up the stairs. Kelly took one look at Jackie Brett and shouted for the first-aid equipment. Michael Gibbs, always a close friend of Jackie Brett, quickly handed it to him. He grabbed the cotton wool, tore it into strips and packed it into the bleeding entrance and exit holes in Jackie Brett's body to try to stem the big flow of blood from his wound. Jack Donovan, though still in a state of shock, was sent to get the priest and doctor. Jackie Brett was unconscious until Father Larkin, the curate in Windgap parish, arrived but then he opened his eyes when the priest entered the room. Flying Column members went out while Father Larkin tended the dying man. Soon afterwards Dr Marnell of Kilmoganny arrived at Donovans and he went to the room upstairs to try to save Jackie Brett's life.

The members of the Flying Column waited downstairs around the kitchen fire, hoping for the best. Father Larkin was the first to come downstairs and he sat down among the silent freedom fighters. ‘Jackie passed away a few minutes ago,’ he said. ‘I was lucky to get here in time.’ Dr Marnell came down the stairs and, after sympathising with the members of the Flying Column, he left. Father Larkin told them to contact him again if they needed his help and he also departed. Ned Aylward thanked him on his way out for coming so quickly to their assistance. This was the Flying Column’s first encounter with a death in their ranks and it took them a little while to adjust to the shock. They then knelt down by the glowing kitchen fire and recited a full Rosary for Jackie’s soul as they thought of how suddenly the young 19 year-old soldier boy had departed their ranks away from his native Mullinahone and the relations and countryside that he loved so well.

The members of the Flying Column, huddled together around the kitchen fire, discussed how they would bury the remains of their former comrade. They knew full well that they were outlaws in their own country and that they could not participate openly in any funeral. They could not risk bringing a coffin out of Carrick-on-Suir or Callan in case the R.I.C. or British military got word of it.

But Jackie Brett had to be buried. It was proposed to bury him in a sheet. Seán Quinn, Jackie Brett’s friend, who had played football with him on the C.J. Kickham team in Mullinahone, protested. ‘I’ll not allow him to be buried in a sheet,’ he retorted. ‘we’ll have to get a coffin for him, wherever it’ll be got.’

The others pointed out that this was impossible in the circumstances. But Quinn would not yield. ‘Even if we’re all to be shot over it, we must get a coffin,’ he insisted. Micky Gibbs then volunteered to make a coffin, if he could get some old boards of any sound type.

Accompanied by Ned Aylward and Paud Downey, Micky went over to Frank O’Neill’s house in Kiltrassy, to ask if he had any suitable boards for the purpose. They found Mrs O’Neill in the kitchen.

‘Any thing in the house that is of use to you, you can have it,’ she said. ‘Go up on the loft and you’ll get some timber there.’

Micky Gibbs found to his great satisfaction that the loft contained a pile of rejected coffin boards which the O’Neills had bought some time before. Micky picked out four of the boards and started to make a coffin. He started about 9 p.m. and he had a rough coffin fashioned by midnight. Mrs O’Neill brought out an 18-inch long crucifix and Micky put it on the lid of the coffin.

Larry O’Neill, a son of the family, arrived home and he offered to transport the corpse to the graveyard. It was arranged to do this secretly during the night and to make the minimum noise. Larry yoked the horse to the cart, which had rubber

wheels, took the shoes off the horse and put sacking over the four hooves in order to dull the sound of the moving horse and vehicle. Micky Gibbs and Larry O'Neill, first brought the hand-made coffin back to Donovans Castlejohn in the horse's cart. With them came Nurse Kitty O'Neill, a sister of Larry, who was home on holidays and she prepared the body of Jackie Brett for burial. The Flying Column members then coffined Jackie and carried the coffin down to the kitchen. Every member of the Flying Column then passed by the body in the coffin and touched his hands as they bade farewell. To close the coffin Micky Gibbs drove nails into the roughly fashioned rectangular box and to secure it more soundly, Frank O'Neill of Kiltrassy got two ploughing reins and tied the head of the coffin with the strong ropes.

The Flying Column had sent word out to the local I.R.A. unit in Tullahought and they had gone to Lamoge graveyard and picked and dug a grave, which already had been used and would not be needed again by the particular family who owned it. The Flying Column members followed the rubber-tired cart, bearing the remains of Jackie Brett, drawn by the horse with the sack-covered hooves, on the silent journey to Lamoge cemetery. In the half-light Jackie Brett was secretly buried in the deserted graveyard and the Flying Column members, assisted by members of the Tullahought company of the I.R.A., filled in the grave as neatly as they could in order to disguise the fact that any new fresh grave had been opened in the cemetery. Before leaving the graveyard at dawn, the Flying Column recited a Rosary for the repose of the soul of Jackie Brett. It was now dangerous for them to stay any longer in the district as British forces might come looking for freshly made graves and the next day they moved on through the fields for Kilbricken, near Callan, where they stayed with Madigans, Kirwans, Condons, HoIdens, and Downeys.

Despite all the exhaustive measures taken by the Flying Column to keep the news of Jackie Brett's death from the British military, they still got word of his accidental shooting but they did not know where he was buried. Still they went searching for the body in order to instigate an investigation into the whole case and they kept their eyes open for a newly made grave. The Tullahought Company watched the British military as they searched near their area and when it became apparent that Lamoge cemetery would come within the range of the search, they decided to raise Jackie Brett's coffin again. Ned Maher, Cussane, Michael Davis, Jack Donovan, Frank and Larry O'Neill of Kiltrassy, Paddy Lee, Johnny Duggan and Pat Holden, Newtown, Kells opened the grave once more and brought the remains of Jackie Brett this time to the farm of Ned Maher, Cussane. There the coffin was taken out to a field, which was being tilled for the sowing of turnips. A grave was opened in the field and the coffin, containing the remains of Jackie

Brett, was again interred. Planks and boards were put over the coffin, to prevent the grave sinking and the earth was then filled in. All the loose earth that did not fit back into the grave was then taken away and the next morning the horses tilled and harrowed and opened fresh turnip drills over the freshly made grave in the six- acre field.

Before leaving the field, the local I.R.A. Volunteers measured accurately the position of Jackie Brett's hidden and unmarked grave by stepping the distances from the two adjacent sides in the rectangular field. One day, when the fight was won, they would see to it that the remains of Jackie Brett would be buried in consecrated ground. But for them and the Flying Column that day was still very much in the future and more of the Column would die before it would dawn.

A ballad-maker, Paddy Cuddihy, was in business in Callan at the time and he penned a verse in memory of Jackie Brett.

May the sod lie lightly on you, Seán,
And when the fight is won,
We'll rest you in the Martyrs' Plot,
'Neath the shade of Sliabh na mBan.
And rising proudly at your head
Like a sentinel shall stand
Redemption's sign - with the noble words
"He gave all for Ireland".

CHAPTER 19

The Flying Column moves South

When the Flying Column members had buried their young comrade, Jackie Brett, at half-dawn in Lamoge cemetery they moved on to Kilbricken, near Callan where they spent two days amongst their friends and sympathisers. They moved then to Goldenfield, Ballycallan where they stayed in Fentons and in the home of Bridget Hoyne. Then they returned towards their base in the Callan area. Some of them stayed in Cahills, Cappahenry, and others near Finns, Boharawarrige.

MOONARCH AMBUSH

Ned Aylward decided that it was time for the Flying Column to go into action again. On 13 April, 1921, the active service unit of eleven men moved out to Moonarch about two miles from Callan on the Mullinahone road to hold up the postman who was bringing mail in a pony and trap from Mullinahone to Callan. The mail sack was taken from the postman and he followed the usual course and went into Callan police barracks and reported the matter to the R.I.C. The I.R.A. party expected an R.I.C. cycle patrol to come out from Callan to investigate the matter. Ned Aylward placed three of his men near the road at Cappahenry Bridge, and put the remaining seven further down the road towards Kilbride in a wood near Moonarch. The ambush plan was to allow the cycle patrol in between the

two groups and then to open fire simultaneously on the patrol from both sides. On being informed of the raid on the mail car, a party of military and police left Callan barracks in two Crossley Tenders to go to the scene of the 'hold up.' Seán Quinn was going through the mail when he heard the two Crossley Tenders approach. He signalled to the I.R.A. volunteers in the wood and they opened fire on the military and police.

Sergeant Moran of the Callan R.I.C., who had fought courageously against the Flying Column in Garryricken, was in the front tender. When the lorry reached Attynoe, where the wood skirts the road, the firing increased from the wood. As they advanced further, the military and police came under very intense fire and the tenders were forced to grind to a halt and the occupants had to jump from the lorries before they stopped. When Sergeant Moran went to leap clear, he crashed on to the road breaking his collarbone and injuring his shoulder and right upper arm. He also suffered a wound to the back of his head and he got some scratches on his face. Constable J. Oliver broke his knee when he fell and was unable to walk from the spot. The British soldiers set up a Lewis machine gun under a lorry opposite the gate to the wood and raked the wood with rapid fire from this machine gun.

Aylward, Ryan, Quinn and Ned (Buckshot) Butler, who were the four I.R.A. volunteers at Cappahenry Bridge, came out on the road and opened fire on the Auxiliaries and police who had jumped from the lorries. A private of the Devonshire Regiment, was operating the Lewis gun and Ned Aylward got him in his sights and fired at him five times. The fifth bullet hit him and the Lewis gun went out of action. The soldier was wounded badly but not killed. Intensive firing continued for some time. Ned Aylward was lying in a fence at the wood side of the road with the gun to his shoulder and his elbow on the road. Suddenly a bullet went under his elbow and ricocheted off the road but whatever way it went it missed him. At the same time the riflemen in the wood came under heavy fire on their left flank from reinforcements from Kilkenny. Tommy Kearney from Currach, who was firing with a shotgun from the wood, had a piece taken from the top of the barrel of his shotgun by a bullet from a soldier's rifle. Bill Saunders from Mantingstown, who was beside him, almost toppled over when a bullet struck the gun under his arm. Ned Aylward then realised that there were soldiers firing in the wood and he shouted to the I.R.A. party near him to get down in the deep channel under the bridge. Ryan and Aylward got into the channel and continued moving along in the hollow. Ned (Buckshot) Butler, and Seán Quinn got out of the channel and were lucky to escape as they ran down a field in full view of the soldiers and under heavy fire. Ryan and Aylward circled around to the rear of the soldiers who were firing from the wood. They opened fire on these soldiers then and this forced the British military and police to direct their fire on

them. That tactic gave all the other I.R.A. attackers an opportunity to disengage and get out of the area before being surrounded.

Paddy Kennedy from Coologue, Callan, who had been with the group firing from the wood, noticed when retreating that there was a basket left by sympathisers inside the gate containing refreshments for the Flying Column. He stopped and looked again when he saw two creamery books left inadvertently in the basket with the names of two neighbouring farmers prominently displayed on them. He had the presence of mind to grab them and take them with him. By his quick thinking action he may have saved two neighbouring farmhouses from being burned to the ground. The Flying Column and the local volunteers who had joined them in the 'wood ambush' retired without casualties and they gave British forces in Callan and Kilkenny due warning that they were still around and as strong as ever in their first brisk encounter since Garryricken.

After the Moonarch ambush Michael Gibbs dislocated his ankle and was not able to travel with the Flying Column. Seán Quinn told him to rest the ankle. Ned Aylward advised him to lie low for a while in a safe house. Father Walsh, who was curate in Callan at the time, wrote to Father White in Galmoy to tell him that he was sending Michael Gibbs to him for safekeeping. When Gibbs arrived in Galmoy, Father White sent him to Currans, Waterfield. He left there after a while and went to Dalys and Hendersons of Cooloultha in the Johnstown area. Miss Daly was a schoolteacher and she arranged for him to go to County Laois until after the Truce.

The Callan Flying Column began to grow in strength at this time. Ned Halley, Neddie Byrne and Nicholas Byrne from Ballyclovan volunteered for active service and were accepted into the column. Ned Halley had been elected as Vice-Commandant of the seventh battalion after the arrest of Comdt James Roughan. Later on Ned Dwyer and Ned Walsh, also members of the Ballyclovan Co. I.R.A. joined the Column. The active service unit moved off after the 'wood ambush' for south Kilkenny. An officer of the 9th Battalion invited them down to the Kilmacow-Mooncoin area for consultations about a proposed ambush. They travelled on foot and inspected the proposed site for an ambush between Upper and Lower Kilmacow, two separated parts of Kilmacow Village. They had in mind attacking a cycle patrol of British forces, consisting of R.I.C. and Black and Tans, which passed between the two villages early every morning. That night, some of the senior officers of the 9th Battalion objected vehemently to the plan. Ted Moore, Kilmacow and Jack (na Cullagh) Walsh, Portnascully told Ned Aylward that they had this ambush planned themselves but they needed more time to prepare. Even though Ned Aylward offered to give them all the arms that might be captured in the attack, they were adamant in their refusal to allow the ambush to go ahead and Ned Aylward withdrew the Flying Column. The 9th Battalion,

Kilkenny Brigade, subsequently carried out this attack on British forces on Saturday, 18th June at Sinnott's Cross, near Clogga, Mooncoin and Constable Albert Bradford was killed and Constable John Stuart was wounded in the arm.

While they were in the area the Flying Column stayed in Clogga at Pat Walsh's and McDonalds. On their way back from Kilmacow they stayed in Moolum. Ned Aylward was put up in Tommy O'Neill's house and other members of the column stayed in Whelans. Pack Whelan arranged the billeting for them. They left then to go to the Piltown area. They passed by Killinaspick Church and on to Buddy Walsh's, Springfield and Powers, Brenar. The column members felt tired and exhausted after the long trek, and when some of them arrived in Owing they were hungry also. Ned Halley went into a public house near there but he had no money to buy a drink. He left the public house again as they were under strict orders not to take any drink in a licensed premises unless they could pay for it. They arrived at a big slated house which was covered in ivy and stood in a farmyard. They saw a horse and cart in a barn and got the owner's name from the cart. When they knocked on the door, they were well received. The Hearne family lived there. The owner of the house knew Johnny Cummins from Desart, a school teacher who had taught Ned Halley and Nicholas Byrne. Johnny Cummins lived a mile up the hill from the house. He came down to meet them and he brought them up to his home where they danced well into the night to the music of his melodeon. When the Flying Column was leaving Powers, Brenar next morning, Paddy Power joined the column, and went with them.

THE BESSBORO GUN BATTLE

During the time Ned Aylward stayed at Buddy Walsh's, Springfield he heard that the 8th Battalion had planned an ambush for the next day Saturday 23 April, 1921. They proposed to attack a six-man mixed patrol of military and police who travelled between Fiddown and Piltown every morning. He promised the co-operation of the Flying Column to Buddy Walsh and Jack Duggan, the captain of the Templeorum Co. I.R.A., for the task ahead. The column had six rifles and these would be a help in an ambush situation. Members of the 8th Battalion from Hugginstown were asked to report for duty. Amongst those who arrived after walking from Carrickshock were Willie Farrell, Nicky Carroll, Danny Kelly, Ned Walsh (Carrickshock) and Bill Walsh (Ballaght). Members of the Templeorum Co. I.R.A. reported for duty also. Jack Duggan, the company captain was there and John Carroll the quartermaster. Tom Walsh of Templeorum was amongst others from the local company who took part.



87. Route and military engagements of the Flying Columns, 1921.

The patrol was to be attacked from behind a high wall at Doodys, Fiddown. The I.R.A. party arrived at the scene of the ambush early in the morning, having come across the fields through Bessboro demesne. When they reached Doodys, Ned Aylward placed the men in position on two sides of the road. Most of the I.R.A. attacking party was behind the wall. At the other side of the road there was

a fence where a few more of the freedom fighters were under cover. The farmer, on whose land the I.R.A. ambushing party was in position, was not allowed to go to the creamery that morning. About 10 a.m. a lone unarmed Tan passed in a creamery car going towards Piltown. The scouts then relayed a message that he was passing back. As the Tan was walking back on the footpath, Jimmy Kelly of the Flying Column raised his head above the high wall to see what was happening. He was wearing a Volunteer uniform and the Black and Tan saw him. He could not then be allowed to return to Fiddown R.I.C. Barracks. The ambushers jumped out and captured him, poking their guns into his face. While the Tan was being captured, drivers of horses and carts going to the creamery, who saw the incident, were turned into Doodys' farmyard by the scouts.

The Black and Tan was put into a haybarn in Doodys' farmyard and interrogated by Ned Halley and others. He told his I.R.A. captors that he was of London-Irish stock. He had been unemployed and when he called to the Labour Exchange in London, they told him that he would be paid £1 per day if he would volunteer to go to Ireland as an Auxiliary. That appeared to him to be a very good wage and he accepted the offer. He was first sent to Woodstock but he did not like it there. The Auxiliaries came in each night very intoxicated, and they attempted to beat up and shoot their prisoners. His resignation was refused but he was sent instead to Fiddown R.I.C. barracks. Mrs Doody was giving around cups and mugs of tea. Halley got a mug for himself and asked for one for the Black and Tan. Halley gave the Tan tea and bread and he was happy with the food.

When afternoon came and the mixed patrol of military and police had not arrived, the ambushers got uneasy and Ned Aylward became apprehensive. The officers had a consultation, as a result of which they withdrew their men from the ambush positions and went back as they came through Bessboro demesne, bringing the captured Black and Tan with them. It was about 4 p.m. when they approached Ladies' Bridge on the estate. There was a river flowing under the bridge and they stopped before they came to it to decide what to do with their prisoner. He was then a nuisance to them. Someone suggested shooting him but they had got to like him in the few hours they had known him. They had just turned to cross the bridge when a local volunteer named Johnny Murphy called Ned Aylward's attention to a movement he saw on a rise of ground to the right of them.

'Look at the tin hats,' said Paddy Power.

'Look out,' cried another volunteer, 'They're setting up a machine gun.'

Shortly afterwards British troops opened fire on their right. There were trees on each side of the bridge and elms, oaks and laurels almost met together above it. The I.R.A. party took cover in the trees for a minute, and then they noticed

that the firing from the military was about three feet too high. They were in a dip in the field and the first bursts of machine gun fire went over their heads. They decided to make a dash for it. They spoke to their prisoner first and told him that they would free him on one condition that he would never identify any of the I.R.A. volunteers he had met during his day's sojourn with them. He promised to do so. They released him and told him to take good care of himself.

They then made the dash across the bridge. Above them the bullets fired by British forces on the hill ripped through the leaves and the branches of the trees, knocking leaves down over them and scattering small branches all over the place around them. The first I.R.A. volunteers across kept their heads down, they lay down in the fence and replied to the fire of the British forces. Shots fired by the freedom fighters gave cover to the other half of the I.R.A. force to get over the bridge. British military and police could not lower their gunfire any more because of the dip in the ground around the bridge and the freedom fighters got across the bridge and into the cover of trees beyond without suffering casualties. The engagement became brisk at this stage as the I.R.A. fired towards the position of the military with rifles, automatics and shotguns of various kinds. The shotguns were not effective but the one man with a Peter the Painter automatic, and the six riflemen from the Callan Flying Column more than held their own in the fierce exchange of fire. The police and military, who by this time had been reinforced and now numbered between eighteen and twenty soldiers, R.I.C. policemen and Auxiliaries, replied with rifles, grenades and bombs. After the battle had reached its fiercest intensity it then died down as the British machine-gunner was hit. Although he was only slightly wounded, the machine gun went out of action for a while.

Willie Farrell and Ned Aylward asked Seán Carroll of the Templeorum Co. I.R.A. what was the best line of retreat and he advised them not to go towards Piltown but to go to the left towards Gortrush. Once the firing faded the freedom fighters moved away quickly. The density of the undergrowth helped them to slip away unobtrusively. Seán Carroll and Paddy Power were locals and knew the country well. They got along by Gortrush, just out of sight of the military and police. British forces tried once more to outflank them. The freedom fighters were crossing a road when they heard the Tans approaching the bend in their Crossley Tenders but the I.R.A. just barely cleared the opposite fence before the Tans turned in on the road. The I.R.A. party went ahead and up a rise until they came to Corbally Hill. The hill is near Templeorum and north-east of Brenar. They were now outside the police net and they had a meal in Ashtown. Some of the local volunteers, including Paddy Power's brother, withdrew through Piltown.

A police report, issued later, said that the freedom fighters withdrew, taking their wounded with them and that they were afterwards seen dragging what appeared to be a dead body in the direction of the hills near Mullinavat. It was further claimed that numerous bloodstains were discovered at the scene of the conflict.

The 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade Flying Column suffered no injuries in the Bessboro gun battle and neither did the Templeorum Co. I.R.A. or the members of the Hugginstown Co. from the 8th Battalion. Paddy Power helped to guide Ned Aylward and the Callan Flying Column away from Bessboro. They travelled around the hill to Kilmoganny and they billeted there at McEnerys, and Moores, Readsbarne. While Ned Aylward was at Moores, he received an urgent despatch from an I.R.A. messenger stating that Seán Hogan, the renowned Tipperary freedom fighter, was about to cross into Co. Kilkenny with his whole Flying Column.



88. *Seán Hogan.*

CHAPTER 20

The Enlarged Flying Column

The Army Council of the I.R.A. appointed Ernie O'Malley Commandant-General over the 2nd Southern Division of the I.R.A., which took in the South Tipperary Brigade, the East Limerick Brigade, the Mid-Tipperary Brigade, the Mid-Limerick Brigade and the Kilkenny Brigade on 21 March, 1921. Ernie O'Malley had every intention of stepping up the action of the I.R.A. in all these brigade areas and of making a gigantic effort to force the British Government to recognise Ireland's full nationhood and complete separation from Britain. In April 1921, he held an important divisional meeting in Rosegreen, County Tipperary, the underground headquarters of the South Tipperary Brigade and this meeting had a profound influence on the progress of the War of Independence in County Kilkenny from then on until the Truce on 11 July, 1921.

O'Malley stated at this meeting that he wished the 2nd Flying Column of the South Tipperary Brigade, under Seán Hogan of Knocklong fame, to extend the war into County Kilkenny in order to relieve the pressure on the Cork Brigade under Liam Lynch. County Kilkenny had two I.R.A. Flying Columns and already many attacks had been made throughout the county on British military and R.I.C. targets and the Brigade officers were quite satisfied with their level of harassment of British enemy forces but now O'Malley was demanding greater effort in County Kilkenny and County Tipperary.

It was suggested by O'Malley that Seán Hogan link up in County Kilkenny with the Flying Column of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, which was under the command of Ned Aylward. Both commandants were then to select and attack

British military targets in County Kilkenny before meeting with the Kilkenny No. 1 Flying Column, which was operating in North Kilkenny under Commandant George O'Dwyer, a Castlecomer man. The Kilkenny No. 1 Flying Column was made up of the following members from Graiguenamanagh and Kilkenny City and from East Kilkenny in general:–

Graiguenamanagh:	Comdt. Seán Walsh, Michael C. Carroll, Patrick Quinn, Chris Doyle, Bob Doyle, Jim Doyle
Kilkenny City:	Michael Ruth, Michael McSweeney Jnr., Kieran Coady, James Delaney (Matty), Kieran Tobin.
Kells:	John Keane.
Inistioge:	Michael O'Hanrahan.
Thomastown:	Nicholas Mullins.
Glenmore:	Seán Hartley.
Paulstown:	James Purcell.
Tullaroan:	Ned Holland.
Threecastles:	Jack Wall.
The Rower:	Martin Bates.

Hogan got the message to link up with these two County Kilkenny Flying Columns, and he decided to meet the Callan Flying Column first in the Windgap area. He sent a despatch to Ned Aylward requesting him to lead his column across to the Windgap road where he would be waiting to rendezvous with him. Seán Hogan's Flying Column at this time consisted of 41 men selected from the Clonmel, Cahir, Carrick-on-Suir, and Grangemockler areas of County Tipperary. They were finding it increasingly hard to successfully engage the enemy in County Tipperary because of the large and close concentration of military and police in that county. The Kilkenny Flying Column members of the 7th Battalion were becoming more experienced as time went on in guerrilla warfare and had inflicted many casualties on R.I.C. and British military up to this time. This Flying Column was smaller than Hogan's.

When Seán Hogan's Flying Column crossed the Tipperary border, Ned Aylward and the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade Flying Column met them on the Windgap road about halfway between Carrick-on-Suir and Callan. The combined Flying Columns moved to Dunnamaggin and billeted in Danganmore, which is a short distance from the village. During the day they drilled under Seán Hogan, the diminutive but fearless column commander of Knocklong fame. He had an aura of authority about him and he was respected by the men under his command.

Seán Hogan's Flying Column brought an Overlord motor car with them into

County Kilkenny which they had captured in County Tipperary and they carried a machine-gun in the car which they had also captured. The members of Hogan's Column were welcomed in Danganmore and the members of the Callan Flying Column were no strangers there, as Aylward, Quinn, Leahy and Ryan had stayed in John Hickey's after the Garryricken House gun battle before moving down to the Piltown area.

This was the beginning of a new departure in so far as it was unusual up to then to have such large columns together. As the combined Flying Columns numbered over 50 men it was necessary for safety to put all the relevant guidelines for security into operation when such a big number of fighting men were involved. Where the large Flying Columns broke their cross-country marches in the War of Independence, the local I.R.A. Company arranged safe houses in which to billet them. The local I.R.A. Company then did scout duty for the Flying Columns as they slept and rested. The Dunnamaggin local I.R.A. company were enthusiastic and performed this duty most efficiently. The members of the Flying Columns were billeted with Wallaces, Brennans, Hickeys, Mulrooneys, Holdens, O'Neills, and Forristals of Danganmore, with Mrs Long and Mrs Davis of Shortallstown and with Walshs of Ballintee. All the members of Dunnamaggin Company I.R.A. turned out to do scout duty. Amongst those who acted as scouts were Pádraig Walsh, John Hickey, Pat Holden, Denis Treacy, Kieran O'Neill, Bob Coady, Lyda Holden, Pat Mulrooney, Bill Mulrooney, Denis Lahart, Andy Forristal, Larry Forristal, Ned Egan, Phil O'Shea, Anthony Byrne, John Walsh, John Egan, Bill Fitzpatrick, Jack and Jim Hanrahan, Kells, John and Michael Walsh, Rathduff, Jim and Mick Hickey and Paddy Kenny of Danganmore.

Due to the big number of flying column members around Danganmore over those two days, the local people there came to know a lot more about the lifestyle of Flying Columns, with a membership of up to 60 volunteers. The fighters of these large service units were full time republican soldiers. They joined the roving Flying Columns consisting of between 10 and 60 republican soldiers and they travelled through the country, mostly on foot. They wore green-grey uniforms and peaked caps. Often the caps were worn back to front and some had hats with pinned-up sides. Most of them wore riding breeches and leggings. Leather bandoliers stretched across their shoulders, chest and back and finished in a leather belt around the waist. They carried rifles and shotguns and some had revolvers as well. Some carried grenades hanging by levers from the girdle around their waists. Many wore trench coats designed in military fashion with shoulder straps and belts as accessories. Around half of the members of the Flying Columns came from rural backgrounds and they were very familiar with travelling cross-country and they knew how to use the fields, hills, dykes and ditches to their

own advantage. They received no payment of any kind but depended on the kindness of the Irish people for the odd drink and the spare packet of cigarettes. Their aim was to attack British military targets speedily and unexpectedly and then disengage quickly, having inflicted the maximum damage. After an attack they disappeared quickly into the hills of the countryside where they had safe houses. They could not afford to suffer heavy casualties, as their leaders believed that, if they did, the Irish people would lose faith in them. They were a wandering army who had no field hospitals, ambulances, or military doctors for their sick or wounded. But as always there were priests and doctors who put themselves in danger in ministering to their needs.

It was this wandering army that Captain Pádraig Walsh of the Dunnamaggin Company I.R.A. joined as a full-time Flying Column member on 9 May, 1921, while the large service unit was in Danganmore. He had been ‘on the run’ since Sunday, 24 April when ten members of the Dunnamaggin Company I.R.A., on their way to take part in a planned attack on British Forces in Callan, were overtaken by a party of British military at Haggard between Dunnamaggin and Kells. In the party were Pat Walsh, Pat Holden, Denis Lahart, Bob Coady, John Hickey, Pat Mulrooney, Phil O’Shea, Paddy Kenny, Kieran O’Neill, and Denis Treacy. They had to retreat in haste and Pat Holden and Denis Treacy were spotted in a field and the military opened fire on them. They both jumped a fence to get out on the road and Pat Holden was wounded in the ribs as he jumped. British forces pursued them and they had to run a good mile as far as Costelloes of Goodwingsgarden, crossing a river on the route, before they lost their pursuers. During the hasty retreat, Pat Holden was carrying Pat Walsh’s overcoat and, in the chase, he was forced to drop the coat onto the ground. Pat Walsh’s name was marked on the coat and the British military picked it up. The following morning, having recognised Pat Walsh’s name on the coat, they called to his house but Pat was not at home. He had gone ‘on the run’ and for a while after that he had sheltered in local houses and for much of the time in Pat Holden’s house in Shortallstown. It was just then that the large Flying Columns arrived in Danganmore and Pádraig Walsh applied to join the column. He was gladly accepted as a member of the Callan Flying Column and Pádraig was delighted with the news.

Before the column departed from Dunnamaggin they assembled and paraded in Forristals’ field in Danganmore. Pádraig Walsh shook hands with his comrades of the Dunnamaggin Company I.R.A. before he departed. ‘Goodbye, Andy and I’ll be back soon again with a new Ireland for you,’ were his last words to Andy Forristal as he proudly marched out the gate of the field, a full-time member of Ireland’s fighting men. Little did he know what faced him soon afterwards in the West Kilkenny Hills.

CHAPTER 21

The I.R.A. occupy Kilmanagh and billet in Tullaroan

Commandant Ned Aylward and Commandant Seán Hogan had no intention of delaying long before engaging British forces in County Kilkenny and they meant business. They set out with the Flying Columns and stayed in Newtown for a night where Pat Holden and Mick Brennan of Newtown, Kells arranged the billeting of the freedom fighters. Both commandants examined an ambush site but Commandant Hogan was not satisfied with the location. Commandant Aylward then informed the column members that they were pushing on for Shipton, near Kilmanagh where they would billet in Teehans. Seán Hogan and Ned Aylward made Teehans, Shipton their headquarters for the night of 11 May. It was there that Ned Aylward heard that he had been selected the Monday previously by the Sinn Féin clubs of Kilkenny and Carlow as one of their four candidates for the 1921 elections for Dáil Éireann, which were just about to take place. Ned was described at that selection meeting as a young man who had just finished a brilliant college career and one who could ably put forward any point of view.

But here at Shipton on the night of 11 May, Ned and Seán Hogan made their plan of action for the following week. Kitty Teehan and her sister Molly provided food and shelter for all the members of the Flying Columns, gave up their beds so that column members could sleep, did scout duty for them while they slept and even provided a change of clothing for some and packets of cigarettes for others. These two Cumann na mBan ladies could not have done more to make the Flying

Column members feel really and truly at home for the night. They always did their work so well in guarding and protecting the men ‘on the run’ that their house was never raided by British forces while harbouring members of the I.R.A.

Seán Hogan and Ned Aylward completed their plan of action. They planned to occupy Kilmanagh the following day as two lorry-loads of Black and Tans were expected to arrive there to provide protection for the auction of a farm in the area because this sale had local political implications. They intended to ambush these lorries as they passed through Kilmanagh village. After this engagement they were to travel further up northwest Kilkenny and rendezvous with Kilkenny Brigade No. 1. Flying Column under Commandant George O’Dwyer, and all three Flying Columns were then to amalgamate for an all-out attack on Urlingford barracks.

It was decided to get word to the Kilmanagh and Ballyline companies of the I.R.A. to have men in Kilmanagh the following morning. Ned Halley, who was a native of the parish of Kilmanagh and a member of Ned Aylward’s Flying Column, was instructed to get word around the area. He took Paud Downey, a fellow column member from Callan, with him and together they spread the word. The rest of the Flying Column then slept the night and awaited the dawn. Very early in the morning of 12 May both Flying Columns left Shipton to take up ambush positions in Kilmanagh Village. The officers travelled in the Overlord motorcar and the column members who numbered about 60 in all, walked in military formation carrying their arms. It was a mistake for Seán Hogan to travel through County Kilkenny in the captured Overlord motor car as his whereabouts could be all the more easily traced because motor cars on country roads were rare in those days and travel by motor car, motor cycle, or pedal bicycle was prohibited in County Kilkenny in 1921 between the hours of nine o’clock in the evening and six o’clock in the morning by British military proclamation.

Nearing Kilmanagh the Flying Columns were joined by members of the Kilmanagh and Ballyline companies of the I.R.A. who turned out in strength after getting the word. At about 7 a.m. the whole force marched into Kilmanagh village setting up outposts round the village and manning road blocks. Seán Hogan posted Tipperary men in the creamery and at the crossroads. Ned Aylward’s men occupied houses all down through the village and up as far as the post-office at the other end. Some of the workers in the local creamery were members of the Kilmanagh Company I.R.A. and they helped the Flying Column to occupy the creamery and barricade the windows with bags of flour and feeding stuffs. The manager of the creamery at the time was Frank McCluskey and his brother Edward, the local schoolmaster, was captain of the Kilmanagh Co. I.R.A. The remainder of the I.R.A. occupation force barricaded the windows of the

houses in the village in the same manner and occupied the post-office. Seán Hogan and Ned Aylward paraded up and down the village keeping up communication between the different outposts. The inhabitants of the village stayed indoors and waited with breathless anxiety for what promised to be a planned engagement with British forces in the middle of the village.

But still nothing happened! The villagers watched as the I.R.A. occupation forces posted up printed notices declaring the village to be a 'military area' and stating that any members of the Crown forces found carrying arms without a permit from the I.R.A. would be shot at sight. The inhabitants saw a large section of the I.R.A. proceeding to a field in the centre of the village and bringing with them a number of carts which they had commandeered. The carts were arranged in circular formation in the field and sentries were posted. In the centre of this fortification the army party rested and partook of refreshments and seemed to be settling down for a long-drawn out gun-battle. The I.R.A. waited all day for the expected arrival of two lorry-loads of Black and Tans. It was now mid-afternoon and nothing was happening and Seán Hogan knew that they could not take the risk of waiting much longer. At four p.m. he decided to make an effort to entice the British military out to Kilmanagh. Thomas Looby, a member of Seán Hogan's Flying Column, who had worked as a telephone engineer in Clonmel, was asked by Seán Hogan to go to the post-office in the village to phone the British military in Callan to come out to Kilmanagh immediately alleging that the mail bags and the post-office had been raided by armed men. Mrs Kelly, the post-mistress and the other member of her family had been arrested by the I.R.A. in the post-office and the telephone instruments had been taken over. Looby tried to impersonate Mrs Kelly's voice as he tried to get the message to the British military in Callan. The military in Callan did not budge still. In Callan, local sympathisers of the I.R.A., noticed that afternoon that the military came out and boarded the lorries and prepared to depart but they were recalled to barracks shortly after that.

In Kilmanagh the I.R.A. were getting impatient. Farmers who arrived in the village to do business there were detained by Ned Dwyer of the Ballyline Co. I.R.A. and other Kilmanagh volunteers and they were not allowed home so that no message could get out of the village to the British military about what was happening there. When the troops did not arrive by five p.m., the two commanders thought it unwise to stay in occupation any longer as they had yet to move further on to billet for the night. About 6.30 p.m. the occupying forces were mustered up in military style, the outposts gave the all-clear signal and the men marched away in the direction of Tullaroan. The villagers relaxed although pleasantly aware that they had lived several hours under the protection of the soldiers of the new Irish Republic.

The military had played a waiting game. That night the village was again occupied but this time by armed forces of the crown, who remained in possession all through the night and raided around the village and surrounding townlands. Black and Tans called to Tom Walsh, The Castle, and asked where those ‘Sinn Féin bastards’ had gone. ‘I wouldn’t have a clue,’ replied Mrs Walsh.

‘Where’s your husband,’ barked the Tan leader.

‘He’s gone to guide the Flying Column to their destination,’ she retorted. A friendly R.I.C. man beckoned to her from behind the Tan’s back to keep her mouth shut.

‘The penalty for harbouring rebels you know, ma’m, is to have your house burned over your heads,’ growled the Black and Tan officer.

‘If you only leave me the cowhouse,’ Mrs Walsh said, ‘I’ll shelter them there.’

‘That’s good pluck,’ said the Tan, ‘but pluck won’t save you the next time.’

It was clear now that the hunters had become the hunted and the British military were on the trail of the two Flying Columns and that they now held the initiative. What a prize it would be now for the British forces to re-capture Seán Hogan, ‘the greyhound,’ who had broken away from their grasp after the bloody battle in Knocklong railway station and to get their hands on Ned Aylward and the other soldiers of Garryricken, - men who had been congratulated by the Chief-of-Staff of the I.R.A., General Richard Mulcahy, for the brave and unyielding gun-battle they had fought there. A gallows awaited such men in Mountjoy and in other prisons around Ireland!

The I.R.A. officers, Hogan and Aylward, pushed on and put the second part of the plan into operation. They set out for Urlingford, via Tullaroan, to attack Urlingford R.I.C. barracks. Seán Hogan, Ned Aylward, Seán Hayes, who hailed from Tipperary, and Paddy Ryan of Callan travelled in the captured Overlord car towards Tullaroan and Tom Looby and Seán Morrissey, both from Tipperary, shared the driving. The other members of the Flying Column went on foot. Jack Nagle took charge of Seán Hogan’s Flying Column on the march but he had not the same command over them as Hogan and a certain amount of ‘caffling’ took place. The two Flying Columns met together at Oldtown Bridge and got tea in Hogans, Oldtown, on this bright and warm night in the early part of that good summer of 1921. They were also welcomed and fed by Larry Walsh, The Church, Huntstown; Michael McDonald, Oldtown; Ned Maher, Oldtown; and Michael Bowe, Huntstown. Jack Nagle asked Larry Walsh, The Church, to go into the village of Tullaroan to check if it was safe for the Flying Columns to pass through there. There were May devotions in the village church that night. At the same time, the street was full of military and they were searching all the people as they emerged from the church. Larry Walsh walked straight across the village

crossroads and was unnoticed as he hurried into Dick Dunphy's public house. Phil Hogan from Gaulstown was there, having come from devotions. He bought a drink for Larry and they were just beginning to satisfy their thirst when the Black and Tans came in and searched both of them.

Larry Walsh quickly returned to Huntstown and told Jack Nagle and the other members of the Flying Columns not to go up through the village but to cross through the graveyard, make their way under cover through Dillons' fields and cross the main road again above the village church at Kellys and travel down through the fields at the Liss side of the road until they got clear of the area where the Tans were searching. Jimmy Kelly and Ned Halley formed up the Callan Column and Jack Nagle gathered the members of Seán Hogan's Flying Column together and they set off in double file, and followed Larry Walsh's directions. They were making for Sim Walton's, Reimeen, Tullaroan, captain of the Tullaroan company I.R.A., who was to arrange for the members of both Flying Columns to be billeted for the night.

Sim Walton was known as 'Little Sim' to distinguish him from his first cousin who lived close by and who bore the same christian name and surname. 'Little Sim' had won seven All-Ireland medals for Kilkenny between 1904 and 1913 and together with Jack Rochford (Threecastles), Dick Doyle and 'Drug' Walsh (Mooncoin) held the record for the greatest number of All-Ireland hurling medals until 1954 when Christy Ring (Cork) won his eighth medal. 'Little Sim' now had a job to do that he had not expected and as the Flying Columns made their way up through Tullaroan village by Liss Cross and towards Reimeen he took on the task.

Pat Walsh and Ned Halley were travelling together at the rear of the 7th Battalion Flying Column. Pat Walsh was feeling tired and exhausted as he passed through Tullaroan and Ned Halley advised him to rest by the roadside for a few minutes. Pat Walsh had a small container of whiskey in his pocket. 'There's spring water running down by the road over there,' said Halley. 'Sit down and drink a mouthful of the whiskey and wash it down with the spring water.' They both sat down and drank a mixture of spring water and whiskey. 'That mixture made me feel better,' said Pat. 'My feet were sore on the stony roads.'

They started off again but they had lost the other members of the Flying Column. Ned Halley did not mind having to slow down as he was anxious to help this newest member of the Flying Column who was feeling the going tough but who would likely harden up as time went on. Michael Maher of the Callan Flying Column arrived in 'Little Sim's' with about 56 members of the combined Flying Columns at around 9.30 p.m. Willie Meagher, who was later on the Kilkenny senior hurling team beaten by Cork in the 1926 All-Ireland final, was a brother

of Lory Meagher, one of the greatest hurling stars of all time. As one of the officers of Tullaroan Company I.R.A., he was there to help in the task of billeting the column. Dave Moher of Seán Hogan's Column and Michael Maher of the Callan Column stayed in Dick Grace's, Gaulstown, another famous Tullaroan and Kilkenny hurler who went on to win five All-Ireland medals before retiring in 1926. The Flying Columns were now in the heartland of Kilkenny hurling country where almost every house had a collection of All-Ireland hurling medals on the mantelpiece. The hurling men did not let them down, but gave them willing help. Seán Hayes was one of the freedom fighters who billeted in Paddy Grace's, Gaulstown, and they were made welcome and were well looked after. More men stayed with Tom Gaffney, Reimeen, Phil Hogan, Gaulstown, Wm. Tynan, Gaulstown, Ned Holohan, Gaulstown, and Bill Holohan, Rathealy.

During the hours of darkness the lorry-loads of British forces who had gone to Kilmanagh earlier, followed the tracks of the Flying Columns to Tullaroan. They patrolled the roads of the area all through the night, ready to pounce. Mick Maher and the group of freedom fighters with him were sleeping soundly in Dick Grace's, Gaulstown. They were aroused around three a.m. when a woman rushed into the room and tore the blankets off their beds as she shouted to them. 'Get up! Get up! The Tans are surrounding ye!' They got out into the hay barn where they were joined by a big group of other Flying Column members who had come into the hay barn from over the ditch. As they awaited further orders they could hear the rumbling of lorries moving around the roads near them. As daylight came Seán Hogan arrived. He drilled them and numbered them off in the hay barn. 'Tom Kennedy's, Knocknamuck will be the H.Q. for tomorrow,' he ordered. 'All are to report there at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.'

Hogan, Aylward, Downey, Nagle and the driver Looby got into the Overlord. 'Get in, Maher, and come with us to Kennedys,' said Hogan. Michael Maher jumped into the car. They could hear the rumbling of heavy lorries in the distance and they were approaching. No one drove lorries on the roads around Tullaroan in 1921 at that time of night except British forces. They sat apprehensively in the car with their guns pointing outwards as they made the one mile journey to Kennedys.

Tom Kennedy wasn't up when the Flying Column members arrived. It was about 5.30 a.m. Tom and his sister, Sadie, got up. Kennedys had killed a pig and the freedom fighters were given a meal of pork steaks before they went to bed. A lorry-load of military stopped outside Tom Gaffney's, Reimeen, and he roused the Flying Column from their sleep and they quickly got out the back door of the house and across the fields to Phil Hogan's, Gaulstown, guided by Tom Gaffney. A military lorry passed close to Paddy Grace's, Gaulstown. He awakened the

Flying Column members. When the order came that they were to report to Tom Kennedy's, Knocknamuck, he accompanied them on foot as far as Jim Brennan's, Adamstown, from where they could see Kennedys' dwelling house.

Ned Halley and Pat Walsh had been the last to arrive in 'Little Sim Walton's' on that Thursday night. They were met there by Bill Hayes, a brother of Seán Hayes, who was one of the Tipperary men with the Flying Column. Bill Hayes, who was teaching in Tullaroan N.S. along with Danny Brennan at the time, warned them that Kilmanagh village was full of British military lorries and that they were raiding houses between Kilmanagh and Tullaroan. He told them that military lorries had come into the locality from Woodstock, the headquarters of the Auxiliaries in Inistioge, and from Kilkenny and Callan as well. They decided to keep to the fields as they travelled from Sim Walton's to Nicholas Hoyne's, Goldenfield, Ballycallan where they billeted for the night. When they went into Hoynes, they found that Jimmy Kelly, Paddy Power and Seán Quinn were also staying there. At about 4 a.m., just as the dawn was breaking on that Summer's morning, a despatch was brought to Hoynes by Pack Bolger, who worked at Little Sim Walton's in Reimeen, from Seán Hogan and Ned Aylward, informing them to be at Kennedys, Knocknamuck at 10 a.m. for a muster of all the members of the Flying Columns. Pat Walsh, Seán Quinn, and Paddy Power set off for Kennedys and they felt stronger after the meal and the few hours' rest they had received in Hoynes. They went the direct road towards the Tullaroan hills but Ned Halley and Jimmy Kelly went back towards Kilmanagh first and walked into the path of a raiding party of British soldiers and were forced to take cover for the rest of the morning and did not, as a result, rendezvous with the others in Kennedys at the appointed time.

Seán Quinn, Paddy Power and Pat Walsh were the last to arrive in Kennedys. When they arrived they saw no activity in the house or in the yard, as all the other members of the Flying Columns who had gone to Kennedys before them were asleep in the dwelling house. But Tom Kennedy had always left a 'sleeping house' open in the farmyard on the left-hand side of the farmhouse for men 'on the run' in 1921. Quinn, Power and Walsh, saw the door open and let themselves in quietly. They felt very tired and were soon asleep again. The others, who were asleep in the farmhouse, were unaware that Walsh, Quinn, and Power were in bed in another part of the farmyard.

All the members of the Callan Flying Column except Ned Halley and Jimmy Kelly were now billeted in Tom Kennedy's, Knocknamuck. Halley and Kelly were pinned down under cover near Kilmanagh as they had run into a party of British military who were patrolling in that area. The main group of Seán Hogan's Column was billeted in Shortalls and Heffernans of Monavrogue, - two houses

on the opposite side of the road to Kennedys and facing in towards County Kilkenny rather than towards County Tipperary as Kennedys' dwelling house did. Besides the members of the Callan Flying Column, Seán Hogan, Seán Hayes and several other prominent members of the Tipperary Column were billeted in Kennedys.

Outside between Kilmanagh and Tullaroan and on the narrow roads around Knocknamuck and Tullaroan, British forces in their Crossley Tenders scoured the roads on the trail of the 'armed civilians' who had taken over Kilmanagh for a day. It was a miracle so far that they had failed to sight these 'rebels,' on the move. This situation could not last indefinitely.



89. *Fr P. H. Delahunty, Éamon de Valera and unidentified, in the 1920s.*

CHAPTER 22

‘We’re surrounded. Fight till you die, lads’

The Flying Columns slept late the following morning because of their late arrival after a disturbed night. Word had gone out to the Graine Company I.R.A. of the 2nd Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade to send members on scout duty while the Flying Column members slept. Their captain, Michael Ryan, was imprisoned in Bristol Jail at the time but Robert Campion, Michael Brennan, Jack Purcell, Michael Purcell, John Brennan, and Tommie Noonan of the Graine Co. I.R.A. reported at about 9.30 a.m. at the Three Mountains and took up duty on the three hills overlooking Knocknamuck and Monavrogue. Michael Purcell and Tommie Noonan were positioned on the top of Blackbottom Hill overlooking Shortalls and Heffernans and 500 yards across to the right from this hill, in the direction of Graine. Jack Purcell and John Brennan were scrutinising the country with field glasses from the top of Comerford’s Hill for the approach of any British forces. Robert Campion and Michael Brennan waited on Banim’s Hill, overlooking Kennedys of Knocknamuck for any signals from their fellow scouts to signify the approach of British soldiers.

Around 11 a.m. the scouts recognised two lorries of Black and Tans coming slowly down the Rathealy road and to their great surprise grinding to a halt outside Kennedys’ gate, the last place on this earth that they expected them to stop! There followed a hasty flurry of activity as the scouts relayed the message rapidly by flags from one pair to another on the hills until the message got to Robert Campion and Michael Brennan who got word into Kennedys’ yard to

warn the Flying Column members of the fast approaching danger. Tom Kennedy got the word in the kitchen. His mother, Kate Kennedy, and his sister, Sadie, were all in the house. They all dashed around to warn the members of the Flying Columns and to make sure that everyone was awake and conscious of the danger that they were in. Ned Aylward was having his breakfast of pork steaks at the time. The thought of abstinence had escaped his memory on that particular Friday morning due to long travelling and irregular sleep. But he did not enjoy his pork breakfast for very long as Tom Kennedy burst into the room to announce excitedly that the Tans were coming up the boreen. Ned jumped up, grabbed his rifle, revolver and bandolier from the nearby chair, rushed out the door and ran across the yard. He headed out the gate and up a field to the left, passing by a haybarn on the right.

Seán Hogan had just washed himself under the cold water of the pump in Kennedys' yard and was in the process of shaving himself when the alarm was raised. He had one legging on and one in his hand. He grabbed his parabellum from the cement slab beside the pump and headed through the gate and out after Aylward. Seán Hayes rushed through the yard with his coat on his arm, leggings in the other and his face half-shaved. All the rest of the men then poured out of Kennedys' dwelling house and they followed Aylward and Hogan, dressed in all manner of attire. Kate Kennedy, Tom's mother, stood at the gate shaking Holy Water on each of them as they scurried from the yard into the fields.

In the midst of all this flurry of activity, Paddy Power, Seán Quinn, and Pat Walsh who had been the last to arrive and had gone to sleep in the outhouse in Kennedys' yard, unknown to all the others on the premises, were last to make their escape. Paddy Power had awakened at about 10 a.m. and he was shaving himself in the 'sleeping house' when he heard the alarm being raised. Pat Walsh was already up and dressing himself. Seán Quinn was still soundly asleep in bed. As Paddy Power stood by the iron beds on the board floor of the 'sleeping house' and poured cold water from the enamel jug into the washstand basin to finish his shaving, he heard a loud shout piercing the morning air.

'Get out fast! The Tans are in the lane!' Looking out Paddy Power saw the last two of his comrades from the dwelling house running through the yard with their rifles and shotguns at the ready.

Paddy reacted quickly. He turned from the door and shook Quinn who was still snoring. Quinn jumped from bed instinctively and grabbed the rifle, which he had captured from Constable Riley in Garryricken House. He then hesitated for a while and laughed loudly, thinking Paddy Power was playing one of his tricks on him. However, when he saw Paddy Power and Pat Walsh racing out into the farmyard and making for the gateway, he realised that it was no joke. He

pulled on his pants hurriedly, shoved his feet into his boots and made towards the hay barn after Power and Walsh. As the three of them rushed through the gate of the farmyard to get into the fields at the back, Kate Kennedy was no longer standing there shaking Holy Water on all who rushed by, as unaware that anyone was in the 'sleeping house' for the night, she thought that all had gone already and so the last three went without Holy Water.

Outside in the fields at the back of Kennedys, all the Flying Column members re-grouped apart from the last three out, Walsh, Quinn and Power, who had taken cover about 300 metres behind the others. Everyone had come out of Kennedys' yard now and the only thing left behind, to their knowledge at this time, was the Overlord motorcar still parked there but later removed by the British military. Together now were Tom Mullaney (Tipperary), Tom Nagle (Tipperary), Jack Nagle (Tipperary), Seán Hayes (Tipperary), Jack Butler (Tipperary), Seán Hogan (Tipperary), Seán Morrissey (Tipperary), Maurice McGrath (The Bogman) also of Tipperary, Thomas Looby (Tipperary), Ned Dalton (Tipperary), and Tommy Ryan of Castlegrace, who had played at centre-field on the Tipperary football team on Bloody Sunday in Croke Park. Huddled together in the same group and all from the Callan Flying Column were Ned Aylward, Mick Maher, Paddy Ryan, Neddy (Buckshot) Butler, Paud Downey, Neddie and Nicholas Byrne from Ballycallan.

Two of the scouts of the Graine Co. I.R.A. Robert Campion and Michael Brennan, who had relayed the warning message to Kennedys, were now also with this group of Flying Column members in the field. Taking cover still at the rear were Seán Quinn, Pat Walsh and Paddy Power of the Callan Active Service Unit. All were squatted in a sunken ditch at the end of Tom Kennedy's long fence considering how best to outwit the British military, disembarking in force on the Rathealy road and entering the fields around Kennedys and further up the road around Pat Minogue's in a movement down the dipping fields towards where the Flying Column members were secluded.

Hogan saw that the troops had not yet arrived in Kennedys' yard and he remembered that he had left his haversack, full of ammunition, and his Sam Brown belt behind him there. He sent Robert Campion and Michael Brennan, the two Graine scouts, back to Kennedys to get the forgotten equipment. When they returned to Kennedys' yard, Sadie Kennedy went out to the barn and retrieved the haversack and bandolier from a box in which there was a hatching hen. She had put them there to conceal them from the approaching Tans. They returned to Hogan who was still observing the approach of the military from the same sunken ditch.



90. *Shipton, 1987.*



91. *Seán Hogan's Flying Column (part of): First Row sitting L. to R., Seán Hayes, Gabriel McGrath, Tom Gorman, Richard Dalton, Liam Mulcahy, Liam Breen, Ned Dwyer. Middle Row L. to R., David Fitzgerald, Martin Lyons, Francis Payne, Seán Morrissey, Maurice McGrath, John Fitzgerald, Michael Pattison. Standing at back L. to R., Seán Hogan, Ned Mulcahy, John Butler, Tom Kirwan, Liam Keating, Thomas Taylor, Bill Mulloughney, David Moher, Jack Nagle. Members not present, John (Buddy) O'Donoghue, Ned Dalton, Patrick Hackett, Tom Looby, Tom Daly, Matty McKenna, Tom Ryan, Tom Mullaney, Denis Lonergan, David McAuliffe, David Quirke, John Power, Jim Doherty.*

'We're surrounded. Fight till you die, lads'



92. *Thomas and Joanna Kennedy, Knocknamuck.*



93. *Sadie Kennedy and husband James Butler, Clomantagh.*



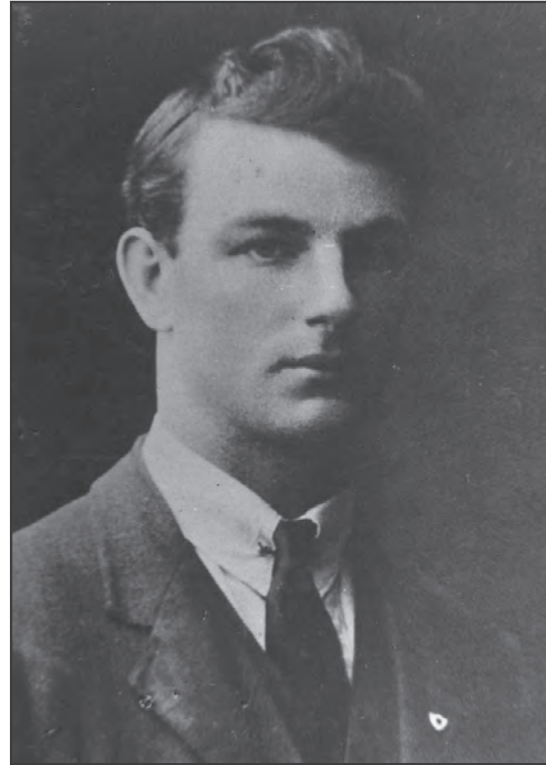
94. *Jimmy Kelly, Callan.*



95. *Paddy Power, Kilmoganny.*



96. *Robert Campion, Woodsgift.*



97. *Michael Brennan, Graine.*



98. *Tommy Noonan, Woodsgift.*



99. *Jack Purcell, Kildrinagh.*

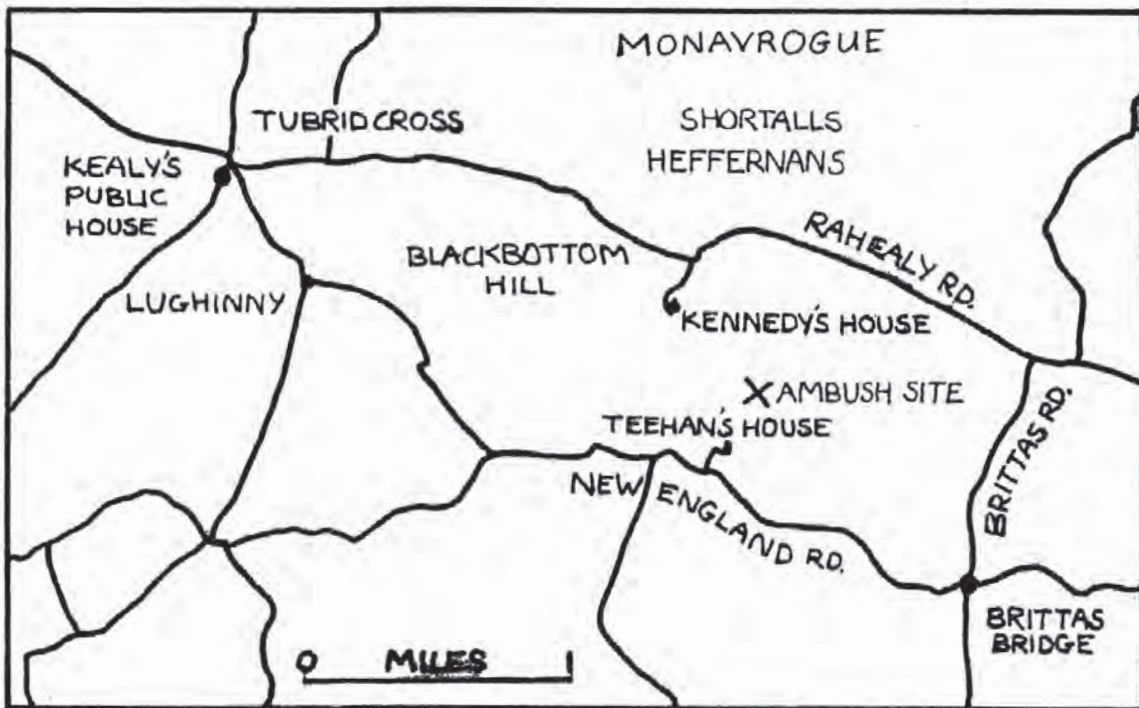
'We're surrounded. Fight till you die, lads'



100. Michael Purcell, Kildrinagh..



101. Kate Delaney (nee Heffernan),
Monavrogue.



102 Road network in Knocknagress area (showing why the Flying Column was surrounded).



103. Escape route of the Flying Column from Kennedy's house to New England Road, 13th May, 1921.

As they observed the situation from their sunken dyke little did it occur to them that the military forces now approaching them in strength represented the might of the huge British Empire, which had seldom lost a war even to some of the strongest powers on earth and that they were just a small band of Irish freedom-fighters who had the audacity to challenge the might of an Empire in the lonely hills of their own native country, armed only with a mixture of shotguns and rifles captured earlier from the enemy. Yet here they were, 23 of them, many of whom had prices on their heads and the gallows waiting for them, if captured, with no intention of yielding without a fight to a finish.

Lorries of military continued to park along the Rathealy road and the soldiers formed up in a long straight line and proceeded to move very slowly down the fields with their guns ready and their keen eyes searching before and around them. Tom Kennedy had shouted instructions on how to get out of the fields as they rushed out the yard and had gone with them part of the way. Now they tried to put his directions into effect. They had already come down by the straight ditch from Kennedys' house for about a mile and they were at the cross-ditch. They were now to wheel left and cross two fields belonging to William Coady until they came to a high bank. After crossing that they were to go through John Campion's high field, through a corner of Jack Hoyne's field and down by Edmund Doheny's fence to New England. They could then cross the road there and get safely away. But they could not stir for the moment as British officers swept the fields below them with their field glasses for signs of escaping rebels.

The main group of the two Flying Columns was billeted in Shortalls and Heffernans of Monavrogue, on the Kilkenny side of the Rathealy road. John Heffernan lived there with his daughters, Mary who was single and Kate who had married Michael Delaney. The Heffernans had given up their beds to the members of the Flying Column when they arrived at 5 a.m. that morning. Tom Kirwan of Seán Hogan's Column and nineteen others were in Shortalls. They slept late and Mrs Margaret Shortall and her two daughters, Greta and Joanne, were preparing dinner for them when they saw British military lorries coming up the road from Tubrid crossroads and stopping outside the short laneway which led to both houses.

Mrs Shortall stopped her dinner preparations hurriedly and rushed around, rousing the Flying Column members from their sleep. Tom Kirwan jumped up and looked out. He could see British soldiers on the road above the laneway. He dressed quickly, did not have time to put on his leggings and rushed out the back door. All the others followed in haste, across the garden and down the fields in the direction of Ballylarkin, Freshford. They were forced to depart so quickly that some of them left their guns, wellingtons, leggings, and ammunition behind

them in Shortalls' house. They gathered together in a corner of a haggard down the fields under cover and still in sight of Shortalls' house. John Heffernan hurriedly roused the Flying Column members at the same time, and they scrambled over the boundary ditch between Heffernans and Shortalls and joined the others from Shortalls in the hasty withdrawal down the fields.

Mrs Margaret Shortall watched the military lorry as it stalled at the top of the laneway. Greta and Joanne exchanged worried glances as they peered around the house and saw the guns, ammunition and leggings left there by the Flying Column members. They breathed a sigh of relief as they heard the Crossley Tender move away from the laneway. It was months later when they heard that Sergeant Horgan, a friendly R.I.C. sergeant stationed at the time in Clomantagh R.I.C. Barracks, was in the lorry with the British soldiers and had told them that there was no point in raiding Shortalls as only three ladies lived there and that they had suffered a sad bereavement shortly before that, when the only son in the family had died at a young age. When the lorry had moved away from the laneway, Margaret Shortall and her two daughters collected the guns, wellingtons, leggings, and ammunition that the Flying Column had left behind and hid them in the garden under a heap of nettles in case the military returned.

The Flying Column members still in the fields below the Rathealy road and a mile up from Kennedys' house kept a close eye on the soldiers steadily advancing down the fields in their direction. Glancing around them and across by the cross-fence which would take them nearer to New England they observed a thick cluster of ferns in front of the cross-fence which would give them cover for part of the way if they crawled through them. Seán Hogan crept into the ferns and to his great delight saw that there was a sunken ditch behind the fence running under the cross-fence through William Coady's fields towards New England. This would give them cover as they moved across towards New England and they would be hidden from view of the field glasses.

Seán Hogan led the way and the Flying Column members crawled along slowly but steadily through ferns, long grass and briars, keeping under cover and still having a watchful eye on the soldiers in the Rathealy fields. They passed through two fields on William Coady's land but then they came to a high bank, which impeded their progress. The sunken ditch was deep here and the military could not see them, although they could observe the advancing soldiers. Seán Hogan then recognised that they were after coming across so far towards New England that they were now outside the line of the advancing troops and that they could lie low there and let the troops go down the fields below them and then they could slip away in the direction of New England when everything was quiet as the British troops were now far to their left as the Flying Column members faced up towards the Rathealy road.

The soldiers were carrying out a slow, intensive search of all houses bordering the Rathealy road. The Flying Column members saw more lorries arrive and soldiers searching an old disused house. If the soldiers kept coming as they were they would pass down well to Kennedys' side of them. They were sitting tight and were not unduly worried. The high bank to their right prevented them from going any further until darkness for if they rose to cross it they would run the likely chance of being spotted with field glasses. They waited patiently and time passed slowly.

The scouts from Graine Co. I.R.A. were still doing active duty on the hills. Michael Purcell was still on the top of Blackbottom Hill overlooking Shortalls and Heffernans of Monavrogue. Towards evening he saw a Crossley Tender containing a party of military and police approaching from the direction of Kilkenny. It was followed by another armoured car. Michael carried a white handkerchief in his pocket for the purpose of signalling the approach of British military to the Flying Column and he now began to wave the white handkerchief frantically to warn the Flying Column members in the vicinity of Shortalls and Heffernans that fresh British military reinforcements were on their way from Kilkenny.

A British officer in the armoured car was scanning the countryside with field glasses trying to spot Irish 'rebels'. One mile on the Tullaroan side of Tubrid Cross, he saw a man standing on top of a hill waving a large white handkerchief and signalling. He immediately ordered the driver of the armoured car to halt. He looked again through the field glasses and he observed that the man on the hill was not facing them and had apparently not seen them. He told the driver to reverse the armoured car into the cover of a high hedge from where neither the car nor the military party could be seen. The officer and soldiers then got out on the road and advanced under cover in the direction of the hill. They stopped and pointed their guns as they saw the man look at where they were and advance in their direction.

Michael Purcell saw the military with pointed guns at close range to him. In a glance he saw that he could not get away. He made up his mind quickly. He would try to bluff his way through. It would be far better if he could do this successfully than making a run for it as, even if he succeeded, this would cause the search to be intensified in the Tubrid area. He was not armed. He put the handkerchief into his pocket and he walked in the direction of the military.

The military officer saw Michael approach and, when he was within 200 yards, he shouted at him to halt and put up his hands. Michael obeyed the command. The British military officer then told him to come on to them. To do so he had to get over a gate and, as he climbed over it, the army officer saw him drop a

brown parcel. The officer sent a soldier to the gate and he picked up a brown paper parcel containing sandwiches. British soldiers then searched Michael. Two empty lemonade bottles and a large white handkerchief were found in his pockets. Repeatedly asked about what he was doing on the hill, Michael tried to bluff his way through. ‘I work in Garranconnel with a farmer. Work was slack today and after finishing the job I was doing, I was just having a stroll around,’ This story did not convince the military party and they brought Michael Purcell with them back up to the top of Blackbottom Hill, from where he had descended a few minutes before that.

When the military party got up there, they scrutinised the country around with their field glasses. They saw two men on Comerford’s hill about 400 yards over to their left as they faced towards Monavrogue. One was standing up and the other was lying down and looking in their direction also through field glasses. Michael Purcell looked across and saw the men now beginning to move and he knew that one of the men was his brother, Jack, and that the second man was John Brennan but he said nothing. The British officer in charge returned to the main body of British forces. He ordered that Comerford’s Hill be surrounded and searched. Jack Purcell and John Brennan saw through their field glasses that the figures on Blackbottom Hill were British soldiers in uniform and while the search was getting off the ground, they took off and disappeared over the crest of the hill, crossed the road at Comerfords and took shelter in the Rhimeshaun where there was a thick clump of trees. Tommy Noonan had earlier come off Blackbottom Hill, not long before Michael Purcell was captured. The British officers now realised that they had sighted the Irish ‘rebels’ and that they were close on the tracks of the Flying Columns. They called up more reinforcements and extended the search on all sides.

Michael Purcell was put into a Crossley Tender and brought as far as Tubrid Cross which was about a mile away. Here the lorry stopped and three British officers consulted together about the whole situation. The Crossley Tender continued, followed by other lorries in the direction of New England. When the convoy arrived in New England, Michael Purcell was left in the lorry, under guard, while the soldiers and officers disembarked from that lorry and other lorries and went into the fields. Michael Purcell had not given away any information nor did he know at the time where the members of the Flying Column in the fields were. But the military were now after finding the Overlord motorcar in Kennedys, Knocknamuck and knew that the Flying Column members in the fields were between the Rathealy and the New England roads and the extended search started in the fields on the Kilkenny side of New England.

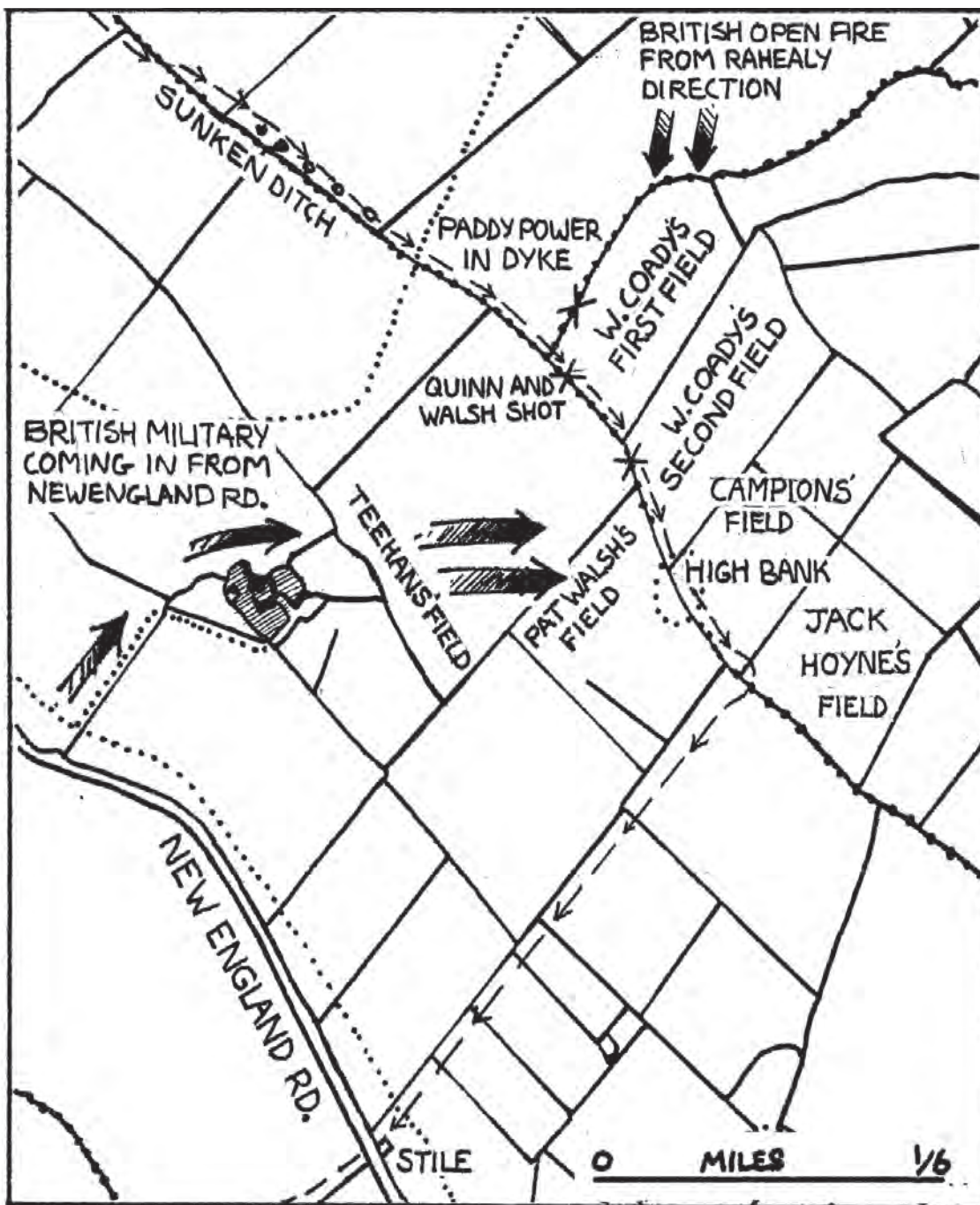
All this time the freedom fighters of the Flying Column were still taking cover

in the sunken ditch on William Coady's land. It was now late in the afternoon as they observed the soldiers in the fields towards the Rathealy road but they had relaxed quite a bit as the soldiers appeared to be well to Kennedys' side of them and down so far in the fields that they had gone below a line level with them. Seán Hogan now thought that if they climbed the high bank into John Campion's field they would not be seen. However, before giving the order to the Flying Column to mount the high bank, he had sent Tom Nagle and Jack Nagle over to the other side into John Campion's hill field to report back on the escape route to New England, which they proposed to take.

Eight year old Margaret Teehan was standing on the New England road when she saw two lorry-loads of British soldiers approach and stop at a gap near her father's gate. Living in the house at the time were her father, Ned Teehan, her mother, Bridie Teehan, and her aunt, Mary Coady and her three brothers, Tod, aged five and a half years, Paddy aged 4 years and Dick aged 7 years. The boys were playing in the haggard at the time, and they watched with interest and some apprehension as the British Military searched the outhouses and the dwelling house. Their father, Ned Teehan, was ill in bed, but thinking that he could be a wounded I.R.A. man, acting the part of the man of the house, the British soldiers searched his bed and made him get out on the floor where they stripped him naked to see if he had any hidden gun-shot wounds on his body. Their workman, Jack Cummins, fearing that he would be arrested, hid under a major of hay in the cowshed under the cows' heads. He stayed there hidden for an hour and did not stir even when the military searched the cowshed with bayonets.

The soldiers then fanned out into Teehans' field and Pat Walsh's field just behind the dwelling house and approached the cross-fence at the other side of which the Flying Column members huddled in the sunken ditch. Jack Nagle and Tom Nagle were scrutinising the field on the other side of the high bank when Jack heard the sheep in Teehans' field scuttling to shelter. He told Tom Nagle to turn back to the fence and look into the field to see what was happening. As Tom Nagle was turning around he heard Seán Morrissey shout from the top of the bank, 'Tin hats.' Seán Hayes was next up the bank. 'Tin hats behind ye, we're surrounded,' he shouted. Seán Hogan jumped over the five foot high bank like a deer, shouting as he landed on the other side in John Campion's hill field - 'Give it to them, Nagle. Quick!'

Jack Nagle turned to the ditch behind and fired at the soldiers moving in Pat Walsh's field and in Teehans' field. He fired at close range as the soldiers were almost up to them. Tom Nagle fired as fast as he could in their direction also. Hogan was blazing with his parabellum as he turned back towards the ditch. 'Open fire. Fight till ye die, lads,' he yelled. Hogan's parabellum cracked like



104. Sites referred to in account of Knocknagress gun battle, 13th May, 1921.

thunder in the still afternoon air. 'Get over the bank,' he called to the others. 'We'll give ye covering fire.' The opening attack by Hogan, Jack and Tom Nagle, Seán Morrissey, and Seán Hayes had sent the advancing British soldiers flying for cover in the long grass near the ditches. Ned Aylward was on William Coady's side of the bank with the largest section of the trapped freedom fighters. After the firing started on Champions' side of the fence, the British soldiers in the Rathealy fields knew the position of the Flying Column members and began to fire on them from that direction as they crossed the fence. The freedom fighters that had not cleared the fence had to fire back at them to get covering fire for those who were surmounting the huge obstacle.

'Halt! Surrender!' roared the British military as the Flying Column members scrambled up and over the high bank and into Champions' field. Those who went over fell, picked themselves up and turned in towards the cross-fence and fired back at the British soldiers. The Flying Column members fired quick successive rounds which kept the British troops pinned down long enough to allow more of their comrades to get over the high fence. But the fight was not over yet! Paud Downey of Callan crossed the bank in front of Ned Aylward. Paud's cap was shot from his head as he jumped but he kept going. When Ned Aylward got to the other side he positioned himself beside Hogan and fired into Teehans' and Walshs' fields. Tommy Ryan from Castlegrace, who played centre-field for the Tipperary football team in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday was head, and neck in the fray. 'Keep the bastards down! Let them have it! We've guns now, not like Croke Park!' he roared as he remembered his friend, Mick Hogan, from Grangemockler who was gunned down playing football on Bloody Sunday.

Seán Hogan saw a British officer rise and come close to the fence. He fired rapidly and the officer fell. Ned Aylward saw a soldier running across towards John Champion's fence to cut off their line of retreat further down. He kept his hand steady and fired but missed. He raised the gun again but this time aimed ahead of the running soldier and fired. The soldier stumbled and fell into the ditch. Under shelter of the heavy covering fire the Flying Column members kept hopping over the bank into Champions' Field, falling, picking themselves up again, running a bit more, and firing back as they raced along under the cover of the cross-fence towards Jack Hoyne's and Edmund Doheny's land. The three Teehan children, who were now under cover in the haggard behind their dwelling house, could hear the rasping of the bullets off the wall surrounding the haggard and off the roof of the haybarn as well. All the members of the Flying Column who were close to the corner of William Coady's second field got successfully away without being hit. They raced away, climbing two more high ditches, passing through a corner of Jack Hoyne's field before wheeling to the right into Edmund Doheny's land.

Hogan and Aylward and the group giving covering fire looked back at the bank and they saw no more freedom fighters climbing over. They waited for a few minutes more and took it that all the Flying Column members had passed over the high obstacle. They then raced away after the others who had gone ahead towards Dohenys' land. Unknown to them three of the Flying Column members were still trapped on Coadys' side of the high bank.

CHAPTER 23

Death in the West Kilkenny Hills

Paddy Power, Seán Quinn, and Pat Walsh had been the last out of Kennedys' house and now they were the last in the line on Coadys' side of the high bank. They had stayed together in the rear and were about 50 yards behind the others in a sunken ditch under the cross-fence when the scramble to get over the tall bank began. Because they were the last in the line, they came under heavier fire than the others in front of them when the military in the Rathealy fields began to shoot from the rear at the Flying Column members as they negotiated the high bank into Champions' field. This firing kept them pinned down for so long that the other Flying Column members had got over the high obstacle before they moved. Hogan and Aylward, who were at Champions' side of the fence, thought that the entire column had passed over the bank before they left after the others. When this happened the covering fire at the high bank ceased, and the soldiers were able to get to their feet again.

Perceiving that there was no covering fire at the bank and knowing that the military were close to that point, Paddy Power, Seán Quinn and Pat Walsh doubled back towards the long fence which came down from Kennedys' house, thinking that there was no military activity further down. They then rushed to mount another high bank in the cross-fence in William Coady's first field leading into Teehans' field, and only 50 yards from the long ditch stretching down from Kennedys. They were compelled to cross the fence there because the soldiers in the Rathealy fields fired another volley of shots in their direction and they had to

get out of the line of fire. They could not see over this high fence. As they ran towards it to get a grip on it, they could hear the military shouting. ‘Halt! Halt!’ but they kept going. Paddy Power took a quick sudden leap to get a grip on a tuft of grass on the top of the bank. He was wearing a bandolier and haversack carrying Pat Walsh’s shotgun ammunition. Pat Walsh and Seán Quinn were about to rise at the same time. As Paddy Power landed on the top of the bank, he could see the soldiers’ rifles rise up from the other side.

Seán Quinn landed on the top of the bank beside Paddy Power but became slightly unbalanced and began to slide backwards. In order to steady himself, he caught a grip of Paddy Power’s haversack and pulled Paddy backwards with the force of the pull. Paddy Power fell completely back off the bank. Seán Quinn steadied himself and reached the top of the bank. At the same time, Pat Walsh raised himself fully upright on the fence. No sooner were they upright than they were facing into the sights of British guns in Teehans’ field. A quick burst of fire followed and both of them were hit. Paddy Power, who had fallen back on the ground, saw them both fall back off the high bank and remain on the grass. ‘God help us all,’ he whispered to himself thinking that he would be next. Suddenly Paddy Power saw the tall and threatening figure of a Black and Tan loom over him on the top of the bank. ‘I’ll never see them all at home again’, was all he could think of at the time. But then, instinctively and rapidly, he raised and aimed his gun in the Tan’s direction. To his great surprise, the Tan looked down into the muzzle of his gun for a second, hesitated and then vaulted back over the fence again as fast as he had come, and back into Teehans’ field. Paddy could not believe his good fortune when he did not return later bringing other soldiers with him.

Paddy Power stayed where he was for a short time and then the thought struck him to get away from the bottom of the fence as quickly as he could. He crept into a deep wet dyke at Kennedys’ side of the field. The dyke contained rushes and a good amount of water, but he managed to lie down in it and cover himself with a light bunch of briars and rushes. Paddy now knew that it would be risky to get over the bank again as the British soldiers were still close to the cross fence. He knew that it would be equally dangerous to move back any further towards Kennedys’ house as the troops were coming down to where he was from the Rathealy side. The firing had now ceased and he took the only option open to him and that was to lie low where he was for the present and take the chance that he would not be discovered in his leafy hideout. With British soldiers all around him and two badly wounded I.R.A. comrades near him, his chances of survival were slim.

The Flying Column members under Hogan and Aylward, who had got away from the gun battle at the high bank, raced towards the fence bordering Edmund Dohenys' land. They crossed through a corner of Jack Hoynes' field and then wheeled right and ran down at the left-hand side of Dohenys' long ditch. This long ditch gave them cover as they crept and crawled towards a low stile which opened on to the New England road. When Hogan got as far as there, he halted the Flying Column to see if any of the British soldiers had taken up positions on the road at this point. He saw that all was clear and he was happy to observe that the road rose sharply on both sides so that they were in a deep hollow which would give them excellent cover if they crossed the road just there.

At that moment, Mrs Statia Hoyne, who lived at the end of the long field dipping towards the road, came bravely out of her house and warned Hogan and his comrades to get across the road fast as armoured cars were dropping British soldiers about 150 yards on the Tubrid side of the hollow in the road.

They quickly crossed the New England road and headed up directly through Jim Dillon's land opposite the stile. They were now in unfamiliar territory and they were not safely out of the British military net yet. They saw a farmhouse directly in front of them. This farmhouse belonged to Butlers of Trenchardstown and they went straight into the yard. There they met Mrs Alice Butler in the yard together with her two sons, Peter and Pat, and Ellie, the daughter of the house. At this stage the two scouts from the Graine company I.R.A., Robert Campion and Michael Brennan, had branched off for home towards Killahy. The Flying Column members asked for directions to County Tipperary and Peter Butler volunteered to go with them. The freedom fighters asked the occupants of the house not to tell the British military what direction they had taken if they called to the house.

Peter led them up through Dick Walsh's yard, across Malones' land and through Teehans', Lisnalea. They then arrived in Dillons' farmyard in Ballybeigh at about 9 p.m. Jimmy Dillon and his brother, Colm, were both members of Tullaroan company I.R.A. and a friend of theirs, Matt Kennedy, who was in Dillons that night, was also an I.R.A. member. The Flying Column went into Dillons' kitchen where Jimmy and Colm Dillon went to get food for them but suddenly they heard the barking of dogs not far away and they knew that the lorries of British soldiers were not far behind as the dogs in the locality were the first to signal the approach of strangers. They rushed out of the kitchen again but Jimmy and Colm Dillon and Matt Kennedy, knowing how hungry the freedom fighters were by this time, quickly handed them mugs from the kitchen dresser as they ran out into the yard and the Flying Column members filled their mugs with milk from the churns in the yard, and drank it hastily as Jimmy and Colm Dillon and Matt Kennedy passed out bread to them from the kitchen. They



105. *Escape route of Flying Column from Knocknagress into Co. Tipperary, 13th/14th May, 1921.*

only had time to gulp a mouthful or two of the milk before rushing away. Jimmy and Colm Dillon brought them across the fields to Gort-na-Gap, across the Munster River into County Tipperary and by the Slievardagh Hills as far as Farranrory. There they billeted at Jimmy Corcoran's, near the War House in Ballingarry, where Smith O'Brien had led the 1848 Rising. Jimmy had killed two pigs only a week before and the meat had not been hung up as bacon yet. The Flying Column members were so hungry that they ate the raw bacon as soon as they entered the house.

While the Flying Column members were leaving Butlers' yard the dog barked and the British military heard the yelping and came in hot pursuit in their lorries. The Flying Column, guided by Peter Butler, had just left when the British arrived in the yard. Pat Butler was in the yard and they seized him and asked him if he knew the direction that the 'rebels' had taken. He denied all knowledge of seeing anyone pass through, as also did all the other occupants of the house. The British military then took Pat down to the boundary fence of Jim Dillon's land in New England and threatened to shoot him and to burn his house to the ground if he did not tell them the direction that the Flying Column members had taken. Pat refused to give them any information and continued to deny that he had seen any freedom fighters that night. The British military finally released him but they warned him that if they discovered later that the 'rebels' had been near his house they would return immediately and carry out the threat they had made. They then boarded their Crossley Tender and left in haste. Later that night Peter Butler returned to Trenchardstown after helping to guide the Flying Column into County Tipperary and, later still, Jimmy and Colm Dillon returned tired and wet after bringing them to Farranrory.

The members of the Flying Column who had billeted in Shortalls and Heffernans on the Kilkenny side of the Rathealy road and who had gone into the fields when the British military stopped outside Shortalls, returned to Shortalls once the firing had stopped. They now ate the dinner, which Margaret, Greta and Joanne Shortall had cooked for them that morning. Then they collected what guns and ammunition they had left behind from the cluster of nettles under which the three women of the house had hidden them. Having thanked the Shortalls and Heffernans for what they had done for them, they departed, not knowing what had happened in the fields below Kennedys. They crossed Shortalls' bog under the cover of darkness and went down through a clump of hazel trees leading to Adamstown. They then went into Joe Kennedy's, Adamstown, and Joe took them across the fields to Bill Holohan, Rathealy. From there they eventually got to Ballincurry, County Tipperary, and they met Seán Hogan and the rest of the Flying Column once more near Drangan, County Tipperary.

The members of the combined Flying Columns who had fought their way through the sharp and intense gun-battle in Knocknagress were now resting in Farranrory for the night but British troops still patrolled the Tullaroan roads and yet hoped for the good fortune of capturing another batch of them. Back beside William Coady's field, where the fierce exchange of gunfire had taken place, Paddy Power was still sheltering in his rush-covered sunken ditch. Walsh and Quinn had fallen back from the bank when they were shot and were lying motionless in Coady's first field under the tall bank. The British military converged from both the Rathealy road and the New England road, onto and around the high bank from which Walsh and Quinn had fallen when shot. The British officer in charge went over to the wounded I.R.A. men. Both were still alive. John Quinn was wounded in the stomach and legs and Pat Walsh was shot behind the knee. Both of them were moaning in pain. The officer, who treated his wounded captives with respect, went up to Teehans' house at the top of the field to get assistance to remove the badly injured freedom fighters to the road.

William Coady of Monavrogue had been washing sheep in a nearby stream that day but had earlier brought the sheep back to Teehans' field. He was eating a meal in Teehans' house when the British officer arrived, accompanied by another soldier. Both had loaded revolvers in their hands. 'A couple of your friends are out there and they have met with an accident,' he said to William Coady, 'would you get a horse and cart to take them out of the field and as far as the road. One of them is in severe pain at the Rathealy side of the fence.' William Coady willingly did as requested. He yoked Teehans' Irish draught black mare, Kit, to the common cart, and he went across the fields to the high bank. The officer directed him to back the horse and cart to the gap and he gave orders to a soldier to hold the horse firm.

Paddy Power still lay covered up in the deep wet dyke, which was not far from where his two wounded comrades lay and he could hear the noise of the horse and cart approaching. Above the rattle of the cart he could hear a loud moaning sound coming from the direction of the wounded men, but he dare not look out of his hide-out in the rushes for fear of being spotted. William Coady came into the field and there he saw Seán Quinn lying on his back in the grass. Seán Quinn lifted his head towards William Coady but then dropped it suddenly again and lapsed into unconsciousness. Two soldiers lifted Seán Quinn's body and William Coady gave them a helping hand to load the body onto the horse and cart. Pat Walsh was groaning as if in severe pain. The officer asked the three men to lift Pat Walsh gently and they also put his body into the cart. He was badly wounded in the knee and bleeding heavily. 'Drive slowly, Paddy,' admonished the British officer, 'and head up to the New England road.'

William Coady led the horse and cart containing the two seriously wounded freedom fighters towards Teehans' house at the top of the two fields and out through a laneway on to the New England road. The officer told him to wheel towards Tullaroan and after going a short distance on this road he was ordered to halt. Two soldiers then loaded Quinn and Walsh into a military lorry at the roadside. Michael Purcell, the captured scout, was still held in the back of the same lorry and he was now really shocked when he saw two members of the Flying Column thrown in on the floor of the lorry beside him, badly bleeding and moaning and obviously in a dying state.

The lorry was driven back to Tubrid Cross but on the way it stopped at Brittas Bridge. Here Michael Purcell was taken from the lorry and put standing against the bridge, beaten with rifle butts, kicked and questioned in an effort to extract information about the local I.R.A. units. He refused to give any information whatever and bravely stuck to his original story of being out for a walk and of having no connection with the I.R.A. He was thrown back into the lorry, badly marked and bruised, and the lorry moved on.

The same lorry, containing the two wounded I.R.A. men, stopped again outside Kealys' public house and the driver parked in the haggard and all the military climbed down and went into the public house to drink, relax and celebrate following the gun battle in the lonely Knocknagress fields. They did not worry unduly about their wounded captives as they spent two hours revelling while their two injured prisoners bled and moaned outside in the back of the lorry, which also contained Michael Purcell who was under guard.

A local man named John Leahy of Craddoxtown, who was standing at Tubrid Cross, walked over to the lorry and offered a drink to the injured and wounded men but the soldiers beat him away. Mary Kealy, the owner of the public house, came out and saw the two wounded men in the lorry and Johnny Leahy asked her to recite the Rosary. The loud moaning coming from the lorry unsettled her and she turned her back to the wounded men as she nervously fingered her Rosary beads and said the prayers. Some other local men, who were at the cross, were asked by two soldiers if they recognised any of the men in the back of the lorry and, when they denied any knowledge of their identity, they were told to mind themselves in the future or they would get the same treatment. Bill Mulhall, Loughinny protested to the British soldiers about the long delay in the public house when wounded men lay motionless in the British military lorry in need of medical attention. 'We're goin' soon and we'll take you with us as well,' angrily retorted the non-commissioned officer in charge.

They climbed into the lorry soon afterwards taking Bill Mulhall with them and after much sport and laughter at his expense on the journey into Kilkenny, they

let him off in Talbot's Inch and had a last laugh as they told him to walk back to Tubrid. Pat Walsh and Seán Quinn were eventually taken to Kilkenny Military Hospital where a military doctor examined them on admission. Seán Quinn was in a critical condition and shortly after admission he succumbed to his mortal wounds and died peacefully. Pat Walsh was given medical treatment in the same hospital although the careless and deliberate delay made by the British military in Kealys' public house on the way in from the gun battle did not help the medical condition of either himself or Seán Quinn.

Michael Purcell, the captured scout, was brought to Kilkenny Military Barracks and was there interrogated by British officers. His face and body were already badly bruised as a result of the beating he suffered at the hands of British military at Brittas Bridge. A fellow prisoner, who knew him previously, did not recognise him in Kilkenny Military Barracks after he was taken into custody and lodged in a cell.

Paddy Power waited in the sunken dyke back in the fields of Knocknagress. At about 8 p.m. just before darkness set in, when everything was quiet and silent, he crept slowly out of his hiding place. He looked around and saw no one. Silence reigned once again in the green fields behind Kennedys. He saw Teehans' house over the high bank in front of him and he made his way carefully up the hill to the house. Inside Teehans' house Edward Teehan was in bed after the frightening experiences of the afternoon. His wife, Bridie Teehan, opened the door and she was surprised to see a stranger in wet clothes outside. Her sister, Mary Coady, lived in the house and they brought Paddy Power in and listened to his story. Ned Teehan got up and spoke with Paddy Power. When Paddy convinced them that he was one of the Flying Column, they gave him a shot of whiskey and a hot meal and a change of clothing as he was dripping wet and shivering from his sojourn in the sunken dyke.

Teehans' house had been searched earlier for fugitive 'rebels' and Paddy Power had to get out of the area quickly. Ned Teehan then brought Paddy Power to the gate of their farmhouse and directed him from there through the fields to Willie Meagher's house at Curragh. Willie Meagher of Curragh, a brother of Lory, was on the lookout all the evening for any wayward members of the Flying Column so that he could get them away to safety. Paddy Power was fortunate to meet him and Willie Meagher went with him and brought him to Ned Dunne of Dreelingstown. Paddy later joined the Flying Column in the Callan area.

The members of the Flying Columns, who had fought bravely through the fields of Knocknagress, rested in Farranrory that night but they were not safe yet as on the following morning Tom Cuddihy, a native of Tullaroan, was going into Kilkenny and he counted twenty lorries of British military leaving Kilkenny to resume the search for 'rebels' in Tullaroan and in the surrounding areas. The

R.I.C. and British military had searched the houses in Knocknagress on the night of the gun battle. The R.I.C. from Tullaroan, accompanied by British soldiers, had called to John Champion's Knocknagress. They found Jack Hoyne of New England, who had won two All-Ireland medals with Kilkenny in 1904 and 1905 there. He had come across through the fields from New England that evening. He had heard the shooting in John Champion's hill field and then the moaning of the wounded. When they questioned him he told the R.I.C. that he had come across to help John Champion to wash sheep and he gave them no more information.

On Saturday 14 May the day after the ambush, a lorry load of British soldiers, getting near the scent, arrived in Dillons of Ballybeigh and in an aggressive manner made Jimmy and Colm Dillon and Matt Kennedy turn out a whole bench of hay in the haybarn and thoroughly searched the dwelling house but found nothing. Robert Champion, the Graine scout, who had branched off for home from the Flying Column at Killahy, was lucky that he did not go home that night, as British soldiers searched Champions' farmyard the next morning and fruitlessly turned a heap of turf in the yard. Robert stayed away from home that day but both he and Michael Brennan, returned shortly after that. Two of the remaining scouts who got away, John Brennan, and Tommy Noonan were 'on the run' for some weeks afterwards as the Tans were on their track but eventually they reported safely to base.

Tom Kennedy did not return to his home after guiding the Flying Column out from his dwelling house and up the fields. His sister Mary was married to Frank Purcell of Woodsgift and he made for there. He stayed there until the searching by the British military ceased around Knocknamuck and Tullaroan and then he returned furtively. On that Saturday, British forces stopped many Tullaroan citizens like Gerry Mahony, accused them of being 'rebels', put them into their lorries and carried them some distance, threatening them, hitting them with rifle butts and looking for information from them about the I.R.A. 'bastards' who had been in the locality. They got no information.

The Tans pulled up at Purcells' forge, Kildrinagh, beside which the Purcell family lived. In the kitchen there was a photograph of Jack and Michael Purcell on the mantelpiece. One of the Tans recognised Michael in the photograph. 'We got that bastard, we've got to get the other bastard yet,' he barked. Jack Purcell was at that very time making drills for turnips on Gormans' farm nearby. His mother got a quick chance to tell her other son Matt, the blacksmith, to go to Jack and tell him that the Tans were looking for him. When Jack got the word he tied up the horses and made a dash for it across the fields. He remained 'on the run' for a long time afterwards.

On Saturday, the Callan Flying Column under Ned Aylward and the 2nd Flying Column of the South Tipperary Brigade parted ways at Farranrory. They had to push further away from Knocknagress before they could consider themselves secure from British forces. The Tipperary Flying Column under Seán Hogan withdrew to Pat Neary's Kylemore in the parish of Mullinahone where they rested and got food. There they were met by two trusted comrades, a young I.R.A. volunteer named Jack Gardiner from Poulacapple and his neighbour, Jim Brien. Seán Hogan's Flying Column left Pat Neary's, Kylemore guided by Jack Gardiner and his cousin, Tommy Egan, Poulacapple. Jack took the whole Flying Column to his own house in Poulacapple. They sat around the kitchen in Gardiners, drank two churns of milk, ate all the bread in the house and rested. From there Jack and Tommy Egan brought them as far as Newcastle in County Tipperary and across the Pollocks until they broke out on the Ballyduggan Road on the main road to Carrick-on-Suir. Jack and Tommy went with them as far as NineMileHouse where they finished up in Tobins, Brenormore at the foot of Sliabh-na-mBan. They were back again in Kickham's country and in safe keeping in happy hunting grounds.

The members of the 7th Battalion Flying Column, under Ned Aylward, after parting with Seán Hogan's Flying Column at Farranrory, made their way back towards Callan and billeted in Dwyers, Comerfords and Coonans of Cappaghayden. They met Paddy Power there again and they were delighted to see him as they feared for a while after Knocknagress that he was a casualty also.

Once again the Tullaroan and Graine areas were silent and quiet and free from the rumbling of military lorries and the cracking of rifle and machine-gun fire. The people of Tullaroan, Graine and Kilmanagh had, on the whole, shielded and guided the armed forces of the seedling Irish Republic when superior enemy forces had threatened the lives of the Flying Column and also the lives of all those who had protected them, fed them, guided them and had given over their beds to them to have much needed rest and sleep.

While Seán Quinn lay dead in Kilkenny Military Hospital, Pat Walsh was in a critical condition. The military doctor in Kilkenny gave him medical treatment but he showed no improvement. On the doctor's instructions he was conveyed to Fermoy military hospital where, on his arrival, the military surgeon found that the leg had become gangrenous. The surgeon amputated the wounded leg but Pat Walsh did not survive the operation and died in Fermoy Military Hospital on Wednesday, 18 May.

Three days after the Knocknagress gun-battle, the Flying Column of the 7th Battalion was still billeted in Cappaghayden, near Callan. There they held a meeting to discuss how it happened that the whole military operation in



106. *Guard of honour at Pat Walsh's funeral. Dunnamaggin, 22nd May, 1921.*

Kilmanagh and Tullaroan had run into such difficulties and a plan of operation was put into action.

On Monday night, 16 May, following the Knocknagress gun-battle, two members of the 7th Battalion Flying Column were sent to interrogate two ex-British soldiers who lived in a district between Kilmanagh and Tullaroan. One of these men had been working as a farm labourer in the locality for some time while the other man had only recently arrived from the Carrick-on-Suir area. The two Flying Column members dressed up in khaki uniforms and pretended to be British soldiers. In the early hours of Tuesday morning, 17 May they interrogated the two ex-British soldiers in connection with their relationship with British military forces. As a result of this interrogation, the two Flying Column members brought the two ex-British soldiers to a quarry at Ballagh, Oldtown, a short distance away and shot them there.

One of these men was shot through the heart and died instantly in the quarry. The second man was shot in the abdomen and lingered on until about 3 p.m. on Tuesday afternoon, 17 May, when he died. Tod Ronan, Oldtown, found the shot

men in the quarry and he sent for a priest and medical assistance. Father Wm. Walsh, parish priest of Tullaroan administered the Last Rites. An R.I.C. constable identified the two bodies. The bodies were brought to Kilkenny Military Barracks during the afternoon of Tuesday, 17 May and were examined by a military doctor on the following morning. The cause of death in the case of the man shot through the heart was shock and haemorrhage and the man shot through the abdomen died of similar causes. Dublin Castle issued the following official report of the shooting:

Two British ex-soldiers were taken from their homes at 1 a.m. on Tuesday and shot by unknown men. One was killed outright and the other died of his wounds later in the day.

The British armed forces did not succeed in apprehending anyone for the shootings but shortly afterwards a proclamation was published closing the creameries at Kilmanagh and Tullaroan for a period of two weeks from Monday, 20 June, in consequence of the shooting of the two men at Oldtown, and no business was transacted at the creameries during that period.

Michael Purcell of Kildrinagh, Tubrid Cross who had been captured doing scout duty on Blackbottom Hill was held prisoner in Kilkenny Military Barracks immediately after the gun-battle but was then transferred to Ballybricken Jail in Waterford. At a Military Court held in Waterford on 1 July, 1921, he was charged with levying war against His Majesty by participating in an attack on His Majesty's forces at Tubrid Cross on 13 May. Michael Purcell pleaded not guilty and was defended by Mr Thomas Colbert, solicitor, Waterford. He firmly stuck to his original story that he was just having a stroll around on that day and that he came to his own house about 12 o'clock and afterwards went to his sister's house where he had tea. He then met the military and police. During cross-examination at the trial, a military officer stated that it was around 5 p.m. when Michael Purcell was arrested and that it was after that they encountered a party of 'armed civilians' when shots were exchanged by both parties and a military officer was wounded. Michael Purcell was found guilty of the charge and sentenced to penal servitude for life. He was fortunate that he did not have to serve very long in jail as a Truce came in the War of Independence on July 11, 1921, and all prisoners were released.

In the Knocknagress gun-battle, the Flying Column suffered two fatal casualties and one scout captured. The Flying Column members claimed that they shot two of the British forces near the high bank that they had to cross in William Coady's fields. One British officer Captain Scott-Watson was hit by

shotgun fire in the right hand. A surgeon who extracted a number of pellets from the wound treated him. An official report from Dublin Castle said:

About 5 p.m. (Friday) a mixed party of troops and R.I.C. from Kilkenny encountered a body of armed rebels at Tubrid. A short engagement ensued resulting in the capture of five armed rebels, two of whom were wounded. One rifle, one shotgun, two revolvers and sixty rounds of ammunition, some dum-dum, was taken by the Crown Forces. One officer was slightly wounded.

There are inaccuracies in this report in reference to the capture of five armed 'rebels' as only three 'rebels' were captured and it is likely that there was a certain element of propaganda value inherent in the statement issued and because of this the claim of the Flying Column members that they shot or wounded two of the British forces in the encounter is more likely to be true.



107. *Cumann na mBan at Pat Walsh's funeral.*

CHAPTER 24

They buried them with dignity

Seán Quinn died in Kilkenny military barracks shortly after being admitted on the night of 13 May, 1921. The news that Seán Quinn had died was passed on to the members of the 7th Battalion (Callan) I.R.A. Jack Gardiner contacted Tommy Egan another member of the 7th Battalion I.R.A. from Poulacapple and together they got in touch with Jack Doran of Mullinahone who owned a horse hearse to ask him if he would come with them to collect Seán Quinn's body from Kilkenny military hospital. Jack Doran willingly agreed. The remains of Seán Quinn had lain in Kilkenny Military Hospital from 13 May until Jack Gardiner, Tommy Egan, and Jack Doran arrived on Tuesday 17th to claim the body. A military inquiry had been held and evidence of identification taken. The three men were questioned by military officers for an hour before it was agreed to release the body to them. They gently put the remains of their I.R.A. comrade in the horse hearse, left the barracks but shortly afterwards stopped, unfurled the Tricolour that they had brought with them and with poise and dignity covered the coffin with the flag of the Irish Republic.

A large crowd was waiting near Callan to pay their respects to the dead freedom fighter and the horse hearse proceeded slowly through the native town of the Fenian poet, John Locke, to enable the republican people of Callan to take part in the funeral procession. The funeral was stopped by British military opposite Callan police barracks and Jack Gardiner, Tommy Egan and Jack Doran were taken into the barracks and questioned by a British military officer. British forces outside on the streets of Callan removed the national flag from the coffin. As might be expected, the people of Callan closed in around the horse hearse

and they recited the Rosary in Irish outside the parish church for the repose of the soul of Seán Quinn. Brave and generous old Callan with its long and honoured connection with the doctrines of Irish nationhood made sure to pay a dignified tribute to this latest dead freedom fighter. All the work and dedication of Rev Father Delahunty, who was a curate there from 1912, Michael Shelley, J. J. Dunne and Commandant Jim Roughan, the imprisoned leader of the 7th Battalion at the time, had made Callan a strong and loyal Sinn Féin area. Shortly afterwards Jack Gardiner, Tommy Egan, and Jack Doran were released from the police barracks and the horse hearse moved on.

As the funeral neared Mullinahone the cortege grew larger. More and more comrades and friends of Seán Quinn followed the hearse. His comrades unfurled a second Tricolour and the coffin was once again draped with the national flag. The British military who accompanied the funeral were now unable to get near the coffin and were helpless to remove the flag as the cortege had become so large. The Flying Column of the 7th Battalion received word that Seán Quinn's funeral was on its way from Kilkenny to Mullinahone. They could not join the cortege to pay their military respects, as that might mean the capture of the whole Flying Column. They moved into the district earlier in the day and they took up positions on a fence, two fields in and overlooking Boharawarrige Road, near the home of Michael Gibbs, Ahenure. As the Flying Column waited for the cortege to approach, they had time to talk and reflect on the happenings, both exciting and tragic, of the past few months. Pat Walsh was in a critical condition and the news was bad in his regard. They remembered Pat. Then they thought of the first member of the Flying Column to die and they remembered the curly cheerful, nineteen year old, Jackie Brett, who still lay in unconsecrated ground in the turnip field in Ned Maher's farm in Cussane. Jackie would have his day yet, they vowed. Some day, when the fight was won, they would raise him up again. Yes, if the fight was won. But, even if just one of them survived, he would see to it. Whoever would remain would raise him up again and put him in consecrated ground.

They could see Seán Quinn's funeral cortege approaching now. As it passed by them down on the Boharawarrige Road, they formed up under their Flying Column leader, Ned Aylward and presented arms to give Seán Quinn a last salute as they watched the hearse wind its way in the direction of Mullinahone, soon to be enveloped in the grey mists of Sliabh na mBan and Kickham's own country. Their hearts felt cold. They felt the loss of a loyal comrade who was one of the first to join the Callan Flying Column. They vowed to finish the fight.

Charles J. Kickham, of a former generation, found the gates of Mullinahone graveyard locked against him when his remains arrived to be buried. Unlike

Charles J. Kickham, Seán Quinn found a welcoming and sympathetic parish priest in Mullinahone, Canon O'Meara, who was waiting to receive his remains. No freedom fighter was ever abandoned by Canon O'Meara during the War of Independence. He attended to the spiritual welfare of all the Tipperary Flying Column members and often sent word to his parishioners to tell all the members of the Flying Columns that they were welcome at his house at any hour of the day or night for Confession.

There was a huge crowd in Mullinahone for the funeral on the following day, Wednesday, 18 May. Mullinahone parish church, its precincts, and the town itself were thronged with the crowds of people who came from all parts of County Tipperary and County Kilkenny to pay their respects to the dead Volunteer. British military lined the walls of the churchyard with rifles and machine guns at the ready but that did not deter the local company of the I.R.A. from burying the remains of Seán Quinn with dignity in a grave to the left of the resting place of Kickham. No volley could be fired because of the military presence but when the soldiers had finally gone and the mourners had departed, three members of the local company I.R.A. came into the graveyard and fired three volleys over the grave of their lighthearted but brave comrade, before slipping silently away through the lush green fields in the direction of the sloping brown edges of Sliabh na mBan.

On the day that Seán Quinn was buried, Pat Walsh died in Fermoy Military Hospital. Word of his death was sent to his father, Matthew Walsh, in Dunnamaggin. He notified Ned Egan, Baurascoobe and Ned got in touch with Pat Holden and John Hickey of the local I.R.A. Company who all agreed that Pat Walsh's remains should be brought home to his native Dunnamaggin for interment. Dunnamaggin I.R.A. Company held a meeting in the dairy in Dunnamaggin that night where it was agreed that John Hickey and Pat Holden would both travel to Fermoy to collect the body. John Hickey suggested that they ask Bill Egan of Callan, who had a hackney car, to drive them to Fermoy and back.

Next day Father T. Hennebry, the curate in Dunnamaggin at the time, accompanied John Hickey and Pat Holden into Callan military barracks to get a pass. The three of them were photographed in the barracks but they were well received by the local constables who gave them their passes. Bill Egan was in Dunnamaggin at 4 a.m. the following morning with his hackney car and all three then set off for Fermoy, on a long and what was a perilous journey at the end of the War of Independence in May 1921. All along they met roads blocked with felled trees and impassable because of wide trenches dug by I.R.A. units in rural areas. Three times, around Ballypatrick, Kilcash, County Tipperary, the car had to stop while the occupants called to houses in the district to get axes and saws

to cut boughs off the felled trees in order to get through. People in the locality were reluctant to give them axes until they heard their story as they felt that they might be helping the British military in loaning their axes to have the road cleared. Once they met a blown-up bridge and the car had to be lifted by its wheels and thrown over the gaping gap.

It was mid-day on Saturday, 21 May when they got to Fermoy and they were glad they made the journey that day as the British military had a grave open and were planning to bury Pat Walsh there as the body had not been claimed. The British officers were very courteous to them and they were pleasantly surprised when they were given a military escort for a mile of the road after the remains of Pat Walsh had been given over to them and the British soldiers saluted as the car sped away from the escort. They then lowered the side of the car and covered the coffin with the Tricolour. The Black and Tans were stationed at Kilworth, County Cork and stopped the car as it moved along a narrow road through the camp and John Hickey, Pat Holden and Bill Egan were taken out and spread-eagled against a wall and searched. A bayonet was thrust through the national flag and it was torn in places. They were stopped in Mitchelstown where the barracks had been burnt by the I.R.A. that morning and the Black and Tans addressed them as 'Bloody Shiners' and 'Murderers'.

Many of Pat Walsh's former comrades met the cortege in Clonmel and the crowd following the funeral car began to grow in numbers between Callan and Dunnamaggin. The coffin was brought to Dunnamaggin parish church where it was placed on the catafalque to repose for the night. A glass panel was inset on the top of the coffin, and during the night and the following morning crowds of people filed past the bier and prayed silently for the repose of Pat Walsh's soul.

The funeral took place on Sunday, 22 May. A huge number of people from all parts of counties Kilkenny and Tipperary attended the obsequies. There was also a heavy presence of British military in Crossley Tenders with rifles and machine guns. They set up a machine gun on the road and searched many people coming to the funeral.

The officer in charge intimated to Father T. Hennebry C.C. that his orders were that no more than forty people would be allowed to follow the funeral to the graveyard which was only about two hundred yards away from the church. The coffin was covered with the Tricolour as it left the church and borne by members of the local company of the I.R.A. including John Hickey, Pat Holden, Bob Coady, Denis Treacy, Lyda Holden, Larry Forristal and Andy Forristal. They had not gone far carrying their staunch and dedicated dead captain on their shoulders when the British officer moved forward and removed the national flag.

Members of the Crown forces also occupied the graveyard. Father Hennebry and Father Ned Purcell, the parish priest, offered prayers at the graveside. Then Ellie Peters, a member of the local Cumann na mBan, in the spirit of Ann Devlin and Countess Markievicz, unfurled another Tricolour and quickly but with dignity, put it on the coffin just before it was lowered into the grave. Amongst the many wreaths laid on the grave was one from his comrades of the Flying Column. They could not chance to leave their hilly retreats to attend the obsequies, as they were 'outlaws' in their own native land. Other wreaths came from Callan Sinn Féin, Dunnamaggin Gaelic League, Dunnamaggin Hurling Club and Dunnamaggin Sinn Féin Club.

When all was over and the British military had departed Bob Coady, Denis Treacy, and John Hickey filed back into the graveyard and in military fashion fired three volleys over the grave of their former comrade-in-arms for the freedom of Ireland. The British military had gone as far as the Grand Gates of Balintee at Castlemorris when they heard the shots and came back to the graveyard and questioned a group of women, including Ellie Peters, at the cemetery gates as to whether they had seen men with guns in the graveyard. Needless to say the women had seen nothing although the three I.R.A. Volunteers were in hiding only 300 yards away.

On the following morning, Monday, 23 May, Office and Solemn High Mass were celebrated for the repose of Pat Walsh. An immense congregation again attended. The Celebrant of the Mass was the Rev T. Hennebry C.C., Dunnamaggin: Deacon: Rev W. Murphy C.C., Callan: sub-deacon: Rev J. Walsh C.C., Tullaroan: master of ceremonies - Rev J. Walsh C.C., Callan. In the choir were: - Rev T. Rochford P.P., Aghaviller (presiding): Rev P. Carrigan P.P., Callan and Rev J. Larkin C.C., Windgap, Chanters: Rev T. Brennan P.P., Ballyhale: Rev J. Brennan P.P., Windgap: Rev P. Drennan, Chaplain, Callan: Rev E. Purcell C.C., Kilmoganny: Rev L. Hoyne C.C., Aghaviller: Rev E. Doody C.C., Ballyhale: Rev M. McGrath C.C., Windgap: Rev Fr. O'Flynn O.S.A., Prior, Callan: Rev Father Crotty O.S.A., Callan: Rev Father Canavan O.D.C., Prior, Knocktopher.

Shortly afterwards two votes of sympathy were passed in Dunnamaggin and of themselves they mirror how Pat Walsh spent his life as a youth and a young man in his native parish. The Dunnamaggin Hurling Club of which Pdraig Walsh was a staunch member passed the following resolution:

'That we desire to offer our very sincere sympathy to Mr Matthew Walsh, Dunnamaggin, on the untimely death of his esteemed son, Patrick.'

The Dunnamaggin Gaelic League passed this vote of sympathy:

‘That we the members of the Craobh Conradh na Gaeilge, Dunnamaggin, tender our united sympathy to Mr Matthew Walsh on the death of his son.’

The people of Dunnamaggin did well in their last respects to a loyal and true Irishman who had given his young life for the freedom of the Gaelic Ireland that he had worked so hard to achieve during his lifetime.



108. *Kennedys of Knocknagress.*

CHAPTER 25

O'Mara Resigns. Aylward is selected as T.D.

The Government of Ireland Act which became law on 23 December, 1920 was only brought into operation early in May, 1921. Under this act separate parliaments were set up for the area containing the six north-eastern counties of Ulster and for the area containing the twenty-six counties. These parliaments had limited powers and the supremacy of the British parliament over both was preserved. The Republican Government refused, of course, to take any interest in the Government of Ireland Act and called it 'The Partition Bill.'

The British government announced elections for every constituency in Ireland for 24 May, 1921. None of the republican candidates thought for one minute of taking their seats, if elected, in any of the British convened parliaments. However they decreed that as a demonstration of the people's will, the elections were to take place and were to be regarded as elections for the Second Dáil. The representatives of all Ireland, including those elected in the six north-eastern counties, would be invited to take their seats in Dáil Éireann and the system of proportional representation would be introduced for the first time in the whole of Ireland.

For these elections the constituencies of North and South Kilkenny and County Carlow were amalgamated and four Sinn Féin candidates were nominated:- Alderman W. T. Cosgrave T.D., Mr James Lennon T.D., County Carlow, Professor Gerard O'Sullivan M.A., Knockbeg College, Carlow and Eamon Aylward, Ahenure, Callan. James O'Mara, the sitting Sinn Féin member for South Kilkenny, who had won a great victory over Matt Keating in the 1918

General Election, had been replaced on the Sinn Féin panel of candidates by Ned Aylward.

When the early euphoria of O'Mara's success had died down, South Kilkenny voters became disillusioned with him. O'Mara was a very wealthy man. He was managing director of Donnelly's bacon curing business, owned by O'Maras of Limerick, but situated in Dublin. He had a house in Salthill in Galway where he spent the weekends, and he bought a second house in Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin, where he lived during the week. He travelled to and fro by car, a mode of transport that few could afford at this time. He seldom if ever came to Kilkenny, and at one stage W.T. Cosgrave wrote to him about his absence - 'The Kilkenny people want to know when you are coming down to see them. Your best friends there want to see you and to hear you for however few minutes ... We must keep in touch.'

James O'Mara did not keep in touch. He was appointed a trustee of Dáil Éireann Funds on 17 June, 1919, along with Eamon de Valera T.D., and the Most Reverend Dr Michael Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe. He was asked by President Eamon de Valera and Arthur Griffith to go to America to help organise the Irish National Loan there. While on the American Republican Mission, James O'Mara disagreed with de Valera on many matters of policy as is evident from this letter he wrote him on 25 April, 1921.

My dear de Valera,

A cable from you was read at the great Convention of the American Association for Recognition of the Irish Republic, asking for a guarantee of a million dollars yearly and was translated into action by a levy of five dollars a member on every member of the association - which practically includes every active person of our race. Neither Mr. Boland or [sic] myself was consulted on the matter.

There are nearly three million dollars lying idle here to the credit of the American trustees and at the disposal of your government. Funds were therefore not urgently required and your request at this time unnecessary. It is somewhat unworthy of our country to be always holding out its hat, but to hold out two hats at once is stupid.

And lastly your appeal now makes impossible any attempt later this year to raise the twenty million dollar loan which was contemplated - to use your own words when we last discussed the matter "crops will not grow on trampled ground."

I would advise you to promptly send someone to this country who has your confidence, if such a person exists, and having done so don't constantly interfere with his work.

O'Mara was totally in disagreement with de Valera about the whole thrust of the American mission. De Valera then recommended on 8 April, 1921, that the financial outlay for the maintenance of the diplomatic and political side of the U.S.A. service be cut down to 100,000 dollars for the next year and that some of the New York offices opened for the Irish Bond drive be closed down. O'Mara opposed this recommendation. He disagreed vehemently with de Valera's proposal of putting a levy on every member of the American Association for recognition of the Irish Republic instead of floating a second Irish Loan in America, as is clear from his letter of 25 April, above quoted. James O'Mara found fault with what he alleged was the dictatorial tone of de Valera's policy. All these facts culminated in O'Mara's letter of resignation to de Valera on 30 April, 1921, in which he began by saying that he could not be responsible for a policy that he totally disagreed with and he continued by stating:

I tender my resignation as the most emphatic protest I can make against what must be the utter disruption and destruction of organised American aid.

You will therefore place my resignation before Dáil Éireann on the expiration of the year, June 14th, 1921.

James O'Mara had done good work for Ireland in America. He had helped to raise five and a half million dollars in bonds for the Irish Treasury. De Valera said of him:- 'The fact that our funds are what they are today is due to the work in America of Mr. Frank P. Walsh and Mr. O'Mara.' What James O'Mara said himself sums up his final feelings about the American Mission - 'It cost me four years work and nearly £10,000 hard cash.' O'Mara preferred to be dealing with important national issues than keeping in touch with local grass-root problems.

When James O'Mara fought and won the 1918 General Election in South Kilkenny for Sinn Féin he had two stalwart supporters in Canon Doyle P.P. of Mooncoin, and Father Brennan of Windgap. Canon Doyle headed his parishioners to the polls on that occasion and Father Brennan wrote to James O'Mara hoping that he would stay with him in Windgap where he would be always welcome whatever happened. On the date that he tendered his resignation to President de Valera, O'Mara wrote the following letter to Canon Doyle:

As President of Sinn Féin in South Kilkenny, I herewith place my resignation in your hands. The enclosed correspondence will fully explain to you the reason I can no longer take active part in the movement. I have to thank the electors of South Kilkenny for the

confidence they have twice placed in me, and for the opportunity they have given me of serving my country. Now that I can no longer do so, as once before, I would be false to their trust if I did not place my position before them fully and frankly. I will always have a kind remembrance of the friendly feeling in which they held me.

To Father Brennan he wrote:

‘You are one of the few by whom I would not like to be judged without knowing the facts.’

James O’Mara did not want to be nominated for Sinn Féin in 1921. Shortly afterwards he returned from America and disappeared from the national scene until after the Civil War.

For Ned Aylward and the other three nominated Sinn Féin candidates there was no election. In fact throughout the whole twenty six counties no elections were necessary; in every county and in every borough the Republican candidates were returned unopposed on nomination day, 13 May, the day of the Knocknagress ambush. Cosgrave, Lennon, Sullivan and Aylward were returned unopposed for the constituency of Kilkenny-Carlow. There is no doubt that Ned Aylward would have got a huge vote in that election as by now he was known far and wide as an uncompromising fearless freedom fighter.

As the Callan Flying Column rested in Cappaghayden on the night of 23 May, 1921, they felt low and depressed after losing two comrades in Knocknagress. However, it cheered these fighting men to hear that their leader had been chosen as a member of Dáil Éireann, the free parliament of Ireland. They would now have a higher standing among the people. They would have a better chance of not being called outlaws in their own country, and their leader would speak for them and tell of their needs and desires in the free parliament of Ireland, whenever it became possible for him to attend. This realisation warmed and comforted this small band of Ireland's fighting men in their darkest hour.

CHAPTER 26

The Truce

After the Knocknagress gun battle the Flying Column of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade never went into action again as the same unit. Instructions came from I.R.A. headquarters in Dublin, in June, 1921, to disband the active service units for the summer months because the long days made movement difficult. The Flying Column members returned to their own districts and formed smaller active service units to carry on attacks and skirmishes with British Forces in their own company areas. This was intended to be a temporary arrangement. Plans were afoot to organise a 2nd Southern Divisional Flying Column, which would consist of one hundred men and the various brigades were asked to nominate suitable men for this proposed column. The Brigade Flying Columns would also operate as before. Far from being defeated, the new plans looked promising and were the result of months of hard-earned battle experience.

On the night of 3 June, 1921, Ned Halley, Jimmy Kelly and Paud Downey came into Callan to ambush the curfew police patrol. They met an I.R.A. volunteer, named Christy Reilly, who was a member of the Callan Co., and asked for his assistance. He was to walk about 30 yards in front of them and if he saw the curfew patrol coming, he was to raise his hat, and scratch his head and then get out of the way! Halley, Kelly and Downey would immediately get ready to fire. Ned Halley had a small automatic, Kelly had a Peter the Painter and Downey had a Webley revolver. Reilly went ahead and they followed. There was no sign of any police patrol. They went up Mill Street and turned into Bridge Street. They walked up that street and passed by Jimmy Somers's shop. They came up towards Mick Joyce's newsagent shop and they were just at Pollards' drapery

premises, when Ned Halley looked around and saw that there were two R.I.C. men coming close behind them. Kelly was on the left-hand side of Halley and Downey was on the right-hand side.

‘Go ahead,’ said Halley, ‘and on your lives, don’t turn around. There are two peelers behind ye.’

‘What will we do then,’ whispered Downey.

‘Get in on the footpath at McEvoys’ corner,’ replied Kelly, ‘and get ready to fire.’

Kelly slipped behind Halley when they got to the corner. Downey stepped in on the footpath and wheeled around the corner into West Street. Kelly and Halley were on the footpath in Bridge Street. Halley had his hand on his gun, ready to draw it. Sergeant Cooke of the Callan R.I.C., who had warned Paddy Luttrell not to come out the front door in Garryricken House, had been speaking to Sergeant Butler who had visited his house in Bridge Street a short time before that. Now it was 11 p.m. and they were returning to the barracks. As they were approaching the cross they got a glimpse of suspicious characters lurking at the corner. They too fingered their guns and prepared for trouble.

Halley and Kelly waited at one side of the street and Downey at the other. They let the two policemen by them. Suddenly the police drew their guns and turned back on them. That was what they were waiting for. Kelly hopped out on the street and opened fire with his lethal Peter the Painter. Sergeant Cooke who was firing on the right hand side went tumbling to the ground. Downey was letting fly furiously at the other side of the street. Kelly’s Peter the Painter jammed after the second shot and he had to get out of the way. Halley fired four times in quick succession. As he turned to go he could see Sergeant Butler running towards the barracks. Sergeant Cooke, although wounded in the right thigh, got up and stumbled out of danger. Sergeant Butler got to the barracks and shouted that they had been caught in a hail of bullets from a big crowd of rebels at the cross. British soldiers rushed out immediately and fired shots in that direction. An old woman was coming down Bridge Street before the firing ceased. ‘O Mother of God,’ she screamed, ‘the world’s gone mad.’ Halley, Downey and Kelly got out of Callan quickly and stayed in Castle Eve that night.

On 12 June, 1921, Dan Breen was married in Rosegreen, the secret headquarters of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. Ned Aylward, commandant of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, was invited to Dan’s wedding and he regarded this as a compliment bestowed on him on behalf of the fighting men of the 7th Kilkenny Battalion. There were several days of merriment and gaiety, underground and over ground, in Rosegreen before Ned returned to his command duties in the hills of West Kilkenny.

The Kilkenny No. 1. Flying Column under Comdt. George O'Dwyer went into action, and not for the first time, against British forces in Coolbawn, Castlecomer on the morning of 18 June, 1921, Nicholas Mullins of Thomastown and Seán Hartley, Glenmore, a shop assistant at Graces, Parliament St., Kilkenny were killed in action.

On the eve of the Truce, Sunday night, 10 July, the Mullinahone Co. of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade decided to ambush the curfew patrol in the village. It was usual for a curfew bell to toll each night and immediately afterwards this six-man mixed patrol of military and police marched down the streets to check that no one was outdoors. The ambush was planned some time before the date of the Truce was announced and it was decided to go ahead with it as the I.R.A. members regarded the Truce as unlikely to be a permanent one. Almost all the 30 members of the Mullinahone Co. reported for duty on that Sunday night and took up positions inside a wall opposite the local national school. Word had been passed around the village to all the active members of the local community, who had any connections with Sinn Féin, to leave the village that night and go and sleep elsewhere and not to return until after midday on the following day, Monday, in order to avoid the possibility of arrest before the coming of the Truce.

Jim Brien of Poulacapple, the Battalion engineer, was in charge of military operations that night. He had already commanded a section of the I.R.A. attackers in the NineMileHouse ambush and he was one of the officers in charge of the Mullinahone Co. I.R.A. on the night of the attack on Drangan barracks, when that company encircled their own local barracks in order to prevent the Mullinahone police and military from going to the assistance of the besieged garrison in Drangan. (It was Jim Brien who later designed and constructed, with local help, a place of concealment, named 'Katmandu' which sheltered de Valera, Liam Lynch, Tom Barry, Frank Aiken and almost every other anti-Treaty leader during the tragic Civil War. It defied all efforts to locate it although the searchers knew for certain that a hideout did, in fact, exist in the immediate vicinity. It was in 'Katmandu' on 20 April, 1923, that the I.R.A. Army Executive authorised the Government of the Republic to make peace with the Free State Government and thus end the unfortunate Civil War.)

Jim Brien had now manufactured an explosive charge for this curfew patrol ambush in Mullinahone on the night before the Truce. John O'Gorman from Poulacapple was given this lethal bomb to fire at the six-man curfew patrol as soon as the first shot was fired and the battle raged. (His grandfather, of the same name, John O'Gorman, had taken part in the Battle of Carrickshock in 1831. After that battle he was forced to leave the Carrickshock area and he duly settled in



109. *Heffernans' House, Monrogue, 1921.*



111. *John Campion's house, Knocknagress as it was in 1921.*



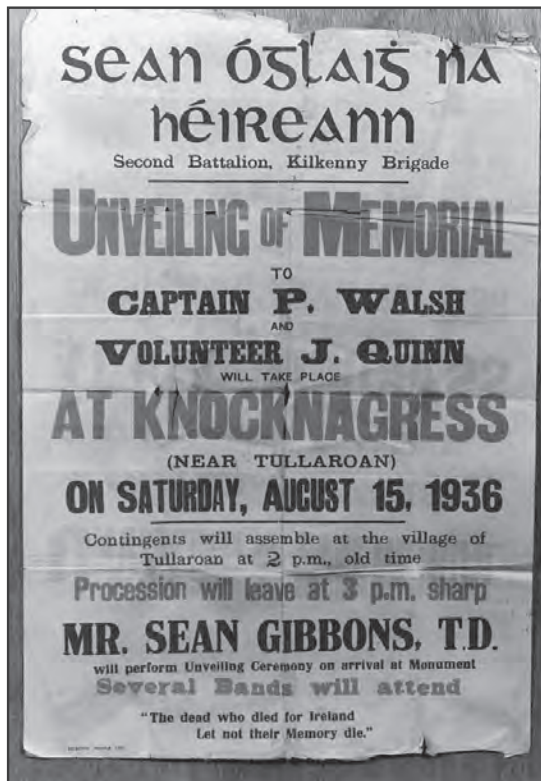
112. *'Sleeping house' in Tom Kennedy's farmyard.*



110. *Teehans' house, New England.*



113. Group at unveiling of Knocknagress Monument 1936. Back: Michael Ryan, Graine, Jimmy Dowling, Killahy, Liam O'Shea, Freshford, James Dunne, Urlingford. Front: Willie Meagher, Curragh, 'Little' Sim Walton, Tullaroan, Seán Gibbons, Freshford, Paddy Sharkey, Johnstown, Patrick Loughlin, Urlingford, Jimmy Fox.



114. Poster for unveiling of Knocknagress memorial 1936.



115. Jack Hoyne who lived in New England 1921 – winner of two All Ireland medals with Kilkenny 1904/5.



116. Monument in Coadys' field Knocknagress to Sean Quinn and Pat Walsh, with the Dermody sisters. Ballyroe, Freshford and Jer McCullagh, Knocknagress.



118. Jack Gardiner, Poulacapple.



117. Kealys' pub, Tubrid Cross, 1921.



119. *Patrick Downey, Callan.*



122. *Neddie Butler (Buckshot).*



120. *Mick Maher, Ballylarkin.*



121. *Jim Dillon's gate and fence through which Seán Hogan's Flying Column escaped in 1921.*

Ballylanigan, near Poulacapple, where he married, reared a family, and died in 1890.) Now his grandson, John O’Gorman was in another battle, a hundred years later, and this time the struggle was for freedom. John had already been in action with the Mullinahone company I.R.A. in the abortive Gleeson’s Cross ambush in August, 1920, where he was one of the first I.R.A. ambushers to have fired a shot.

Paddy Ryan, that great guerrilla freedom fighter, who had participated in and survived every barrack attack, gunbattle and ambush that the Callan Battalion had engaged in since the start of the war, now turned up for the last skirmish ever with British forces in County Kilkenny or County Tipperary. Jim Brien almost told him not to take part as he thought it would be an utter shame if anything were to happen to Ryan in this last engagement. Ryan scoffed at the idea. He had come into the War of Independence to win it and win it he would, even if it had to be fought all over again. Just before the curfew bell tolled, an I.R.A. volunteer, named Jack Brien, who was a native of the village, passed down by the ambush party inside the wall opposite the national school and gave the message that a mixed patrol, of police and military, consisting of six men, was at the cross up in the village preparing to march down to complete their nightly curfew task. He passed on and soon afterwards the patrol approached the ambush position just below Mullinahone National School. To the surprise of the I.R.A. attackers the British party consisted of only two members of the Lincolnshire Regiment, Lieutenant Rowles and an army sergeant.

As the two men approached the ambush site, Jim Brien gave orders to his men to open fire. John O’Gorman fired out the bomb and it landed near the two-man British patrol. It exploded loudly and the British army sergeant was killed instantly and Lieutenant Rowles was badly wounded. The wounded officer stumbled back up the village and the ambushers did not follow him. Paddy Ryan and Jack Gardiner leaped out on the road immediately. They searched for a revolver under the dead Sergeant’s body, Paddy Ryan found it, but after the ambush he gave it to the Mullinahone Co. I.R.A. The ambushers dispersed quickly. British forces set up a machine gun on the courthouse and fired at the retreating freedom fighters. But the I.R.A. volunteers had the cover of trees, as they withdrew, and though bullets raked the leaves of the branches above them, the firing was too high to cause them injury. They all got back safely to base and suffered no casualties.

On the following day, Monday, 11 July, 1921, at noon, the Truce came into effect. On behalf of the British Army it was agreed as follows:

- (1) No incoming troops, R.I.C. and Auxiliary Police and munitions, and no movements for military purposes of troops and munitions, except maintenance drafts;

- (2) No provocative display of forces, armed or unarmed;
- (3) It is understood that all provisions of this truce apply to the martial law area equally with the rest of Ireland;
- (4) No pursuit of Irish officers or men or war material or military stores;
- (5) No secret agents, noting descriptions or movements, and no interference with the movements of Irish persons, military or civil, and no attempts to discover the haunts or habits of Irish officers and men; Note:- This supposes the abandonment of Curfew restrictions;
- (6) No pursuit or observance of lines of communication or connection. Note:- There are other details connected with courts martial, motor permits, and R.O.L.R. to be agreed later.

On behalf of the Irish Army it was agreed that:

- (a) Attacks on Crown Forces and civilians to cease;
- (b) No provocative displays of forces, armed or unarmed;
- (c) No interference with Government or private property;
- (d) To discountenance and prevent any action likely to cause disturbance of the peace which might necessitate military interference.

The men of the Irish Republican Army were given leave to return to their homes and to come out of hiding. The I.R.A. command warned them, however, to be ready for mobilization at short notice. There was great jubilation in many Irish homes when their I.R.A. husbands, sons and some Cumann na mBan daughters were able to sleep at home again for the first time in over two years.

Wives waited patiently but hopefully that night for the return of their husbands from active service for Ireland, and many a tear of joy was shed as they caressed each other for the first time in a long period. Children did not understand where their Daddies had been and the fathers were too exhausted to explain the long story. 'You'll read it yet in history,' said many a father to his bewildered son or daughter.

CHAPTER 27

Jackie Brett is finally laid to rest

The coming of the Truce on 11 July, 1921, gave the 7th Battalion Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A., the long desired opportunity to bring back Jackie Brett's remains to his beloved Mullinahone. There he would rest near the grave of the staunch Fenian, Charles J. Kickham, whose example he had followed until death for Ireland was his lot in the springtime of his life. There, too, he would now rest near the grave of Seán Quinn, his loyal friend and comrade whom he had insisted in Castlejohn should be buried in a coffin, even if they were all shot in getting one. Jackie Brett's comrades in the Callan Flying Column kept faith and on the first opportunity after the Truce, they came together to arrange his funeral. Ned Aylward was still Commandant of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. and Ned Halley was Vice-Commandant.

Things had changed for the better. The Flying Column members were no longer outlaws in their own country who had to keep to the hills and live like nomads. Now they could mix freely about once again, sleep in their own beds, go to a dance and meet the local girls and play hurling and football in a free and open fashion.

Ned Halley played a big part in making the funeral arrangements. A new coffin, lined with lead, was made by a plumber in Carrick-on-Suir. Jackie Brett's body had been buried for nearly four months at the time and it was planned to put the old coffin into the new lead coffin and completely seal it off. Ned Halley went into Smithwick's Brewery to request the use of two lorries to transport wreaths and the stewards from Windgap to Mullinahone on the day of the funeral. Mr O'Meara, managing director of Smithwick's Brewery, with the

concurrence of James Smithwick, chairman of the company, willingly obliged, as did Dan Smithwick, of Kilkenny Bottling Store and not only did they supply two lorries, but they provided drivers as well for the day.

On Wednesday 24 August, 1921, the Tullahought I.R.A. Company raised Jackie Brett's body out of the turnip field. They knew the location of the grave and Ned Maher, Cussane, Michael Davis, Jack Donovan, Frank and Larry O'Neill, Paddy Lee, Johnny Duggan and Pat Holden came together again to complete the task. Ned Halley arranged to have the lead coffin brought to Lamoge cemetery, late on the night of 24 August and during the early hours of the following morning the old coffin was encased in the new lead coffin, under the supervision of the plumber from Carrick-on-Suir who had designed and fashioned it. There was High Mass and Office in Windgap Parish Church the following morning. The chief celebrant was Father Larkin C.C., Windgap, who had attended Jackie Brett in his last moments on this earth and many clergy from all over the dioceses of Cashel and Ossory attended the obsequies. After the Office and High Mass, the coffin, wrapped in the Tricolour, was borne from the church and placed in the horse-drawn hearse, driven by Jack Doran of Mullinahone. Members of the I.R.A., numbering 3,000, and 400 members of the Cumann-na-mBan, lined up in processional formation behind the hearse and began the march from Windgap to Mullinahone, the funeral passing through Callan en route. Every business premises in County Kilkenny closed for the funeral in order to allow their employees to attend. As the cortege proceeded through County Kilkenny, it was joined by thousands at different parts of the route and when it arrived in Callan at 3.30 p.m., the number of Volunteers had increased to 5,000.

In Callan, the remains were met by the members of the Callan Town Commissioners who marched in front of the cortege, followed by the members of the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. and Cumann-na-mBan. Then followed Smithwick's lorries laden with wreaths. Three bands played the poignant notes of the funeral march as the cortege moved solemnly through the silent streets of the republican town of Callan. The County Tipperary Flying Columns lined the Callan streets as the bands from Thomastown, Kells and Kilkenny accompanied the huge concourse of I.R.A. and Cumann-na-mBan Volunteers. Each and every Volunteer kept his head erect and shoulders straight as line after line of young disciplined soldiers passed through Callan and out on the winding road to Mullinahone. Callan gave a truly patriot's farewell indeed to the young soldier boy who, on that day, represented all the County Kilkenny dead in the struggle for freedom between 1916 and 1921. The ghosts of Nicholas Mullins from Thomastown, John Hartley from Glenmore, Thomas Hennessy and

Michael Dermody from Threecastles, Pat Walsh from Dunnamaggin, Seán Quinn from Mullinahone, Tom Whelan from Ballyraggett, Peter Freyne from Inistioge, Johnny Kealy, Blanchfieldspark, Kilkenny and Patrick Beilin, Castlecomer could also be sensed to be hovering near the Tricolour flag which covered the lead coffin in the horsedrawn hearse. It was estimated that 30,000 people passed through the centre of Callan in the biggest funeral ever seen in County Kilkenny. As the head of the cortege reached Mullinahone, County Tipperary, the rear of the funeral had not then left Windgap, County Kilkenny, which was twelve miles west of Mullinahone.

Jackie Brett, Second Lieutenant, B. Company (Mullinahone), 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A., a Tipperary Bloody Sunday footballer, was laid to rest finally and forever in the family grave only 100 yards away from his faithful friend and comrade, Seán Quinn, of the same company I.R.A. When the coffin had been lowered into the grave, Paddy Reilly, a member of the Thomastown Brass and Reed Band, stepped forward and sounded 'The Last Post'. Its poignant tone could be heard as it re-echoed on the slopes of Sliabh-na-mBan, not very far away. Then six members of the 7th Battalion, Flying Column, who were with Jackie Brett on the night he died, under their commandant Ned Aylward, in full I.R.A. officer's uniform, now proudly and openly presented arms and fired three volleys over the grave of Jackie Brett in a final military farewell. Jackie Brett had finally come home again to rest in peace amongst his own people 'neath the shades of Sliabh-na-mBan. He had given all for Ireland.



123. *Michael Hogan, Grangemockler, shot dead in Croke Park, Bloody Sunday, 21 November, 1920.*

CHAPTER 28

The Tunnel Escape from Kilkenny Jail

Even though military activities ceased on the day of the Truce, the internees in the jails around Ireland and England were not released nor were death sentences lifted on condemned prisoners. Though talks were progressing between the representatives of Dáil Éireann and the British Government, Michael Collins made a statement on 11 September, 1921, saying that there were still 3,200 men interned of whom about 1,500 had been tried and were serving sentences; 40 women were serving sentences - two for 10 years and three for life. In Kilkenny Jail two prisoners were still under sentence of death and many others were serving life sentences. Though the Truce had come these prisoners were determined to end their captivity and there was always the danger that negotiations might break down. In the prison in Kilkenny they began to plan ways of escape. The most feasible suggestion was to burrow their way out to freedom. Father Delahunty was one of the Kilkenny prisoners. He was sentenced to two years penal servitude on 24 December, 1920. He was transferred from Waterford Jail to the prison in Kilkenny on 6 April, 1921.

The prisoners in Kilkenny discovered in late summer, 1921 that there was a disused cellar underneath the floor of the recreation cell in A. Wing of the prison. All the prisoners had access to this association cell and they carefully cut a manhole in the floor, so that the boards could be placed back in position and covered with a piece of matting. Through this hole the men who went down could drop into the disused cellar underneath. From there an entrance was made

into another unoccupied cellar where the work of excavation began and was carried out with roughly made instruments. The actual digging went on at night and only one man worked at a time. Knives and pointed fire poker were used to loosen the soil and old pieces of iron taken from the prison stairs were also used for the same purpose. The soil was then removed in sacks made by the prisoners from blankets off their beds. Later on the loose earth was taken from the tunnel in a large flat pan attached to a rope. It was officially estimated that about eight tons of earth were removed in the process. The prisoners deposited this huge amount of clay in the disused cellar. A friendly warder named Power closed his eyes to the digging that he knew was going on and while he was on duty, a tremendous amount of work was done.

The escape tunnel was 50 yards long and almost six feet deep under the ground. It exited alongside the foundation of the outer wall. In the course of construction it was propped up on each side and on top by bed boards. The exit to the tunnel was about three feet in diameter and came up in St. Rioch's Street, immediately outside the jail wall.

The prisoners timed their escape bid for the most opportune time of the day. Friendly Warden Power was the officer on guard at the time of the escape. He was trussed and gagged in a cell in order to conceal his co-operation in the breakout. At 6 p.m. also, the police guard was withdrawn. The military patrol, which remained, was changing guard. Larry Condon, Fermoy, was in charge of the escaping party. Martin Kealy, a Kilkennyman, from Blanchfieldspark, was commandant of the political prisoners in the jail. He was a brother of John Kealy who was arrested after the Easter Week Rebellion and died from heart failure in John Street, Kilkenny when he was being marched from Kilkenny Jail to the railway station for deportation to Wakefield prison. In keeping with the traditional respect of Irish people for the priestly station in life, the prisoners offered Father Delahunty pride of place after Larry Condon in the outbreak, but he refused to take the offer.

'I'll go with you, lads,' he said, 'but only after the men who are sentenced to death and the other men who are serving life sentences.'

The first into the tunnel at 6.40 p.m. on 22 November, 1921, and the first to emerge on the other side was Larry Condon, Fermoy. He had tested the escape route and found it reliable. He remained outside the jail and assisted each escaping prisoner as he emerged. They all came slowly through the tunnel and it was evident from their muddy appearance that progress had been laborious and difficult. Some of the prisoners had lighted candles and were scantily dressed. Many of them had no caps or overcoats and most of them had their boots in their hands or strung around their necks. Amongst the prisoners who escaped

were the following: - Laurence Condon, Fermoy; Gerard Kenneally, Youghal; Seán Power, Waterford; Martin Kealy, Kilkenny (commandant of the prisoners); James Hanrahan, Brittas, County Kilkenny; Patrick Power, Carrick-on-Suir; Thomas Brennan, Waterford; William O'Leary, Enniscorthy; Michael Kirwan, Enniscorthy; Seán Quilter, Kerry; Henry Meany, Limerick; Edward Punch, Limerick; Thomas McCarrick, Sligo; Edward Balfe, Wexford; W. O'Mara, Carrick-on-Suir; Michael Burke, Glengoole, County Tipperary; Seán Kelly, Tullamore; J. Keogh, Kells; L. Fraher, Dungarvan; D. Connolly; M. Kearns, Limerick; T. Pine, Mayo; Timothy Murphy, Limerick; M. Bourke, Thurles; J. J. Keane; Cornelius Conroy, Cork; Jerry Ryan, Thurles; T. Leonard, Dungannon; Father Delahunty, C.C. Callan, County Kilkenny and Jim Pollock, Mary St., Cork.

Edward Punch and Timothy Murphy, both from Limerick, were under sentence of death and several others were serving life sentences. Michael Burke, Glengoole was Tommy Donovan's great friend. He had been beaten up by British forces under Lieutenant Van Houten on the night of his arrest, but had survived a hunger strike in Cork Jail, which lasted ninety days. Jerry Ryan, Thurles, was serving a long sentence for leading an attack on Littleton barracks. The last man to get into the tunnel was Maurice Walsh of Limerick. Two unfortunate occurrences happened while he was on his way out. As he crawled carefully through the tunnel, portion of it collapsed in front of him and he became trapped. He had no alternative but to go back to the prison. In the meantime Warden Power had been discovered, trussed and gagged inside the prison. Whistles blew, bugles sounded and the warders rushed here and there. The military guard rushed to the entrance of the tunnel. When Maurice Walsh re-appeared at the mouth of the tunnel, he was met by several armed soldiers and taken back to his cell.

The prisoners who escaped found themselves in St. Riach's Street, which was poorly lit. They commandeered seven or eight houses immediately opposite the exit of the tunnel. They placed guards on the front and the rear of these dwellings. The escapees went into these houses as they emerged on to the roadway. They held possession of this section of the street as one by one their comrades were helped out of the tunnel. The local men who escaped and who had a good knowledge of the district took charge of sections of their comrades. Word had gone to the Dunnamaggin Co. I.R.A. through Aly Luttrell, Garryricken, who was a member of Cumann na mBan and sister of Patrick Luttrell who was serving a life sentence in Waterford Jail for being improperly in possession of arms and ammunition at Garryricken on 12 March, 1921. Aly had got a despatch to go into Kilkenny where a letter would be thrown over the prison wall to her with an important message.

The prisoners saw her from a window and threw out a letter wrapped around a stone, which she collected. The letter stated that they would not be ready to come out the tunnel until 6.30 p.m. the following evening. She reported the contents of the letter to the Dunnamaggin Co. I.R.A. Denis Treacy got the word and he arranged that six of his men would be in Patrick Street, Kilkenny, with six ponies and traps to receive the escapees from 6.30 p.m. on. A big number of the prisoners came running quickly along in threes and fours and each group jumped into a trap, and lay down concealed on the floor as the driver headed, as fast as he could, out the Waterford Road and down towards South Kilkenny. Many of the prisoners were dropped off in the Hugginstown district and made their way to their own areas from there.

Paddy Donoghue of St. Rioch's Street was an employee of the railway company at the time. He was a prominent hurler with Dicksboro' and he was to figure later on the Kilkenny county team which won the All-Ireland final against Tipperary in 1922. He was returning home after arriving on the 5.30p.m. train from Ballyraggett when, to his great surprise, in the darkness of the winter's evening, he saw men coming up through a hole in the street, catching on to a telegraph pole beside the hole, and hauling themselves out on the road by means of the pole. He stopped for a while in his tracks, wondering what to do. His eyes opened when he recognised Father Delahunty coming up through the hole, climbing on to the street, turning right towards the Callan Road and disappearing in the darkness. A prisoner who was standing guard at one of the houses recognised Paddy Donoghue from some of his hurling feats. 'Paddy will you help us,' he pleaded as he caught his arm. Already Paddy could see many of the prisoners around the houses in St. Rioch's Street. 'I can get three or four I.R.A. men in a few minutes,' replied Paddy. 'Not enough time for that,' replied the escapee.

Paddy hurried into his sister's home nearby where there were four prisoners already taking refuge.

'Go down and tell Mattie Power, to come up immediately,' said Paddy to his sister, 'I want to see him'.

Mattie was also a Dicksboro' hurler who was later to win four All-Ireland medals with Kilkenny in 1922, 1932, 1933 and 1935, and one with Dublin in 1927. He was one of the most dashing forwards ever to play for Kilkenny, and no game was ever over until the final whistle when Mattie was in the forward line. It was always a joy to see him grace the hurling fields of Ireland with his excellent style and uncanny skill. Mattie rushed up the street to Donoghue. They lived close together in the same road. Mattie agreed to help.

They brought the four prisoners in Donoghues' house with them and they went out on the street and stopped others who were running up the road and told

them that they were taking them out. They ran in front and the prisoners followed them. They made their way up by Kennyswell Road and out the Ballycallan Road. As they moved away from the town, they heard a Crossley Tender coming behind them. They jumped the fence beside them in the darkness. Mattie Power landed in a deep stream. He called for help and the others who had landed on firm ground ran up to him and pulled him out. The water in the stream had almost covered him. He was shaken but he soon recovered. Amongst the escapees who were being guided out of Kilkenny by Donoghue and Power, was Edmund Punch of Limerick, who was under sentence of death up to the time of the breakout. As he approached Ballycallan, and moved further away from the city, he could not believe his luck and it took him quite a while to realise that he was a free man again. When the realisation finally dawned on him, he knelt down on the road, looked up towards heaven and called out as he clasped his hands above his head. 'Thank God, to be fully alive again.' They brought the escapees to William Walsh, Ballycallan, who was a prominent I.R.A. member in that district. He brought them all into his house and gave them tea. Paddy Donoghue and Mattie Power, arrived back in the city at 2 a.m. Bill Walsh looked after the escapees and all got safely back to their own homes.

After the breakout had been discovered, two hundred military, fully armed with trench helmets, were rushed to the jail, together with ninety police. People who were questioned in the vicinity gave them false information which put them on the wrong trail altogether. They searched the county but did not capture one single escapee. Father Delahunty headed back towards the Mullinahone area and got refuge in Egans, Ballyvoneen where he stayed until the Treaty was signed on 6 December 1921. After that he could move about more freely again. He was the first clergyman since the beginning of the War of Independence to have won his way out of prison without leave or licence to freedom. His escape caused intense delight throughout County Kilkenny.

An editorial in the *Kilkenny People* for 26 November, 1921, stated:

We can readily imagine that if the entente cordiale between England and France ever becomes sufficiently 'cordial' to sanction the agreement for the construction of the channel tunnel between the two nations, the contractor for the job will start off by getting in touch with Larry Condon of Fermoy and Martin Kealy of Kilkenny and their comrades. What they do not know about constructing tunnels is not worth knowing, and they will refuse to be hampered by consideration of an eight-hour day; nor do they particularly care whether their work is carried out in old time or summer time.

Father Delahunty was suspended from his priestly duties by Most Rev Dr Brownrigg, Bishop of Ossory because of his deep and constant estrangement with what were alleged to be ‘the civil authorities of the time’, which caused him to be imprisoned and away from his priestly duties as curate in Callan for an indefinite period. Fr. William A. Murphy was appointed curate in Callan on 3 December, 1920. He replaced Father Delahunty, and served as curate in Callan until 9 February, 1925. Father Delahunty returned to his native Curraghmartin in the parish of Mooncoin. His mother was still alive though in poor health. His brother, Dick, carried on the work on the family farm. Father Delahunty supported the Anti-Treaty side during the Civil War. His mother died in 1924 and Father Delahunty was in the body of the church but unable to take an active part in the funeral obsequies. His republican friends did not forget him. Mick Burke, the hunger striker from Glengoole, who was with him as a fellow prisoner in Kilkenny Jail, often visited him together with Seán Hayes of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. He received a present of a motorboat at this time and he travelled regularly up and down his beloved River Suir on his river craft. His brother on the family farm got married, but Father Delahunty stayed on in Curraghmartin and relations were excellent between his brother’s new wife and himself.

Monsignor Barden of Killnaspick, Mooncoin was an old friend of his and of the Delahunty family. He was parish priest of St. Andrew’s, Tecunseh, Nebraska, U.S.A. and he came home on holidays to his native Irish parish in 1925. Father Delahunty was in the habit of crossing the Suir in his boat to visit Ned Barden, a brother of Monsignor Barden, who lived in the County Waterford. He had many chats there with Monsignor Barden while the Monsignor was in Ireland in 1925. Monsignor Barden returned to America in June of that year and unknown to Father Delahunty, he made every effort to secure a mission for him in America. Finally he arranged in 1926 with the bishop of Kansas, which was the neighbouring diocese to Nebraska, that he would accept Father Delahunty as one of his priests. He wrote back to Father Delahunty giving him the good news. It was open to Father Delahunty to accept or refuse. He accepted. His former republican comrades visited him to bid him good-bye. Mick Burke, the hunger striker, went and borrowed a Baby Ford car and drove him to Cobh to begin his sea journey away from Ireland.

Father Delahunty served in many parishes, big and small in Kansas. He taught for some time in a high school there. He then became prison chaplain at Leavenworth State Penitentiary. It was here he did the greatest spiritual work of his life. During his seventeen years as chaplain to this prison, he received sixteen converts into the church and he accompanied many condemned men to the electric chair. He returned on holidays to Ireland in 1939 to see ‘the thunder

and lightning' All-Ireland final between Kilkenny and Cork. He was home in 1946 again and he spent almost every Sunday afternoon attending hurling matches. He loved hurling as a game and his usual haunt was on the back seat of the Nowlan Park Stand in Kilkenny, where he had many nostalgic chats with his comrades from the War of Independence period. He returned to Ireland for the last time in 1952. During this holiday his republican friends from Callan visited him in Curraghmartin, Mooncoin and they chatted together all through the night from midnight to dawn before they parted for the last time.

Father Delahunty died in St. John's Hospital, Leavensworth, Kansas, on 4 April, 1955. His remains were removed to the Cathedral in Kansas, where they lay in state overnight. The Archbishop of Kansas presided when Requiem Office and High Mass was offered before the funeral. Almost one hundred priests from all over the archdiocese sang in the choir.

In 1957, Kilkenny Corporation built a new scheme of public authority houses within a hundred yards of the spot where Father Delahunty and the 43 other prisoners emerged from the tunnel outside Kilkenny Jail on that cold wet November night in 1921. On the proposition of Councillor Thomas Delaney T.C., nephew of Gus Delaney who was a fellow prisoner with Father Delahunty in Waterford Jail, and seconded by AId Michael Magennis, a street in the new housing scheme was appropriately called Delahunty Terrace.

Father Delahunty suffered much for the establishment of the free Irish Republic of today. He was sent to prison for collecting the National Loan for the first Dáil which guaranteed that

the proceeds of the Loan would be used to promote Irish trade and commerce; to develop and encourage the re-forestation of the country; for developing and encouraging Irish industrial effort; for the establishment of a Land Mortgage Bank with a view to the re-occupancy of untenanted lands and generally for national purposes.

Do words like these re-echo in the breeze today?

CHAPTER 29

Those who came home

When Michael Collins stated on 11 September, 1921, that there were still 1,700 men interned in Ireland without trial he was including the republican prisoners on Spike Island in that total. Many an Irish prisoner in Spike Island Prison had heard of the Fenian prisoners confined there and little did they think, when they heard the old people narrate about the treatment meted out to the Fenians there, that they themselves would one day be domiciled on the island as prisoners also. Spike Island is situated in the centre of Cork Harbour, about one and a half miles across the sea from Cobh Quay. Behind it on the left as one looks out to sea is Roche's Point, where there is a tall lighthouse always signaling the navigable path to ships coming into Cork harbour.

Spike is a rather bare island apart from some stands of trees on its peripheries. There are buildings and dwelling houses for officers and men in the centre of the island, but the prison is at the right hand side as one looks out from Cobh. Many people have swum the strait between Spike and Cobh despite the strong currents near the island itself, which are hard to negotiate. The prison or fortress where the republican prisoners were confined consisted of flat-roofed huts, all connected together in a group of about twenty. They were built of cut stone and the walls were about seven feet in thickness. The roofs of these houses were done with brick and were arched in a half-round style. Sentries were placed both night and day on the flat roofs and throughout the island several large guns set in concrete pointed out towards the Atlantic. The Union Jack, the symbol of British authority, could be seen by prisoners to be flying in the breeze as they came towards the pier.

Spike Island was both a prison and an internment camp. The prison section housed three hundred men whose sentences ranged from three months hard labour to penal servitude for life. This section was also called the hard labour compound and men in this prison area had been found guilty on such charges as ‘levying war on his Majesty’s Forces,’ ‘improper possession of arms,’ and ‘impeding the progress of the empire.’ All the prisoners confined in the hard labour compound were looked upon by the authorities as members of the ‘I.R.A. murder gang.’ In the internee section of the prison, 800 men were confined who had never been charged with any offence against the law or any misdemeanor, but who were arrested because they were thought to be members of Sinn Féin, the Volunteers, or the Gaelic League, all of which were suppressed in twenty-seven counties on 25 November, 1919. The prison section was divided from the internee section by a very large wall, strongly interlaced with barbed wire. Almost all the men from the County Kilkenny Brigade, I.R.A. who were on the island were in the internee section. They had gone there as a result of being arrested by British military or R.I.C. and being taken, at first, to Woodstock, Inistioge for interrogation. If they were captured with arms, it was a very serious matter as there was a mandatory sentence of death for improper possession of arms. If no charge was preferred against them, it still happened that they were transferred to Kilkenny Jail, Waterford Jail, or Kilworth Camp, Co. Cork, before being transported to Spike Island for internment. Amongst those interned in Spike Island from County Kilkenny were:

7th Battalion Area

Michael Shelley, Callan; John J. Dunne, Callan; Patrick Funcheon, Callan; Thomas B. Cahill, Kilbricken; James Raleigh, Mullinahone; Philip Mansfield, Mullinahone; Patrick Torpey, Callan; Bob Cahill, Cappaheny; Richard Hurley, Coolagh; William Coady, Clonagoose; Paud Egan, Poulacapple; James Egan, Poulacapple; Charles Egan, Poulacapple; Michael Raleigh, Mullinahone; Thomas Carroll, Clonagoose; Richard Cahill, Garryricken; Joseph Walsh, Mullinahone.

Thomastown and Inistioge Areas

William Forristal, Jerpoint Church; T. Ryan, Bonnybrook; W. Cotterell, Dobbys Hill; W. Lee, Cappagh; P. White, Kilkieran, Inistioge.

Graiguenamanagh

John Murphy, Coolnabroone; James Ryan, Knockeen.

Tullagher

Martin McGrath, Listerlin.

Mullinavat

Seán Foskin; Richard Foskin, Deerpark.

Threecastles

Tim Hennessy.

Urlingford

Patrick Loughlin; Paddy Talbot.

Castlecomer

John Mulhall.

Glenmore

Michael Connolly, Rochestown.

Ballyragget

Ned Holland who had been captured with Ernie O'Malley in Inistioge and sentenced to ten years penal servitude. He was confined amongst the sentenced men in the prison section. James Butler was in the internee compound.

All the prisoners in Spike Island lived in huts, each of which contained about 20 men. Many of the prisoners had been in other jails and looked upon Spike, in the beginning, as a change for the better. Prisoners could enjoy the daylight and the sunshine by being out in the compound all day, which was a change from the close indoor confinement of some of the prisons. The prisoners and internees rose in Spike Island at eight o'clock in the morning. They themselves were responsible for the cleanliness of each hut, as well as serving the prisoners of their own particular hut with food. They did their own cooking in the cookhouse. Their beds consisted of boards mounted on trestles with military blankets supplied as bedclothes. Any sick prisoner could see the camp doctor, receive a prescription and remain in bed if the illness so warranted. Their room orderlies attended him. Work parties of prisoners maintained and looked after the compound. The men sentenced to hard labour were sent digging a trench at the back of the huge moat nearby. This work came to an end eventually when the prisoners refused to work for the camp authorities. The prisoners elected their own camp commandant and their first choice was Seán Twomey of Cork.

Camp life went on very smoothly for some months. There was little to do and plenty of time to do it. When the Truce came between Great Britain and Ireland, prisoners discussed the settlement of the age-old struggle between the two

countries and became optimistic about early release. As each day wore on, and they were still confined, they became restless and mutinous. The monotony of prison life, day after day, for men used to hard farm work in the open air, began to tell on all of them. There were continued rumours of the treaty negotiations breaking off and the fact that they were cut adrift from civilisation, seeing no one each day but their guards who were most hostile to them, and were ready to shoot at the slightest provocation, made them very uneasy.

In September 1921, sentenced men held a meeting in the large gymnasium in the prisoners' yard and demanded political treatment. They demanded the following conditions: (1) that they be allowed to write three letters weekly in place of the one allowed on Sundays by the prison rule; (2) that they get full prisoner of war treatment; (3) that they be allowed tobacco and cigarettes for smoking purposes.

Soon afterwards the camp authorities informed them that these concessions would not be allowed. Following the refusal of their demands, a hunger strike started. Seán Twomey, the prisoners' O/C from Cork, did not agree to the commencement of the hunger strike and he resigned. Jerry Ryan from Thurles was selected as O/C in his place and Jim Murphy, Limerick, was chosen as Vice O/C. The hunger strike lasted for four days and was then abandoned. It was then agreed by all prisoners and internees to put a policy of active resistance into operation. All the men bored holes from one room to another and from one hut to the next. Every article of furniture and anything else made of timber was put into a heap near a window. They pulled up the floorboards, broke down the doors and threw them into the piles by the windows. They then set the heaps of piled up timber alight. The blazing flames were seen in Cobh and *The Cork Examiner* published an account of the fires, which were seen from the mainland.

After they had broken up the camp, they were herded out and lined up on the compound. British soldiers with rifles and machineguns surrounded them. The British commanding officer ordered a count to be made. The prisoners' O/C ordered all the men to mix. The British commander then gave an order to his soldiers to open fire but immediately after he shouted a second command to cease fire. No shot was fired. He then announced that he was arresting the men's officers. Harry Mahoney was arrested first. 'I'm going with my brother officers,' protested Bill Quirke. A sergeant came over to silence Quirke. Quirke caught him and threw him into the barbed wire fence. 'I'll send you a telegram the day after I escape from this place,' shouted Quirke.

All the prisoners were then issued with a blanket each and moved to the huge moat nearby and told that they would have to live in the open. They were sitting in mud and water in the moat and lying back against a wall. They could not sleep

there as they felt extremely cold and wet. It poured rain one night while they were there and they were soaked. They could not walk or run about to dry and warm themselves. They got no food in the moat but British soldiers fired dry bread into them, which fell in many cases into the mud and puddle of the pit. The republican prisoners and internees threw back this bread at their captors. After three days in the moat, they were allowed back to their huts. Wrecked and all as were the huts, they were glad to get back to them.

True to his word, Bill Quirke organised an escape party in Spike Island. They planned to get to the pier, commandeer a boat and get to the mainland. Bill Quirke, Harry Mahoney, Paddy Buckley, Tom Crofts, Dick Barrett, Jack Eddie and Moss Twomey made up the group who organised the escape bid. Dick Barrett was a schoolteacher who had only one year of his short life left as he was executed in the Civil War on 8 December, 1922. They selected a night on which the British officers were holding a monster ball on the island to make their escape bid. They had tried a few nights earlier, but there were no boats moored near the shore at all. This time they cut chains on each of two gates in a long passage. By means of a rope ladder they climbed across the moat under the noses of the sentries, fired the rope ladder over the parapet wall and its hook stuck firmly in the mortar. They pulled themselves up and over and avoided several more sentries on their way to the pier. They bypassed a village, which was well illuminated but quiet. The boats were there but out a bit from the shore. Jack Eddie was the boatman. He saw the predicament and dived into the deep water under the beams of the searchlights from the island. He did not surface until he was outside the beams. He swam further out to the boat, grabbed it and pulled it in after him as he swam towards the pier. All the escapees jumped into the boat. They had no oars. They paddled with their hands as best they could. Luck was with them and they reached the mainland. The following day Bill Quirke forwarded a telegram to the camp adjutant.

‘All the escapees have arrived safely.’

Shortly after the escape, the prisoners and internees were transferred to Maryborough prison. In a letter to the Lord Mayor of Cork, the prisoners’ Commandant described their treatment on being transported from Spike:

On the night of November 18th, following the recent escape, when the count of men was being made, we were told that instructions had been given to shoot, if any of us moved as much as an inch. We were ordered outside and into the narrow muddy enclosures in the front of the huts at 7.30 p.m., and were put in handcuffs, the men being chained together in pairs. I, as commandant of the prisoners, protested strongly

against this, especially as the men would have to carry their own luggage a distance of half a mile or more to the pier. But my protest was of no avail, and the aged and the infirm were manacled as well as the young and the strong. I further protested against the placing in handcuffs of men suffering from deformity of the limbs which made walking difficult for them at best. I further protested that the hospital patients should be given consideration, but all were treated alike even the patients who had been in bed, and had to be taken out of bed to be transported. The men thus chained like goats were compelled to huddle together in the cold and during the half-mile journey from the fort to the pier, there were long stops to suit the plans of the soldiers. The whole journey took five hours, so that we did not reach Spike pier until a half-hour past midnight.

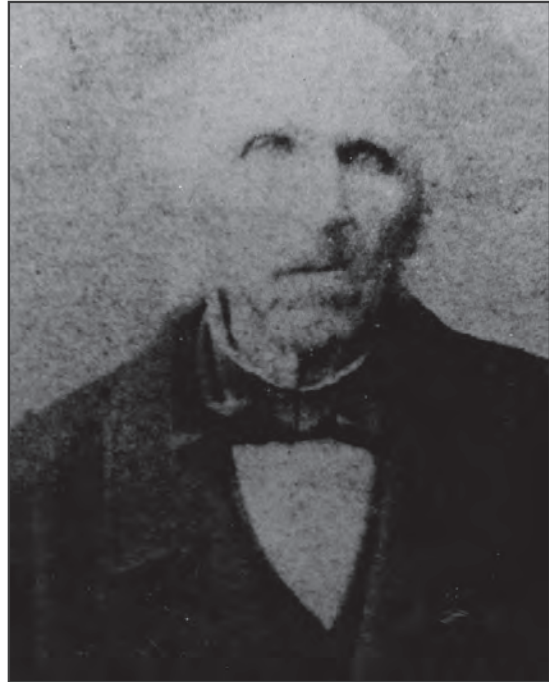
One of the steamers used to take us from the pier was little better than a sand barge, down into the small ‘hold’ of which we were forced to descend by way of improvised ladders, placed at dangerous angles for hundreds of men as I have described and carrying their baggage. Their coming down these ladders, especially the older and heavier men, was a pitiable sight and thereafter they were packed worse than animals in a cattle boat.

Eventually we reached Cobh and the performance of transferring us ashore from the boats was put through much in the same way as our embarking and thus again we reached the railway station and were entrained for Portlaoise, arriving there about 8 p.m. on Saturday, 19th November, never during all that time being relieved of our manacles or provided with refreshments of any kind - neither food or drink.

The prisoners and internees were not long in Maryborough jail, though long enough for them to busy themselves in constructing another tunnel through which to attempt an escape. The treaty between Great Britain and Ireland was signed at 2.15 a.m. on Tuesday, 6 December, 1921, and all the prisoners and internees from Ballykinlar and Maryborough Jail were released on Thursday, 8 December, 1921. It was a historic homecoming in which the people displayed their joy and enthusiasm. A magnificent demonstration awaited the prisoners in Callan, every house in the town, private and public, being lavishly illuminated and decorated in the national colours. As was befitting the occasion, the day was observed as a general holiday and all business houses were closed. An outstanding feature of the demonstration in Callan was the display of banners, inscribed in words of welcome, one of them bearing the inscription, ‘Welcome home to the



124. *Dan Breen.*



125. *John O'Gorman, born Carrickshock, 1810, participant in Battle of Carrickshock, 1831. Settled later in Ballylanigan near Mullinahone; died 1890.*



126. *John O'Gorman, Poulacapple, grandson of John O'Gorman, Carrickshock.*



127. Jackie Brett's funeral passing through Callan, August 1921. The Callan Town Commissioners, with mace bearer Paddy McCormack in front, head the cortage.



128. Left to right: Bob Kennedy, Michael Maher, Bob Cahill, Jack Gardiner, Pat Dooley.



129. *'Katmandu' Poulacapple (See appendix IV).*



130. *James O'Brien, Poulacapple.*



131. *Joseph Rice, Outrath.*



132. Memorial to participants in War of Independence, Callan. Erected in 1987.



133. Michael McSweeney, Mayor of Kilkenny, Tom Derrig, Minister for Education, J.J. Dunne, Callan and Éamon de Valera at Michael Shelley's funeral, 1932.

Felons of our Land' which spanned the street at the Central Hotel. The Christian Brothers' Schools, the brothers' residence, the home of Dr P. J. Phelan (nephew of Mr Michael Shelley one of the released internees), the Augustinian Monastery, Mill St., and the convent at Bridge St., were prominent in their display of decorations, the Tricolour being much in evidence.

On arrival at the Town Hall, Callan, Messrs. M. Shelley and J. J. Dunne, two of the released prisoners were carried shoulder high into the assembly room where a public meeting was held. Rev P. Carrigan P.P. presided and extended a cordial welcome home to the prisoners. Father Hennebry C.C., Dunnamaggin who spoke on behalf of South Kilkenny Executive of Sinn Féin conveyed a hearty welcome to the returned felons. The first commandant of the 7th Battalion Kilkenny Brigade, Jim Roughan, was also home from Ballinkinlar, and he received a rousing reception from the republican people of Callan. The biggest cheer of all was reserved for the occasion outside the Town Hall when Ned Aylward, Jimmy Leahy and the other members of his gallant Flying Column met their prisoner-of-war comrades and welcomed them back to a different Ireland. There were many hearty claps on the back and a few quiet tears from some of the toughest freedom fighters in Ireland.

A large number of Kilkenny citizens welcomed home the Kilkenny internees at Kilkenny Railway Station. A parade led by the St Patrick's Brass Band and Kells Pipers' Band marched to the Parade, and Comdt. George O'Dwyer, Coon, addressed an enthusiastic meeting. A hearty homecoming welcome was given to Thomas Nolan, Outrath; Michael Loughman, New Street; Joseph Rice, Outrath; John Brophy, Walkin Street; Patrick and William Lennon, Threecastles; Larry De Loughry, Kilkenny; Thomas Treacy, Kilkenny; James Lalor, Friary Street; Tim Hennessy, Threecastles and Edward Comerford.

The return home of the Thomastown and Inistioge internees was made the occasion of a huge public demonstration in Thomastown. The day was observed as a public holiday and the shops both in Thomastown and Inistioge were closed and all business was entirely suspended. Due to a transport delay, Mr William Forristal, Sinn Féin Chairman of Thomastown Board of Guardians, was the only internee to arrive home by train on Thursday evening. T. Ryan, Bonnybrook; W. Cotterell, Dobbynsmill; W. Lee, Cappagh and P. White, Kilkieran, Inistioge, arrived home on Friday night. William Forristal was escorted to a waiting car, around which the local I.R.A. Company formed a guard of honour. The procession moved towards the town, headed by the band. Next came the Cumann na mBan and the general public. Sinn Féin flags were much in evidence as the great crowd of people sang and cheered to demonstrate

their great feeling of jubilation. After parading through the principal streets of the town, a halt was made in Market Street, where Fr Loughry, who was only shortly before released from Waterford prison, addressed a huge meeting. He addressed the meeting:

Volunteers and men and women of Thomastown, we have come to the end of the struggle - a glorious ending, - and you have come together tonight to do honour and welcome home those whose privilege it has been to have suffered in the fight. Our thoughts tonight must rest on our comrades, who made the great sacrifice, who died that we might live, that we might live free men in our own country. They died nobly; all honour to them - and they must not be forgotten. But tonight our duty has not sadness in it. Our hearts are full of joy, and we shout our welcome to our prisoners coming home. This is a great night; it is good to be Irish today. Well, thank God it's over and we have won. Thank God we have lived to see this day. Thank God and thank the Mother of God, whose feast we celebrate today.



134. *Fr. Delahunty and Watt Walsh, Mooncoin, in Chicago.*

CHAPTER 30

The ‘Rainbow Chasers’ have won

The five magnificent years were over. For the first time in history three-quarters of the people of All-Ireland had united together and by that unity, they had changed the whole course of Irish history. It began with a defeat in 1916, but such a noble defeat that it inspired others to do better. The claim to national independence was ratified in the 1918 General Election when the vast majority of the people of All-Ireland voted overwhelmingly for Sinn Féin. Dáil Éireann was set up and the War of Independence began. In that war the freedom fighters of the Irish Republican Army proved themselves to be expert guerrilla combatants. The Seventh Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, proved itself to be equal to any other I.R.A. battalion in County Cork, County Tipperary or any other county in Ireland. There followed the capture of Hugginstown police barracks, County Kilkenny; Drangan barracks, County Tipperary; the NineMileHouse ambush; the Friary Street ambush; Garryricken; the ambushes at Moonarch and Bessboro; Knocknagress and the attacks on the police patrols in Callan and Mullinahone. The names of some of these military engagements will be remembered in history as Kilmichael, Crossbary, Knocklong, and Thomastown, County Tipperary, are still remembered today.

The generation of Irishmen and Irishwomen who achieved independence for most of Ireland has now completely passed away. In those five magnificent years, by their unity and self-sacrifice, they achieved an aspiration that all other generations before them had failed to accomplish, and they did it against all odds.

An editorial written by E.T. Keane in the *Kilkenny People* early in December, 1921 summed up the struggle for independence aptly in the following words:

Freedom's battle once begun,
Bequeathed by bleeding Sire or Son,
Though baffled oft, is ever won.

One of the greatest and most heroic fights for freedom ever put up in ancient or modern history by any small nation has ended in a victory as complete and as striking as any nation, great or small, has ever achieved.

Freedom's battle has been won. Is there anyone living today who six years ago would have the temerity to assert that in his lifetime the evacuation of England's armed forces from Ireland and the withdrawal of every vestige of British power would be witnessed? If any such statement had been made, the man who made it would be set down as a hopeless lunatic or a congenital idiot. Yet this miracle is on the eve of accomplishment.

The 'Rainbow Chasers' have won after all.

That measure of freedom that the Irish people achieved preserved us from the holocaust of World War II. It has kept us from getting totally immersed in the Northern troubles since 1969. It gave us every opportunity to develop our country and make it prosperous. If we do not use our freedom properly, it is not the fault of the 1916-1921 generation, but the blame deservedly lies with us. Dan Breen once said:

I am told that the youth of today accept the freedom they enjoy as a right and don't even consider the effort my generation had to put into it to achieve it. It is a God-given right for all men to be free - I fear it may be abused and lost unless it is well guarded.

Today in the shades of Sliabh na mBan the young men and women of today's generation play hurling and football, dance and sing, go out together freely and have fun. The mountain and the hills have not changed but the people are different. The men and women of the freedom generation sleep easy under the shadow of that mountain in the clear knowledge that the job they set out to do was well done

CHAPTER 31

Survivors

JAMES O'MARA

He took the pro-Treaty side in the Civil War. He was appointed as Special Representative of the Provisional Government in the U.S.A. in March, 1922. He was elected Free State T.D. for the South City Dublin Constituency in 1924, but he left the Dáil and public life for good in 1927, feeling that the patriots he had known and loved were becoming merely politicians. All through the thirties he carried on his business of bacon curing, and he fought tooth and nail against government encroachment into the private business of bacon curers. In the early forties he travelled much, going four times through the Panama Canal and once through the Straits of Magellan. He fished in Chile, and he spent a winter in North Africa. During the late forties James O'Mara spent most of his time in his house in Connemara where he busied himself cultivating a garden and fishing. He celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his marriage in 1945. He went to America twice after World War II on private business. He died a wealthy man on 21 November, 1948.

SEÁN HOGAN

He took no part in the Civil War. He went back to farming in Donohill, but he sold the farm some time afterwards. He bought a vegetable farm in County Dublin, but this venture did not succeed. In later years he was in poor circumstances. He lived on his own in a tenement building in North Great

George's Street, Dublin. Due to illness in his later years his memory was not too clear and his handwriting was almost illegible. He was quite disillusioned with the way the Irish people had developed their country from the time the Republic of Ireland was established. He died aged 68 years on Christmas Eve, 1968. There was a brief reference to his death on R.T.E. He is buried in the family grave in Tipperary town.

NED AYLWARD

Ned Aylward was a member of Dáil Éireann during the Treaty Debates when Dáil Éireann discussed whether it should approve or reject the Treaty. He made his speech on the issue on 6 January, 1922. He concluded with these words: 'Again I say I was elected because I was a republican soldier and I will remain a republican and I will vote against that Treaty'. On the following day 7 January, 1922, the vote was taken and Ned Aylward recorded his vote to reject the Treaty, but the overall result of the poll was sixty-four for approval and fifty-seven against. Ned Aylward lost his seat in the Pact election on 24 June, 1922. He never again took an active part in politics.

While the Truce was in operation, Ned became friendly with the officer in charge of British forces in Callan. Both of them liked fowling and they went out shooting together on several occasions. The British officer was later transferred to Australia but he kept in contact with Aylward. Aylward had no constant job after the Civil War and the British officer was promoted. He wrote to Ned offering him a commission in the British army if he came out to Australia. Aylward declined the offer. He went training dogs with Dan Kennedy in Friary Street, Kilkenny. He went to America in 1927 and worked in the meat trade there. He married Nuala Moriarty from Inch, County Kerry in Chicago in 1932. He obtained the position of Sales Manager in Clover Meats, Waterford in 1935. He remained in Clover Meats until he retired at the age of sixty-five. He had four sons and one daughter. He died in Rosario Nursing Home, Waterford in 1976 aged 81 years.

JIM ROUGHAN, AHENURE

He favoured the republican side in the Civil War, but he did not take an active part in it. He went back farming at Ahenure. His wife was Mary Gorman of Newtown, Kells and they reared a family of three boys, the youngest of whom

is a priest. He died at 52 years of age on the 20 December ,1925 as a result of a brain hemorrhage. He was the first I.R.A. man to be buried in Kilbride cemetery.

JAMES LEAHY

He took no part in the Civil War. He farmed in Poulacapple for the rest of his life. He never married, but he lived with his sister, Ellie, a prominent Cumann na mBan lady in the War of Independence, and his brother Phil. He died in the sixties and he is buried in the family grave in Kilbride.

PADDY RYAN

He took the republican side in the Civil War. He emigrated to America afterwards when he found it difficult to get employment in Ireland. He married an American lady and lived in New York. He reared a family of six children. He returned to Ireland on holidays on a few occasions. He died around 1970, having reached a good age, and he was buried in America.

MICHAEL SHELLEY

He was released from Spike Island on 8 December, 1921. He came home to Callan and continued to operate his drapery shop in Callan. He became an Anti-Treaty T.D. after the Civil War, but he never took his seat as Sinn Féin, under Mr. de Valera at that time, was an abstentionist party. He was defeated in the 1927 general election. He was an uncle of Dr Paddy Phelan of Callan General Hospital, and Dr William Phelan, first county surgeon in St. Luke's Hospital Kilkenny, but who was a surgeon in the same capacity in the county hospital John's Green, Kilkenny and Central Hospital, Hebron Road before that. Michael Shelley died in 1932 in his early seventies.

J.J. DUNNE

After his release from Spike Island in December 1921, he took the republican side in the Civil War. He went back to auctioneering and farming afterwards. He

was the owner of a public house in Green Street, Callan. He was a founder member of Fianna Fáil in 1926. He was father of Dr Joseph Dunne, who was a general practitioner in Castlecomer for many years, and of Dr Martin Dunne who practiced in England. He died in the early sixties at 58 years of age.

JACK GARDINER

He took the republican side during the Civil War. He was imprisoned in Kilkenny Jail and in the Curragh internment camp until 23 December, 1923. He returned to farm in Poulacapple and bought a public house and grocery, named 'The Steppes' in Callan in 1925. He later purchased farms in Ballylarkin and in Dirty Step, Callan. He got married in 1931 and his first wife died in 1938. He married Jo Carey in 1940. He reared a family of two boys and two girls. Without his assistance this book could not have been written. He always felt an obligation to assist in recording these events, in memory of his former friends and comrades, as he was one of their last representatives alive.

JAMES EGAN

He was a member of a family of fifteen children. His father had a grocery, farm and an egg exporting business in Mullinahone. He went to Poulacapple N.S. and then to the secondary school in Callan C.B.S., doing the senior grade there. He returned to the egg exporting business in Poulacapple after he had finished school.

He went to Dublin and joined the National Army after being released from Spike Island. When the Civil War started he left the Free State army and joined republican forces in Clonmel barracks. He fought with the Anti-Treaty forces right through the Civil War from beginning to end. He was killed near his home in Poulacapple by Free State forces in the last week of the Civil War. He was aged 27 years and he is buried in the parish graveyard, Mullinahone, near where Seán Quinn and Jackie Brett are laid.

BOB CAHILL

He was released from Spike Island in December 1921. He took no part in the Civil War but he remained a member of Sinn Féin until 1926. He joined Fianna

Fáil and was a prominent member of that party for 50 years. He married Eilen Gardiner from Poulacapple, a prominent Cumann na mBan lady. He had no family. He carried on a hardware and grocery business in Callan. He died in 1984, aged 87 years.

MICHAEL GIBBS

After the Truce he came back to Ahenure and continued farming. He took the republican side in the Civil War. He married Nell Cahill, a sister of Bob Cahill, and a very prominent member of Cumann na mBan. They reared one boy and two girls. He died in 1970, aged 78 years. He is buried in Kilbride.

NED HALLEY

After the Truce, Ned Halley took the republican side. After the cease-fire in the Civil War, he went to America, but he returned to the family farm later. He married Nora O'Neill from Skeough, Callan. He reared a family of six boys and two girls. He died in July 1971 aged 84 years and is buried in Kilbride cemetery.

JIMMY KELLY

After the Truce he joined the Free State Army and became a drill instructor. During the course of the Civil War, he defected to the Republican side. He later joined the Garda Síochána and he was stationed for a while in Ballingarry. When he retired he went back to manage his own grocery shop in Mooncoin. He reared a family of two boys and two girls. He died in Waterford in the early eighties.

PAUD DOWNEY

After the Truce, he took the republican side in the Civil War. He went to America in the mid-twenties as he failed to get employment in Ireland. He returned later on holidays. He married and reared a family. He died in the early eighties and is buried in New York.

PAUD EGAN

He took the Anti-Treaty side in the Civil War. He was interned until 1924 in the Curragh Internment Camp. He went back to farming then. He married Statia Maher and they lived on their farm in Butlerswood, Windgap. They reared a family of four boys and one girl. He died in 1972, aged 87 years.

PATRICK LLOYD HOLDEN

He took the republican side in the Civil War. He then went back to his trade as a carpenter and he did much of his work around Callan and in the surrounding areas. He was a master craftsman and he was widely known for the quality of his work. He married Mary O'Donnell in 1925. They had two boys and one girl who died at 14 years of age. He died on 12 June, 1986, aged 90 years. He is buried in Kilbride.

NED (BUCKSHOT) BUTLER

He took the Anti-Treaty side in the Civil War and he did a term of imprisonment for his republican activities. When the Civil War ended he went back to work with Kilkenny County Council. He worked his own horse and cart with the Council. He married Lena O'Brien from Doon, County Limerick. They had no family. He died in 1967, aged 68 years.

CHAPTER 32

The Last Post Sounded

“Tis a hard task I asked of ye”, said Mother Ireland

In memory of the I.R.A. members of Kilkenny Brigade who died in combat and other Kilkennymen and one woman who were killed by British bullets between 1916 and 1921

Ba lúgha léo an bás ná saoirse na h-Éireann

PATRICK BEALIN, LOON, CASTLECOMER, CO. KILKENNY

During the 1916 Insurrection in Dublin, British troops came under severe fire from several barricades erected by the insurgents across King Street, near Church Street and from many buildings overlooking the area. The British Regiments sustained heavy casualties.

Patrick Bealin, Loon, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny was working as a foreman in Mrs O'Rourke's licensed premises close to where the bitter fighting took place. Previous to going to Dublin in August 1915, he had first worked as a shop assistant in the premises of Thomas Bergin, Castlecomer and later Mr Bergin had promoted him to manage his newly purchased premises in Maudlin, Conahy, not far from Castlecomer.

During the bloody week of the Dublin Rising, Patrick, who knew the local

residents in King Street well, passed on some messages to the Irish Volunteers who were fighting in the North King Street area. He did not carry a gun or take any part in the fighting. British military entered Mrs O'Rourke's premises on 29 April, 1916, just before the surrender of the insurgents. They arrested Patrick Bealin and took him downstairs to the cellar. After searching and questioning him they told him to climb the stairs again and when he began to ascend they shot him dead. The British military buried his body 12 inches under the clay in the cellar and it was not discovered until two weeks after he was killed. The verdict of the coroner's inquest into the death of Patrick Bealin was:



135. *Patrick Bealin.*

We find that the said Patrick Bealin died from shock and haemorrhage, resulting from bullet wounds inflicted by a soldier or soldiers, in whose custody he was an unarmed and unoffending person. We consider that the explanation given by the military authorities is very unsatisfactory and we believe that if the military authorities had any inclination they could produce the officer in charge.¹

While in Dublin Patrick had been active in G.A.A. circles and played hurling and football but he was not a member of any Irish Volunteer unit. He was 24 years of age when he died. His body is buried in the family plot in Castlecomer cemetery, Co. Kilkenny.

**JOHN KEALY,
BLANCHFIELD'S PARK, GOWRAN, CO. KILKENNY**

John Kealy, a native of Blanchfield's Park, Gowran, Co. Kilkenny and a prominent shop owner in John Street, Kilkenny was amongst 35 Kilkennymen arrested by constables of the R.I.C. and British soldiers following the failure of the 1916 Rising. He had been an active member of the Irish Volunteer Company in Kilkenny City. He, together with others, was lodged in Kilkenny Gaol. John was ill even before his arrest and he did not receive any medical attention in Kilkenny Prison. Early on the morning of 9 May, 1916, he complained to prison warders that he was feeling

weak and unwell. Despite that he was amongst 35 prisoners who were ordered shortly afterwards to prepare for their removal from Kilkenny Jail. British soldiers with rifles and bayonets and R.I.C. constables with short rifles conducted the Kilkenny prisoners from the gaol up through John Street towards Kilkenny Railway Station (now named MacDonagh Station). There they were to board a special train to take them to Richmond Barracks, Dublin and subsequently they were to be transferred to an English ship berthed at the North Wall that would bring them by sea to various prisons in England. John Kealy's state of health did not deter the



136. *John Kealy.*

British authorities from rushing him along the streets of Kilkenny with the rest. As the British escort hurried the prisoners along John Street, a silent crowd of people stopped outside the shop doors to watch and identify the individual captives. The R.I.C., who occupied a police barracks in the same street, ordered the crowd to move back towards John's Bridge. In the hustle and bustle that followed, John Kealy was seen to collapse motionless on the road at a spot just a few yards from his own home. He died shortly afterwards without regaining consciousness. He was at the extreme rear of the line of prisoners and his brother, Martin Kealy, who was also amongst the 35 prisoners, was in the front of the line.

John Kealy was a strong nationalist, a loyal and faithful member of the Gaelic League in Kilkenny and a supporter of the executed 1916 leaders. Mr E. T. Keane, editor of *The Kilkenny People* paid this tribute to him in his newspaper, 'One of the prisoners, a useful and respected citizen, unable to continue his forced march, dropped dead on the street as he was being literally dragged to the railway station from the gaol.'² John Kealy was 34 years of age and he is buried in the graveyard in the grounds of the Church of the Assumption, Gowran, Co. Kilkenny.

THOMAS HENNESSY, THREECASTLES, CO. KILKENNY

Thomas Hennessy's family were extensive farmers in Threecastles, Co. Kilkenny. Tom's father took a keen interest in national affairs and was an avid reader of newspapers and periodicals. The whole family took an active interest in the G.A.A.

and Tom's eldest brother, Ned, captained the Threecastles hurling team to win the County Kilkenny Senior Hurling Championship in 1898 and then went on to play on the Kilkenny county team that lost to Tipperary in the All-Ireland Hurling Championship Final of that year. Tom Hennessy received his primary education in Ballydaniel National School, Threecastles but he also attended adult Irish classes in the old national school and Master Johnny Power, the local school principal, conducted these classes.³ Tom learned enough Irish at these classes to enable him to carry on a conversation in Irish and he used the amount he knew at every available opportunity.



137. *Thomas Hennessy.*

Tom and his other brother, Tim, favoured the path taken by Eoin MacNeill and Pádraig Pearse and decided to establish a company of Irish Volunteers in Threecastles. At its first meeting Tom Hennessy was appointed captain of the new company. On Easter Sunday, 1916, Tom mobilised his Threecastles Volunteer Company but he received a message from the Irish Volunteer Headquarters in Banba Hall, Kyteler's Inn, Kilkenny that all planned manoeuvres for that day were off. In 1917 the members of the 1st. Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade held a meeting in Joe Sweeney's house, Thornback, in the Threecastles area to elect a commandant for their battalion. Tom was proposed for the post but he declined to let his name go forward.

Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A., using units of the 1st Battalion which included the Threecastles Company, decided to attack a British military party who guarded a supply of rations in a wagon pulled by two mules as it travelled from Kilkenny Military Barracks to Kilkenny Gaol. The object of the attack was to disarm the British troops and gain possession of their arms without firing a shot. Tom Hennessy reported to the ambush site with three other I.R.A. members from the Threecastles Company. The attack which took place on 21 February, 1921, went wrong from the beginning. The 32 year old Tom Hennessy was shot in the heart and died instantly. Huge crowds from Kilkenny City and county attended his funeral when he was laid to rest in Tulla Church graveyard in Threecastles, Co. Kilkenny.

MICHAEL DERMODY, THREECASTLES, CO. KILKENNY

Michael Dermody came from a family with deep roots in the G.A.A. He played hurling with the Tulla Junior team that reached the county final in 1920 but lost to Mooncoin. He was selected for the Kilkenny Senior panel on one occasion and played with them in a tournament game.

Michael joined the National Volunteers in Threecastles in 1913. The Threecastles Volunteer Company disagreed with John Redmond's policy of asking young Irishmen to join the British Army and fight in World War 1 on the side of the Allies. Instead they set up a company of the Irish Volunteers and they had 30 to 40 members in the company.



138. *Michael Dermody.*

They had plans to join with the Irish Volunteers in Kilkenny and take part in the 1916 Rising but everything was called off as a result of the countermanding order of Eoin MacNeill on Easter Sunday morning, 1916.

Michael, who worked for the local Frank Mullan Stoneworks, was one of the four Threecastles I.R.A. men who went into Friary Street on Monday, 21 February, 1921, to disarm a patrol of British soldiers who were escorting a wagon load of rations from Kilkenny Military Barracks to Kilkenny Jail. The orders were to do this without firing a shot. Michael's family knew nothing about the intended ambush. The plan for the ambush backfired and after Michael was caught in a burst of fire from the guns of the British soldiers, he fell to the ground with a gaping wound in the side of his head. He was brought to Kilkenny Military Hospital in a critical and unconscious state.

Later that day a neighbour, Bill Hennessy, accompanied by another neighbour, Jimmy Byrne, called to the Dermody home and related the sad news to his mother. With tears in her eyes and on her cheeks, she murmured in a slow and low voice, 'I suppose it is the will of God.' Then she said 'I had a premonition that something dreadful would happen to-day.' She recounted the story about the little robin that came to her window frame every day from the hedge in the garden to sing her sweet song. 'The little bird only remained on the window frame for a second this morning without chirping or singing at all,' added the bereaved mother.⁴

Michael Dermody never regained consciousness and died in the Military Hospital, Kilkenny on 4 March, 1921, eleven days after the abortive Friary Street ambush. He was 25 years of age. He was buried alongside his equally brave, I.R.A. captain, Tom Hennessy in Tulla Church graveyard.

**JACKIE BRETT,
MULLINAHONE, CO. TIPPERARY (KILKENNY BRIGADE I.R.A.)**

Jackie Brett was the eldest of a family of four – three boys and one girl – and he was born in Mullinahone in 1902. Jackie attended Mullinahone National School and after that he went as a boarder to Rockwell College, Co. Tipperary. Jackie came from an area where many of its young men and women had inherited a strong republican tradition from their Fenian forefathers. Following instructions from Volunteer Headquarters in Dublin, the Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. incorporated the Mullinahone Company I.R.A. into its Brigade area for better communication purposes with the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. It was with the Mullinahone Company, 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade that Jackie enlisted when he felt that he should do his part in the fight for his country's freedom.



139. Jackie Brett.

Recognised early in his life as a good and promising Gaelic footballer, Jackie was selected to play in the left-full forward position on the Tipperary football team to play Dublin in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday, 21 November, 1920. He survived the fierce gun attack by British soldiers that killed his good friend and fellow Tipperary footballer, Michael Hogan from Grangemockler.

Shortly afterwards Jackie volunteered for full active service with the newly formed West Kilkenny Flying Column and he took part in many engagements against British forces. On 6 April, 1921, Jackie was killed in an accidental shooting incident while the Flying Column rested near Windgap, Co. Kilkenny. For security reasons the members of the Flying Column buried his body in a turnip field.

Jackie Brett, the 19 year-old boy soldier was finally laid to rest in Mullinahone Graveyard on 25 August, 1921 after a funeral that was the biggest ever seen going through Callan, Co. Kilkenny.

PETER FREYNE, KILCULLAN, THOMASTOWN, CO. KILKENNY

Peter Freyne, the second eldest of a family of ten, was born to John and Ellen Freyne in Kilcullan, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny in 1903. The Freynes were well-off farmers who worked hard on their land. Peter received his education in Inistioge National School. He was only 12 years of age when his mother, Ellen, died in 1915, aged 39 years. After leaving primary school he worked on the home farm for just two years. He was not a hurler or a footballer but this tall, fair-haired youth was a quiet, sensible, but cheerful teenager. He got a job in Jameson's Distillery, Dublin where his older brother, Frank, already worked. He



140. *Peter Freyne.*

left home for Dublin at 16 years of age and lived in the capital city with his older brother.

Frank Freyne had already joined E Company, Second Battalion, Dublin Brigade I.R.A., having previously served with the Inistioge Company I.R.A. in his native Co. Kilkenny. Shortly after his arrival in the capital city, Peter, although still only a teenager, also joined the same Dublin Company I.R.A. as his brother, Frank. On the morning of 21 November, 1920 (Bloody Sunday), Peter played a minor role in a military operation contrived by Michael Collins when the Collins special squad shot dead 14 British special spies who had been responsible for the deaths of many I.R.A. members.

Early on the morning of 11 April, 1921, together with his brother, Frank, Peter was amongst 15 members of his E Company I.R.A., Second Battalion, Dublin Brigade who made an attempt to destroy the London and North Western Hotel at the North Wall, Dublin.⁵ The hotel was occupied by a mixed group of Black and Tans and Auxiliaries who had taken possession of the large building three weeks earlier to watch the arrival and departure of steamers from the North Wall in order to prevent the importation of arms and ammunition by the I.R.A. Shortly before 8 a.m. on that April morning when groups of dockers were walking down the quays on their way to work, the I.R.A. attackers mingled with them. As the I.R.A. detachment approached their target, they rolled round barrels before them as they crouched down for cover while throwing grenades

towards the windows of the hotel at the same time.⁶ In all they fired 12 bombs at the hotel and six of the I.R.A. volunteers directed fire at the British military guarding the front of the building. Peter Freyne, who had a loaded automatic revolver, was among the attacking party who threw the bombs. Some of the Auxiliaries took up positions on the roof of the hotel and fired down on the I.R.A. bombing party underneath them. Peter fell seriously wounded when one of the British bullets pierced his brain. Two other members of the I.R.A. assault group were wounded but they survived. The remainder of the I.R.A. attacking party withdrew and escaped across the canal towards the city. The Auxiliaries suffered one casualty when the sentry at the door of the hotel was wounded in the knee. The hotel was badly damaged but did not go on fire.

The Auxiliaries transferred Peter Freyne to the George V Military Hospital but he died a few hours after admission. Peter was only 18 years of age and he is buried in Thomastown graveyard, Co. Kilkenny.

THOMAS PHELAN, OLDTOWN, BALLYRAGGET, CO. KILKENNY

Thomas Phelan, Oldtown, Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny came from a hard-working, well-off farming family. His father, John Phelan, died when he was still a young boy. His mother, Margaret Phelan, reared a family of four children, three boys and one girl. Thomas was the youngest of the four and he attended Ballyragget National School.

Thomas became a member of the Ballyragget Company of the Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. This company had a membership of around 25 volunteers. The neighbouring Conahy I.R.A. Company, with the help of I.R.A. members from Ballyragget, felled trees



141. *Thomas Phelan.*

and trenched the road at Oldtown, Ballyragget to impede British armoured cars and Crossley Tenders which travelled freely around the area.

On the morning of the 21 April, 1921, Thomas, set out on his bicycle to get the daily newspaper in Ballyragget. Before he started out he said to his mother, 'I don't want to be around when the Tans come to clear the road at Oldtown.'



142. *This photograph was taken of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries outside the London and North Western Hotel, North Wall, Dublin, following an I.R.A. attack on their quarters on 11th April, 1921. Peter Freyne of Kilcullan, Thomastown, County Kilkenny was fatally wounded in the attack. (Courtesy of Colm Mullins, Thomastown).*

On his way back home, having purchased the newspaper, he met a military party of two British soldiers together with an R.I.C. sergeant and a constable who were patrolling the area in a lorry. He cycled on towards the driveway of his house, turned in the lane but as he pedalled, he looked back, stopped and saw the armed group alight from their military lorry, take their rifles with them and turn into the laneway towards his house. Thomas surmised that they were coming to seize him in order to detain him or else force him, with other local farmers, to pull away the felled trees and fill the trenches in the road. Thomas did not want either of these two things to happen and he decided to make a run for it. He threw his bicycle against an outhouse not far from his dwelling house and ran towards the fields that surrounded his house. The British soldiers called on him to halt but he continued to run. The soldiers then fired several shots at him. As Thomas was jumping over a tall fence at the end of a short field at the back of his house, he was caught in a burst of fire. He fell to the ground. He was badly wounded in the chest and back and he died a few minutes later.

The British soldiers put him into a military lorry and took him to Castlecomer Military Barracks. His family claimed his body the next day and they buried him in Rathbeagh cemetery, not far from Ballyragget. Thomas Phelan was only 18 years of age when he was killed by British bullets.

**SEÁN QUINN,
MULLINAHONE, CO. TIPPERARY (KILKENNY BRIGADE I.R.A.)**

Sean Quinn was a baker by trade when he first came to live in Mullinahone, Co. Tipperary. He liked Mullinahone but he was not happy with his lifestyle as a baker because he always longed to be out in the fresh air. After a while he got out of the bakery trade altogether and he took up a job as a farm labourer and worked at saving the crops and the harvest in the local area. He was a skilled Gaelic footballer and he was on the Co. Tipperary junior inter-county football team on more than one occasion.



143. *Seán Quinn.*

When Sean saw that recruits were needed for the struggle for Irish freedom, he enlisted in the Mullinahone Co. I.R.A. that was integrated into the Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. Sean distinguished himself as a tough, unyielding freedom fighter all through the War of Independence and particularly in the gun battle at Garryricken House on 12 March, 1921, when the small Flying Column, that included Sean Quinn, fought their way to safety after being surrounded by a detachment of British soldiers and R.I.C. He travelled all round Co. Kilkenny with the West Kilkenny Flying Column, who then acted independently of Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A., and he played a prominent part in all the battles they fought. Sean Quinn's luck ran out in the Knocknagress ambush in Tullaroan on 13 May, 1921 when he and others were fighting their way out through a big force of British military who surrounded the combined forces of the West Kilkenny Flying Column and Seán Hogan's Tipperary Flying Column. Seán Quinn, together with two other West Kilkenny Flying Column members, jumped over a high bank and straight into the sights of British gunners who fired and shot Seán dead.

Sean Quinn was 25 years of age when he gave his life for Ireland. He is buried in Mullinahone near the grave of his Flying Column friend, Jackie Brett.

PAT WALSH, DUNNAMAGGIN, CO. KILKENNY

Pat Walsh's first and greatest interest was the G.A.A. He not only played hurling and Gaelic football but he sometimes acted as referee. He even purchased camans and sliotars out of his own pocket money to coach the children of Dunnamaggin Parish in the skills of hurling.

But Pat developed other interests as well in the Ireland of his day that was struggling to establish itself as an independent nation. He promoted and attended Gaelic classes in his native Dunnamaggin and always used the basic knowledge he had of his native tongue whenever he could. He was also one of



144. *Pat Walsh.*

the first to spread the gospel of Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteer movement in South Kilkenny. With others he helped to start a Sinn Féin Club in Dunnamaggin even before 1916. After the failure of the 1916 Easter Rising he was prominently associated with Father Delahunty and Father Heneberry in establishing new Sinn Féin branches throughout South Kilkenny.

After the release of the 1916 Co. Kilkenny prisoners from various English jails, Pat played a prominent part in re-organising the Irish Volunteers in West Kilkenny. At a meeting in the home of T. B. Cahill, Kilbricken, Callan in May 1917 to form the 7th. Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, Pat Walsh was appointed to the position of Quarter Master of the Battalion staff. Pat subsequently took part in the successful attack on Hugginstown Barracks. When the 7th. Battalion Flying Column came into the Dunnamaggin area with Sean Hogan's Tipperary Flying Column at the beginning of May 1921 Pat, who was 'on the run' at that time, applied for membership of the West Kilkenny Flying Column and was accepted. His short time on the Flying Column led him to the hilly country of Tullaroan from where the combined Flying Columns planned to organise an attack on Urlingford R.I.C. barracks. Unfortunately the two Flying Columns were surrounded on 13 May, 1921, at Knocknagress, Tullaroan by a big force of British soldiers who arrived in Crossley Tenders and armoured cars. In a subsequent fierce gun battle Pat Walsh received a serious leg wound from which he died while in British custody.

Pat Walsh had a girlfriend of 26 years of age. Bridget Walsh was her name and she was a district nurse and midwife in the Kilmoganny area that was near Pat's own home. Bridget reported, 'I did not know where Pat was on the morning of the ambush but I felt overcome by a strange loneliness all that day.' Pat Walsh was 32 years of age when he died and he is buried in Dunnamaggin graveyard.

**SEÁN HARTLEY,
WEATHERSTOWN, GLENMORE, CO. KILKENNY**

Seán Hartley was a native of Glenmore, Co. Kilkenny and came from farming stock. He came to work in Kilkenny and he began serving his time in Tom Grace's Grocery and Bar establishment in Parliament Street, Kilkenny (later 'Heslin and Maher', Jimmy Maher's and recently 'The Pump House'). Seán was a well-built athlete with broad shoulders, muscular legs and long arms. He was dark-haired, handsome and he stood about five feet, ten inches in height. He was a talented Gaelic footballer and he played at full-back on the Glenmore football team. While in Kilkenny he played with the C.Y.M.S. Gaelic football team. He was a good mixer, a good ballroom dancer and he was a great favourite amongst his many girlfriends.⁷



145. Seán Hartley.

Seán also had a republican trait in him and he became a member of the 1st. Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. While he was working in Tom Grace's establishment he lived on the premises in Parliament Street with other fellow workers. The premises were raided one night and three live bullets were found hidden in his room under a window. Seán was arrested and brought to Kilkenny Military Barracks. His fellow workers went over to see him there. He was transferred from there to Kilworth Military Camp in Co. Cork but he was released from there because of insufficient evidence to link him to the live bullets. Seán then went 'on the run' for fear of being re-arrested. The North Kilkenny

Flying Column was coming together at this time and they asked for volunteers. Seán together with five other volunteers from the 1st. Battalion (Kilkenny City) of the Kilkenny Brigade travelled to Graiguenamanagh and began drilling with their other comrades on the new Flying Column.

One of the major actions conducted by the North Kilkenny Flying Column was their involvement in the ambush in Coolbawn, Castlecomer on 18 June, 1921. The ambush was planned by Commandant George O'Dwyer and personnel involved included the North Kilkenny Flying Column and local companies in the Castlecomer area. British soldiers frequently escorted gelignite as it was transported from Castlecomer Military Barracks to Wolfhill Coal Mines in Co. Leix. The object of the planned ambush was to attack the British soldiers escorting the gelignite. The night before the ambush, Seán Hartley was berthed in Somers of the Lots and he sang a song called 'I am a bold Tipperary boy' but he changed the words to 'I am a bold Kilkenny boy/From the valley of Glenmore'. Early the following morning the Flying Column and local I.R.A. volunteers took up their ambush positions. Unknown to them a local landowner had travelled into Castlecomer to inform the British military of their positions. British forces almost surrounded the whole I.R.A. party before the I.R.A. realised what was happening. The British commander, Captain Beauville, ordered his two machine-gunners to direct their fire on a group of I.R.A. Volunteers located at the south part of the ambush. Seán Hartley was shot in the head and the neck in the first burst of fire. He fell against a wall that was near him and died instantly,

Seán Hartley is buried in the cemetery in his native Glenmore, Co. Kilkenny. He was 26 years of age when he gave his life for Ireland.

NICHOLAS MULLINS, THOMASTOWN, CO. KILKENNY

Nicholas Mullins was born in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny in 1894. His father, Laurence, was the owner of a public house in Thomastown and his mother Anne helped in the business. Nicholas was the second eldest in a big family and he was the oldest boy. He attended Thomastown National School where he was described as a 'cheerful and fun loving youth always singing and dancing and hurling all the time.' As he grew up he became athletic in appearance, tall and fair-haired with a long rather than a chubby face. He worked in the family business in Bridge Street, Thomastown but he also acted as a carrier for a brewery.

Nicholas was a good skilful hurler and he played on his local Thomastown hurling team. He played on the Kilkenny County Junior Hurling team for a couple of seasons and took part in the All-Ireland Junior Hurling Final against

Tipperary in 1913 when the Kilkenny team was beaten.

Nicholas was always a rebel at heart. He sang rebel songs more than any of his brothers. It was no surprise that he joined the 5th Battalion I.R.A. at the end of 1919. For some unknown reason Nicholas attracted the attention of the R.I.C. in Thomastown after the events in Dublin on the morning of Bloody Sunday, 21 November, 1920, that led to the massacre in Croke Park later that evening. The R.I.C. made an exhaustive raid on his premises but found nothing. However this incident caused Nicholas to leave home and go ‘on the run’.⁸ Tom



146. *Nicholas Mullins.*

Mullins, younger brother of Nicholas said that Nick first went to his father’s relations in Glenmore and stayed with them. The next thing that Tom heard about his brother was that Nicholas was in the Graiguenamanagh area and was training with the new North Kilkenny Flying Column that had just been put together.⁹

On the 18 June, 1921, Nicholas Mullins was one of the North Kilkenny Flying Column members who reported to Brigade Commandant George O’Dwyer at Coolbawn, Castlecomer with the object of attacking a party of British soldiers who escorted gelignite from Castlecomer Military Barracks to coal mines in Wolfhill, Co. Leix. They took up their ambush positions as did members from other I.R.A. companies in the Castlecomer region. They were not aware that a local landowner had gone into the British Military Barracks in Castlecomer and reported that I.R.A. personnel were in ambush positions at Coolbawn. As a result British troops came out and almost completely surrounded the I.R.A. party before the republican force realised what had happened. Nicholas was in a group of I.R.A. volunteers in the southern ambush position at the ‘Old Gate’ (opposite where the monument now stands). The British officer in charge ordered his two machine-gunners and riflemen to direct their fire on that position. Nicholas Mullins was first seriously wounded in the hand. Mullins and his comrade, Jim Doyle, crossed the road and got into a shallow dyke where they got cover from the fire. As they travelled up the dyke Doyle looked back and saw Mullins lying motionless but he was still alive. Seconds later Jim Doyle received a serious leg wound and was unable to move any further, backwards or forwards. Doyle then

saw four British soldiers around him and he also saw Nicholas Mullins lying on his back just beside him. He had a bullet wound in his back. He saw Nicholas drop his chin on his chest. Jim believed that Nicholas Mullins became unconscious at that moment or possibly died.

Nicholas Mullins was 27 years of age when he died for Ireland. He is buried in the old graveyard in Thomastown.

JOE McMAHON, KILMALEY, CO. CLARE

Joe McMahon from Kilmaley, Co. Clare arrived, unannounced, in Kilkenny in the early days of the War of Independence. He was not previously known in Kilkenny and Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. officers understood that 'he was a Volunteer 'on the run'.¹⁰ He obtained a job as a coach builder, which was his trade, with Edward Furniss, Patrick Street, Kilkenny.



147. *Joe McMahon.*

Joe became a member of the First Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. Shortly after he joined, members recognised that there was something special about this new volunteer. He participated in all the early engagements of Kilkenny Brigade against British forces. He commenced signalling

classes and he conducted classes in musketry and bombing. Joe, with the assistance of others, made small bombs and hand grenades at night in Peter De Loughry's foundry in Parliament Street, Kilkenny. These were fashioned to a formula or design that Joe supplied. These were the bombs used in the successful capture of Hugginstown R.I.C. Barracks on 8 March, 1920, where Joe was in charge of the bombing party. Joe climbed on to the roof of the police barracks, broke holes in the roof with a sledgehammer and threw bombs down into the building through the gaping holes in the roof. He did this while under intense fire from the R.I.C. forces underneath.

After the capture of Hugginstown Barracks, the R.I.C. pursued McMahon relentlessly and kept his house in Kilkenny under strict and persistent surveillance. He had more than one narrow escape from the police forces of the crown but he was not captured. However this constant police scrutiny of his actions made it impossible for him to carry out further actions against British forces in Co.

Kilkenny. After spending almost one and a half years as a member of Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A., McMahon got orders from I.R.A. Headquarters in Dublin to go to County Wexford to continue his War of Independence activities. This was the first time that many Kilkenny I.R.A. members became aware that Joe McMahon had acted under instructions from I.R.A. Headquarters during his stay in Kilkenny.¹¹ Martin Cassidy, captain of A. Company, First Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade, stated that after the Hugginstown Barracks attack, except for more or less routine Volunteer work, there was a lull in I.R.A. activity so far as Kilkenny City was concerned. He attributed that partly to the fact that some Brigade officers in Kilkenny City were arrested but also, partly to the fact, that Joe McMahon, had to leave County Kilkenny.¹²

After Joe McMahon arrived in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, he met Seán Whelan, O/C of No 1 Flying Column, North Wexford Brigade. Seán Whelan claimed that Joe ‘was the most fearless soldier I have ever met. He was action, action, action.’¹³ In Wexford Seán Whelan formed a bombing party with Joe in charge. Joe McMahon opened the attack on Clonroche R.I.C. barracks, Co. Wexford, on a night in April 1920. For once Joe’s manufactured bombs failed when only one in ten exploded. This was due to the fact that the gelignite used in those bombs was faulty. The failure of the bombs to explode was responsible for the unsuccessful attempt to capture Clonroche R.I.C. barracks. Joe’s next daring Wexford operation was when he accompanied Seán Whelan (Enniscorthy), together with two prominent officers from Dublin I.R.A. headquarters, Frank Thornton and Liam Tobin¹⁴, and the driver of their car, North Wexford Brigade I.R.A. member, Mick Sinnott, on a mission to assassinate District Inspector Lea Wilson, R.I.C., North Wexford, who had ill-treated Tom Clarke and other Irish Volunteer prisoners, including Liam Tobin himself, in the Rotunda Green, Dublin, after they had surrendered at the end of the 1916 Rising. Liam Tobin and others had an old score to settle. The five party I.R.A. Squad shot District Inspector Lea-Wilson dead in Gorey, Co. Wexford on 15 June, 1920.¹⁵

Joe McMahon did not remain long in Co. Wexford. Séamus MacDiarmada, Intelligence Officer for Cavan Town, stated that Captain Joe McMahon was appointed to liven up the area.¹⁶ On Sunday, 15 August, 1920, Joe together with Patrick Roche, a member of Cavan Battalion I.R.A., though a native of Mayo, and some others, were testing a home-made bomb at Oldtown, outside Cavan Town. The bomb was thrown but failed to explode. McMahon picked up the bomb and was examining it when it exploded. Joe McMahon was killed outright and Patrick Roche had his hand blown off.¹⁷

Joe McMahon was buried in Kilmaley, Co. Clare on Tuesday, 24 August, 1920. All the shops in Ennis were shuttered and over one thousand I.R.A. volunteers marched in his funeral.

**CO. KIKENNY CIVILIANS WHO WERE ACCIDENTALLY KILLED
BY BRITISH BULLETS, 1916-1921:**

**MRS MICHAEL RYAN,
BRIDGE STREET, CALLAN, CO. KILKENNY**

In the cross-fire that happened near Aughatarra Bridge about two miles from Callan, Co. Kilkenny during the evening that followed the NineMileHouse ambush, Sergeant Thomas Walsh of John Street R.I.C. Barracks, Kilkenny received a bullet under his left eye which passed through his head and killed him instantly. In the confusion of darkness on that evening of 21 December, 1920, the bullet came from a member of the Devonshire Regiment stationed in Callan because the members of that Regiment thought they were firing on a party of I.R.A. volunteers when they were, in fact, firing at a Crossley Tender load of R.I.C. officers and constables who had come out from Kikenny to help in the post ambush situation.

Sergeant Thomas Walsh was a native of Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny. His body was taken to Callan Hospital where it remained overnight. On Tuesday evening as the remains were being removed to Ballyragget, the residents of Callan were ordered by the military to keep their doors closed and remain indoors themselves. Mrs Michael Ryan, the wife of a Callan publican, whose premises were in Bridge Street, Callan, opened her door for a customer who called for a jug of milk just before the funeral passed through Bridge Street. The cortege had just passed her premises when Mrs Ryan opened her door to let the customer out. Suddenly a shot rang out and Mrs Ryan fell to the floor seriously wounded. The bullet had come from the direction of a Crossley Tender packed by Black and Tans who were accompanying the funeral. Mrs Ryan was pregnant at the time. She was taken to Callan Hospital where an operation was performed. She did not recover and died two days later.

Mrs Ryan was in no way a member or sympathetic to Sinn Féin or the republican movement. She was on good terms with the police and British military.

THOMAS DULLARD, UPPER WALKIN STREET, KILKENNY

Thomas Dullard from Upper Walkin Street, Kilkenny, though not a member of the I.R.A. or involved in any way in I.R.A. activities, unfortunately lost his life during the ambush in Friary Street on 21 February, 1921. He was a Kilkenny Corporation worker who started work at 7 a.m. in the morning, returned home for breakfast at 9 a.m. and resumed work again at 9.45 a.m. Thomas had a ritual of going into the Friary Street Capuchin Church each morning to say a short

prayer as he passed back to join his corporation workmates. On that fateful morning he had just come out of the church when he noticed the first moves of Tom Hennessy and Michael Dermody as they positioned themselves to topple the two soldiers at the rear of the patrol. To get away fast, he swiftly sped down the path towards the end of Friary Street that ran into High Street, but at the same time the British soldiers opened fire on Hennessy and Dermody. One of the four bullets fired by the British patrol party ricocheted off the wall of the street and Thomas fell to the ground about twenty yards further down from where Hennessy and Dermody lay. He had a huge gaping wound in his head. A military ambulance arrived and brought him to Kilkenny Military Hospital where he died shortly after admission. Thomas Dullard was 37 years of age and he left a wife and five children ranging in ages from 15 years to a baby of six months. He is buried in St. Patrick's Burial Ground, Patrick Street, Kilkenny.

JAMES HOBAN, GLENDONNELL, MULLINAVAT, CO. KILKENNY

James Hoban was born in 1898 in Glendonell, Mullinavat, Co. Kilkenny. His father was James Hoban who was a farmer and his wife, Ellen, helped him to run the farm. They had three daughters and two sons and James was the youngest child in the family. Lt. General Peter Strickland, who, in 1921, was military governor for the province of Munster, and the counties of Kilkenny and Wexford, passed through Mullinavat, Co. Kilkenny on 19 April, 1921, and stopped at the R.I.C. barracks there. About midday a Roll-Royce armoured car, accompanying him on his journey, also halted outside the barracks.¹⁸ At the same time there was a pig fair in progress in Mullinavat. James Hoban was at the fair and was engaged in selling his lot of pigs. The officer in charge had left the armoured car but a private in the British army was on the look-out in the turret. The machine gun in the turret was loaded. The British officer heard the discharge of a round from the gun and then saw a civilian lying on the road about 70 yards up the street. A local resident was sweeping the pavement outside a shop owned by a Mr Ryan that was within 15 yards of the barracks and on looking up the street he saw a man falling. He ran up the street and recognised the man as James Hoban. He shouted to the military, 'Ye're after shooting a man.' The officer-in-charge went up and found that James Hoban had received serious wounds through both his legs. He was bleeding profusely but both the British officer and one of the R.I.C. escort party dressed his wounds. The British officer phoned for a doctor and an ambulance and a priest soon arrived on the scene. James Hoban died from his wounds in the City Infirmary, Waterford at 7 p.m. that same evening. The private who was the only one in the turret when the Lewis gun fired said, during his

court-martial, that the bullet came from that gun but that it was an accident. Another British soldier in the party said that on examining the gun he found the fuse's spring too light. The private who was alone in the turret at the time, was found not guilty as the machine gun had fired accidentally. James Hoban was 23 years of age and he had no connection with the Mullinavat Company I.R.A. ¹⁹

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14. Liam Tobin lived with his family in Kilkenny City for a while and went to school in the Irish Christian Brothers' Schools, James's Street, Kilkenny. Bureau of Military History, Liam Tobin, Document 1753
15. Bureau of Military History, Witness statement of Seán Whelan, Enniscorthy, Document 1085.
16. Bureau of Military History, Witness Statement of Séamus Mac Diarmada, Cavan, Document 768
17. Bureau of Military History, Statement of Comdt. Seán Sheridan, Crossdoney, Co. Cavan, Document 1613
18. Author's interview with Richard Kinchella, Mullinavat Company I.R.A., 1968.
19. *Ibid.*



148. Mr de Valera receiving the Freedom of the City of Kilkenny, 1933. Alderman J. McGuinness, Mr de Valera, Ald Michael McSweeney (Mayor).



149. Seán Treacy.



151. Pierce McCann, Cashel, Co Tipperary.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

List of Members of the Dunnamaggin B. Company, 8th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade. (The Dunnamaggin Co. was in the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade until June, 1920).

Capt. Pat Walsh (Killed in action in Knocknagress on 13.5.1921); John Hickey; Bob Coady; Pat Mulrooney; Denis Treacy; Pat Holden; Jim Hanrahan; William Mulrooney; Edward Egan; Michael Walsh; Tom Mulrooney; Phil O'Shea; Denis Lahart; William Holden; William Fitzpatrick; Patrick Kenny; John Walsh; Kieran O'Neill; Laurence Forristal; Andrew Forristal; Andrew O'Neill; Edward Sullivan; William Bergin.

The monument to the memory of Patrick Walsh was unveiled in Dunnamaggin on 14 May, 1950, by Tom Barry. The list of the members of Dunnamaggin Co. I.R.A. was supplied by Mr James Treacy, Raheen, Tullaroan from the back of a plaque made by his father, Denis Treacy. As each of his comrades died and had a military funeral, Denis picked up a spare blank bullet used by the firing party in each case and attached it firmly to the plaque, in memory of each deceased colleague, until he himself died in May, 1982, aged 85 years [see photograph 63].

List of Ahenure Cumann na mBan during the War of Independence

Nellie Cahill, Captain; Katie Neary, Treasurer; Statia Maher; Bridie Neary; Kate Neary; Bridie Gibbs; Nellie Kennedy; Alice Bowers; Kitty Bowers.

List of members of Tullaroan Co. I.R.A. during the Truce in 1921

(This was obtained from a record of membership kept by Willie Meagher, Curragh, Tullaroan and supplied by Dan Hogan, Monavadrew. It was checked against a list which Dick Walshe, The Church, Tullaroan had compiled with Paddy Dunne, The Commons, a native of Ballybeigh and a member of Tullaroan Co. I.R.A.).

Simon Walton, Reimeen, Commandant 2nd. Battalion (promoted from Captain, Tullaroan Co. I.R.A.); Willie Meagher, Curragh, Captain Tullaroan Co. I.R.A. (later Quartermaster 2nd. Battalion); Thomas Grace, Reimeen, 1st. Lieutenant, (later Captain Tullaroan Co. I.R.A.); Michael O'Neill, Lisnalea, 2nd Lieutenant, (later 1st Lieutenant, Tullaroan Co. I.R.A.); Michael Kelly, Tullaroan, (Intelligence Officer); Philip Dunne, Ballybeigh, (promoted to 2nd. Lieutenant); James Dillon, Ballybeigh; William Dunne, Ballybeigh; John O'Neill, Lisnalea; Colum Dillon, Ballybeigh; Patrick Dunne, Ballybeigh; Matthew Kennedy, Hilland, Killahy; Patrick Kennedy, Hilland; Peter Butler, Trenchardstown; Patrick Butler, Trenchardstown; John Hoyne, New England; Jeremiah Mahoney, Killahy; Lorenzo Meagher, Curragh (Lory Meagher); Henry Meagher, Curragh; Patrick Comerford, Boggan; Kieran Delaney, Ard-a-Bawn, and Ballybeigh; James Quigley, Liss; Patrick Quigley, Liss; John Morris, Liss; Edward Holohan, Gaulstown; William Holohan, Gaulstown; James Tynan, Gaulstown; William Tynan, Gaulstown; Michael Kennedy, Gaulstown; Philip Hogan, Gaulstown; Edward Dunne, Mountgale; John O'Hara, Gaulstown; Thomas Hennessy, Ballybeigh; Patrick Bolger, (worked with Sim Walton, Reimeen); Thomas Grace, Brabstown; Philip Dwyer, Brittas; Lawrence Kennedy, Cold Harbour; Matthew Butler, Curragh; Patrick Fry, Kilkenny; Richard Grace, Reimeen; Patrick Grace, Gaulstown; Joseph Fleming, Monavadrew; Michael Fleming, Monavadrew; William Coogan, Rathealy; Philip Coogan, Rathealy; Michael Walsh, Rathealy; Edward Walsh, Brittas; Patrick Kerwick, Oldtown; Frank Keoghan, Liss; Richard Holland, Liss; James Kelly, Tullaroan; James Clohosey, Tullaroan; Richard Molloy, Tullaroan; Thomas Molloy, Tullaroan; John Tyrell, Brittas; Patrick Tyrell, Courtstown; Michael Brennan, Gort-na-Gap; John Brennan, Gort-na-Gap; Thomas Hogan, Gaulstown; Thomas Kennedy, Knocknamuck; John Salmon, Courtstown; John Doheny, Liss; Philip Doheny, Liss; James Lennon, Lisnalea; John Kennedy, Cold Harbour; Paddy Dalton, Oldtown; Mick Dalton, Oldtown; Paddy Cuddihy, Liss; Joseph Bergin, Tullaroan; Joseph Kennedy, Hilland; Pat Connors, Cold Harbour.

Members of the Tullaroan Co. I.R.A. attempted to burn the vacated R.I.C. barracks in the village in May, 1920, but it was only partially damaged. Phil Dwyer, Brittas, who participated in the efforts to demolish the barracks, remembers that another attempt was made later to blow up the empty building with explosives, but again, almost all the building remained intact.

Michael O'Neill, Lisnalea, 2nd. Lieutenant of the Tullaroan Co. I.R.A., Jack Dermody, Ballyroe and Thomas Hennessy, Liss first marked, with a wooden cross, the location in the cross-fence in the Knocknagress fields, where Seán Quinn and Pat Walsh were killed, before any monument was erected there or on the New England Road.

Kilkenny Brigade Staff on 11 July 1921

Brigade O/C. – George O'Dwyer (Coon): Vice Brigade O/C. – Leo Dardis, Kilkenny; Brigade Adjutant – Seán Byrne, Kilkenny; Brigade Quartermaster – Thomas Maher, Callan.

Brigade Officers until their arrest in Autumn 1920

Brigade O/C. – Thomas Treacy; Vice Brigade O/C. – James Lalor; Brigade Quartermaster – Edward Comerford.

Battalion Staffs of Battalions in West Kilkenny on the 11 July 1921.

1st Battalion, Kilkenny City contained seven companies.

Commandant – Martin Mulhall; Vice-Commandant – Michael McSweeney Jnr.; Adjutant – Vincent Dardis; Quartermaster – Thomas Neary. The company captains were as follows: – William Oakes, Kieran Tobin, William Hennessy, Thomas Kearney, Thomas Minogue, Patrick Gregg and Edward O'Gorman. The 1st Battalion had a membership of 618 men.

2nd Battalion

The 2nd. Battalion covered the areas of Tullaroan, Graine, Clomantagh, Johnstown, Freshford, Gathabawn, Urlingford, Crosspatrick, Galmoy.

Commandant – Simon Walton, Tullaroan; Vice-Commandant – James Holohan, Urlingford; Adjutant – Willie Meagher, Tullaroan; Quartermaster – Joseph Pollard; Battalion Intelligence Officer – Seán Gibbons, Clomantagh; First Aid – Thomas Costigan, Urlingford; Communications – Michael Brennan, Graine; Signalling – James Hennessy, Urlingford; Musketry – John O'Hara, Tullaroan; Engineering – Jas. Casey, Jas. Dunne, Urlingford; Transport and

Supplies – Michael Brennan, Graine, Jimmy Muldowney, Graine; Police Officer – P. Sharkey, Johnstown; Scouting – William Holmes, Johnstown.

The company officers were as follows:

	Captain	1st Lieutenant
Tullaroan	Thomas Grace	Michael O'Neill
Graine	Michael Brennan	Robert Campion
Clomantagh	Pat Ryan	John Kennedy
Urlingford	Martin Joyce	James Dunne
Crosspatrick	James Connell	John Tierney
Galmoy	Pat Cormack	Tom Phelan
Johnstown	John Skehan	John Bryan
Gathabawn	James Lalor	John Skehan
Freshford	M. Wall	Ed. Campion

The 2nd. Battalion had 116 men on its rolls.

7th. Battalion

There were seven companies in the 7th. Battalion:- Mullinahone, Ahenure, Callan, Kilmanagh, Coolagh, Ballymack, and Ballyline.

Commandant – Ned Aylward; Vice-Commandant – Ned Halley; Adjutant - Patrick Ryan; Quartermaster – Patrick Downey. The seven company captains were: James Coady, William Tobin, Michael Dowling, Patrick Coady, Edward McCluskey, James Ring, Seán Downey. The 7th Battalion had 473 men in its ranks.

8th. Battalion

The 8th. Battalion was formed in June 1920. Before that it was contained in the 7th. Battalion, but the latter battalion became too large.

Commandant – Wm. Farrell; Vice-Commandant – N. O'Carroll; Adjutant - Pierce Barden; Quartermaster – Seán O'Carroll. There were six companies in this battalion:-Hugginstown, Knocktopher, Ballyhale, Dunnamaggin, Templeorum, Kilmoganny.

The company captains were as follows:- J. Walsh, John Hickey, Thomas Walsh, P. Grant, M. Davis, J. Kirwan. There were 416 men in its ranks.

(This information in regard to brigade and battalion staffs was supplied to me in 1969 by Mr Liam O'Dwyer, Lavistown, Kilkenny from the papers of his late father, Brigadier George O'Dwyer, Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A. Details of the 2nd. Battalion were obtained from the papers of the late Willie Meagher, Tullaroan, Adjutant of the 2nd. Battalion and brother of Lory Meagher, one of Ireland's best known hurlers who, hailed from Tullaroan also.)

APPENDIX 2

Members of Seán Hogan's Flying Column which was the 2nd. Flying Column of the 3rd. (South) Tipperary Brigade.

Seán Hogan, O/C Flying Column; Jack Nagle, Vice O/C Flying Column.

5th. Battalion (Clonmel):

Richard Dalton, Michael Pattison, John Morrissey, Tom Kirwan, Tom Looby, Patrick Hackett, Bill Mulloughney, Ned Dalton, Ned Dwyer, Matty McKenna, Seán Hayes, John (Buddy) Donoghue, John Fitzgerald, Tom Daly.

6th. Battalion (Cahir):

Jack Butler, Bill Mulcahy, Ned Mulcahy, Tom Mullaney, David Moher, Tom Ryan, Denis Lonergan, David Fitzgerald, Liam Keating, David Quirke, Liam Clarke, Michael Regan, Michael Fogarty, Jim Regan, Jim Butler, Tom Gorman, Martin Lyons, Gabriel McGrath, David McAuliffe, Liam O'Brien, Francis Payne, Christy Conway, Maurice McGrath.

8th. Battalion (Carrick-on-Suir)

John Power, J. Doherty.

The members of the 7th. Battalion (Callan) Flying Column, Kilkenny Brigade were as follows:

Ahenure: Ned Aylward, Michael Gibbs, Paddy Ryan.
Callan: Ned Butler (Buckshot), Jimmy Kelly, Paddy Torpey, Paud Downey, Jimmy Robinson, Tom Maher.
Tipperary: Seán Hayes.
Mullinahone: Seán Quinn, Jackie Brett.
Poulacapple: Jimmy Leahy.
Coolagh: Jim McKenna, Mick Delaney (King).
Garryricken: Paddy Luttrell.
Ballylarkin: Michael Maher.
Kilmoganny: Paddy Power.
Dunnamaggin: Pat Walsh.
The Islands: Ned Cuddihy.
Ballyclovan: Ned Halley, Neddie Byrne, Nicholas Byrne, Ned Walsh, Ned Dwyer.
Kiltrassy: Ned Neill.
Kilbraghan: Tommy Tallis.

APPENDIX 3

Some Ballads of the period collected in West Kilkenny.

Paddy Cuddihy was a mechanic in Callan at the time of Jackie Brett's death, and he composed these verses in his memory.

ALL FOR IRELAND

1

Our hearts were filled with sorrow
Though our eyes let fall no tear,
When we knew that on the morrow
Roll-call sounds not for your ear.
The sagart good prepared you well
To join that joyous band,
With a smile you said, 'Good-bye lads,'
'Sure 'tis all for Ireland.'

2

A coffin rude constructed we
With hands that trembled so
'Twere fitting for a soldier brave
From a body-snatching foe.
As the last salute we gave you,
'Ere we gently touched your hand,
We thought we heard you whisper,
"Sure 'tis all for Ireland."

3

With muffled hooves and silent wheels
In the dark and lone midnight,
We bore you to God's acre
With never a parting light.
But a light shone from your features,
So calm, so bright, so grand,
And again we thought we heard you say,
"Sure 'tis all for Ireland."

4

In silence gazed we on the scene
With passive thought and grief,
As we gave you back to motherland
From your soldier life so brief.
No parting volley broke the calm,
'Ere we fell in at command,
And yet again our ears could hear,
"Sure 'tis all for Ireland."

5

May the sod lie lightly on you, Seán,
And when the fight is won,
We'll rest you in the Martyr's Plot,
'Neath the shade of Sliabh-na-mBan.
And rising proudly at your head,
Like a sentinel shall stand
Redemption's sign, – with the noble words,
'He gave all for Ireland.'

BRAVE DUNNAMAGGIN PAT

(Written and composed by Woodside Paddy.

Supplied by Mrs Cecilia Molloy from a scrapbook of the period compiled
by her mother, Margaret Boyle.)

1

We will sing to-night of a hero bold
That died for a noble cause,
And gave his life in the bloody strife
Against cruel alien laws.
He left his dear old mother's side,
And his happy home one day,
To fight for Ireland's freedom
In the dawning of the day.

Chorus

God rest that gallant hero
No boasting coward was he
He bravely fell in an Irish dell
Dear Erin's Isle to free

Beside his comrades brave and true
Mid the Black and Tan's rat-tat,
Fell that bold Kilkenny rebel,
Brave Dunnamaggin Pat.

2

With the foemen's guns around him,
Sorely wounded there he lay;
And they took him in a lorry
To a dark ward far away.
But his blood did flow for Ireland
On Tubrid's steep hillside
And his body joined old mother earth
To swell the martyrs' tide.

KILMANAGH ON THE HILL

(Air – Our latest hero dead)

Composed by James Kelly, Mooncoin who was a member of the 7th. Kilkenny Battalion Flying Column. It was obtained from a cutting of a paper supplied by Ned Cahill, Killaloe, Callan.

1

'Twas on the eleventh day of May, the order strict was made
For all the companies 'stand to,' their own ground to parade
Commanders all then got the call to have their men right there
And so we banded, soldiers fit, in early morning air.
Then Aylward true, brave Hogan too, were glad the word went 'round.
Kilkenny men and men of Tipp, at duty e'er were found,
The Callan few would dare and do, and joined in with good will
All freely bound for battle-ground, – Kilmanagh by the hill.

2

The companies were formed alright, the work was good and brief,
The march was made by woodlands shade to east of Ballykeefe.
The out-posts bold in front went forth the body main to guard,
On, on, until they halted in Kilmanagh's creamery yard.
The people of the village bright at 6 a.m. did rise,
To see men armed full in sight, it gave them a surprise;
On inside floor and housetops o'er those men would wait
Until the foe should yield that day, – Kilmanagh on the hill.

3

The busy day rolled fast away, with peace the night came on,
The enemy there shirked the fray – the time for it had gone.
The boys with patience lingered still but cowardly the foe,
Who knew the way the I.R.A. would lay his body low.
At whistle sound three companies marched on by Oldtown bridge,
The way along to Tullaroan, by field and shady hedge.
But spies so keen watched them unseen, fond hearts with sorrow fell.
For comrades dear met death a-near- Kilmanagh on the hill.

SEÁN QUINN FROM MULLINAHONE
(Air – The Felons of Our Land).
Supplied by Jimmy Murphy, Killamery.

1

O, was it on the battlefield
Where thousands nobly died,
Or was it on the barrack square
Where men faced death with pride,
It was on the field of battle
Our noblest blood has flown,
He died amid wars' grim battle,
Seán Quinn from Mullinahone.

2

On Tubrid side that summer's eve
Surrounded by the foe,
When fighting during a rearguard action,
To relieve his column from the foe
A Saxon's bullet pierced him through
He sank without a moan
Upon the breast of rising skies
Seán Quinn from Mullinahone.

3

His body lies in holy ground
His memory lingers on
And whisper thoughts of his native isle
Amid Jim Egan and Seán Brett.
Their memory lives to guide us on
Till the foe is overthrown
And freedom's sun on Sliabh-na-mBan,
Shines bright on Mullinahone.

A BALLAD OF HENNESSY AND DERMODY

Supplied by Mr Michael O’Grady, 54, Dean Cavanagh Place, Kilkenny.

I

On the 21st of February,
The morning of renown,
Two gallant men of the I.R.A.
Came to Kilkenny Town,
Two finest types of Irishmen
Your eyes had ever seen
For they came to save that dear old flag,
The orange, white and green.

2

The English soldiers came at length
Fully armed to the teeth
But, little did they dwell upon
The foes they had to meet
Then they were quickly pounced upon
And from them arms tore
But then a cry of female terror
Soon left them in their gore.

3

O brave brave hearted Irishmen
The battle is not o’er
Until we free old Ireland
From the tyrant’s cruel power
O brave, brave hearted Irishmen,
For Ireland they did die
And in the sacred ground of Tullow.
Their bodies now do lie.

O'ER SWEET GALTYSMORE

**Submitted by Paddy Clohosey and Paddy Fitzpatrick, both from
Tullaroan, County Kilkenny.**

I

Come in and sit down, gentle Kathleen,
Come in I have good news for thee
Come in and sit down gentle Kathleen
Come in said the old. bean an tí.

2

Last night as the cocks they were crowing
A bold knocking there came to my door
Sure I thought 'twas the boys were returning
From the ambush below in Rossmore.
As I gazed through a slit in my window
Such a grand sight my eyes never seen
There were the gallant Tipp fighters
Hoisting Ireland's proud banner of green.

3

It was quickly she filled up their glasses
Here's a health to all comrades she cried
And to all who are battling for freedom
On the green hills of Ireland to-night
Here's a health to the bold Dinny Lacey
'Sparkie' Breen and the brave Cathal Brugha
And here's to the gallant Seán Treacy
For they died to give Ireland her due.

A REBEL'S GRAVE

Composed by Paddy Fitzpatrick, Tullaroan, County Kilkenny.

1

A rebel's grave is a lonely place
If you happen to pass by
When the moonlight flickers through the clouds,
From a bleak October sky.
When copper coloured autumn leaves
Are shifting in the breeze
And the western wind is sighing
Its sad requiem through the trees.

2

A rebel's grave is a lonely place
At the rising of the sun.
The last post it has sounded
While his work was still undone.
He carried high the freedom flag
With the bravest of the brave
This victim of injustice
In a rebel's lonely grave.

3

A rebel's grave is a lonely place
When the sun has gone to rest.
And the singing bird has vanished
Gone to his cosy nest.
If you linger there for just a while,
The sound of marching men
Will re-echo through your memory,
Ghostly shadows rise again.

4

Illegal on his native soil,
Betrayed, outlawed and banned.
He is gone now to his glory
Like the Felons of our Land.
He'd rather die a thousand times.
Than live his life a slave.
So tonight he lies 'neath the angry skies
In a rebel's lonely grave.

TWO GALLANT IRISH HEROES
Composed by Paddy Fitzpatrick, Tullaroan.

1

The year was nineteen twenty one, it was in the month of May
Two gallant Irish heroes lay down their lives one day
They were murdered by the Black and Tans outside of Tullaroan.
Staunch Walsh from Dunnamaggin and Seán Quinn from Mullinahone.

2

To break the chains of slavery, was the dream of these great men
As they marched both night and day across the heather, hill and glen
To fight against the tyrant's rule, and claim their very own.
Brave men were Captain Padraig Walsh and Seán Quinn from Mullinahone.

3

The blood they shed for freedom flowed upon the grassy ground.
As they slowly passed on from this life, 'midst the wild flowers growing all round.
May they rest in peace those gallant men who died near Tullaroan,
One was brave devoted Padraig Walsh and Seán Quinn from Mullinahone.

An Ode to Nicholas Mullins, killed in the Coolbawn Ambush,
10 June, 1921

A local scribe, an ex-British soldier who fought in World War 1, 'Tusa' Doolan, who was also a stone carver, cut the following verse into the stone at the back of the Nicholas Mullins's tombstone in the old graveyard in Thomastown.*

The silvery Nore is rolling
By an Irish soldier's grave
The Vesper bells are tolling
O'er the ashes of his grave
Smiling, to save his comrades
He fell on Coolbawn's sod
And a warrior soul now marches
In the legion of their God
One life he gave for Sireland
Yeah! ten his heart would give
Mid the greeny vales of Ireland
He died that we might live

* Information from an interview with Colm Mullins, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny.

An Ode to Sean Hartley killed in the Coolbawn Ambush, 10 June, 1921

On the night of the 18 June, 1921, following the Coolbawn Ambush, the ballad-maker penned his poignant lines:

‘Twas there that Nick Mullins took his stand
Like a soldier as you know
For to strike a blow for his native land
Against a foreign foe
Sean Hartley stood close by his side
With skill he used his gun
‘But oh alas!’ he faintly cried,
‘Fight on for I am done’
‘May the Lord have mercy on your soul’,
Was all poor Nick could say
When the foeman scored another goal
And sent him to the clay.

APPENDIX 4

‘Katmandu’ [See photograph 129].

The cowshed was 30 feet long and 12 feet wide. The hideout was 6 feet long by twelve feet wide. The entrance was through the cowshed door and a small space behind where the cows were tied led to the secret door. There were three cows tied and facing the rear of the shed. There was also a jennet tied loosely at the hideout side of the cows as a protection. A part of the roof was covered with thatch and the rest of the roof with galvanised iron. The door of the hideout was fastened by a double latch. A cord was fixed to this double latch inside and drawn through the thatch overhead. When this cord, which was concealed in the thatch, was pulled, the door opened back in. Entrance was made by crawling in under on hands and knees. When inside, the door was closed by pushing it back and the latch went back into position automatically. Jim Brien designed and constructed the hideout and Bill Treacy, Mullinahone made the model.
(This description was supplied by Bill Treacy, Mullinahone)

APPENDIX 5

Further notes on the lives of Jackie Brett, Seán Quinn and Pat Walsh

JACKIE BRETT

Jackie Brett's father was Patrick Brett from Poulacapple and he came to live in Mullinahone in 1892 when he bought a business premises in the town. Together with his sister, Bridget, he established a bar, grocery, hardware, and corn business. Bridget got married to Michael Gardiner, a farmer from Poulacapple and she returned there to farm with him. Subsequently Patrick Brett, who remained in Mullinahone, got married to Kathy McCormack from Boulea, Ballingarry and they carried on a thriving business in Mullinahone. Jackie Brett was the first child of the marriage and he was the eldest of a family of four, three boys and one girl.

SEÁN QUINN

Seán Quinn was born in Mullingar, County Westmeath in 1896. He was orphaned at an early age and he was sent into care in Clonmel Industrial School. He served his apprenticeship to the bakery trade in Clonmel and he worked there for a while. When he was 21 years of age, he went to Mullinahone to work in a bakery owned by Richard Dowling who came to Mullinahone from the Freshford area of Co. Kilkenny. Seán was not happy as a baker and he longed to be out in the fresh air. He left the bakery trade and worked as a farm labourer with William O'Connor, Mullinooney, Mullinahone for a time and then he moved to Paitsín O'Brien, Ballylanigan, to do similar work. Seán was one of the first to volunteer for active service with the West Kilkenny Flying Column. Mrs Maher, Ballylarkin always provided a safe house for the Flying Column when it was needed. On many occasions they rested in her house after a long day's march. Mrs Maher fed them well and looked after their welfare.

On one of the last times the Flying Column sought refuge in Mrs. Maher's home, Seán expressed his gratitude after he finished a hearty meal. 'Begor, Mrs Maher, this couldn't be better. What would we do without the women of Ireland?'

PAT WALSH

Pat Walsh's father came from Newmarket, County Kilkenny where his family had a public house. There were two sons in the family and one son remained on in the public house in Newmarket. Matthew, Pat's father, having spent some time in America, returned to Dunnamaggin and married Mary O'Neill from

Dunnamaggin. Mary's family had a public house there and Matthew and Mary took over the business. Their first and only son, Pat, was born in Dunnamaggin in 1889. He started school in Baurascoobe National School and later attended Kells National School before moving on to secondary school in the Irish Christian Brothers' School in Callan, Co. Kilkenny.

Index

- 1798 Rebellion 11
1916 in Kilkenny, 6, 7, 11,
12-22, 28, 31, 286, 288-9
1916 Kilkenny prisoners, 8,
21, 287, 295, 303
1916 Rising in Dublin, 5, 6,
7, 12-3, 14-7, 19, 22, 32,
36, 285, 300
1916 Rising in Wexford,
11-7, 19-20
1916 Rising, 25, 28, 29, 31,
36, 37, 277, 287, 295
1918 Gen. Election, 42, 53,
54, 277
A Soldier's Song, 56, 58
A.O.H., 2, 3
Abstentionism, 37, 59, 289
Adamstown, 2, 23
Africa, North, 287
Aghaviller, 237
Ahenure, 3, 7, 66, 69, 85,
94, 104, 121-2, 174, 280,
283, 298
Ahessy, William, 154
Aiken, Frank, 245
America, 280-1, 283, 319(n)
American Army, 5, 21
Anfield, 83
Annamult, 43, 76
Arbour Hill, 19
Ardaloo, 141
Ashe, Thomas, 52-3
Ashtown, 189
Attynoe, 184
Aud, 13, 18
Aughatarra Bridge, Callan,
129, 170, 301
Aughtane, 146
Australia, 137, 280, 288
Auxiliaries, 115-121, 130,
133-7, 148, 184, 188,
291-2
Avonree, 41
Aylward, John, 57
Aylward, Ned (Éamonn), 6,
7, 85-90, 95, 99, 121-2,
127, 135, 153, 156,
157-163, 167, 170, 172,
173-4, 175, 179-180,
183-192, 195-8, 201,
204-5, 217-9, 221, 228,
234, 239-240, 242, 244,
253, 255, 275, 280
Babbington, Séamus, 52,
Balfé, Edward, 259
Balintee, 237
Ballagh, Oldtown, 229
Ballaght, 78
Ballinalina, 118
Ballincurry, 223
Ballingarry, 68, 223, 283,
Ballybeigh, 221
Ballybricken, 77, 114, 230
Ballycallan, 146
Ballyclovan, 48, 185
Ballydaniel N. S., 288
Ballydonnell, 94
Ballyduggan, 228
Ballyfoyle, 7
Ballyhale, 44, 79, 56
Ballykinlar, 116, 121, 270
Ballylanigan, 319(n)
Ballylarkin, 174, 211, 282,
319(n)
Ballyline, 48, 85, 94, 196
Ballymack, 94
Ballymurphy, 11, 15
Ballypatrick, 235
Ballyragget I.R.A. Co., 292
Ballyragget N.S., 292
Ballyragget, 40, 130, 292,
294, 301
Ballyvooneen, 261
Ballywaters, 48
Banba Hall (Kyteler's Inn),
4, 14-5, 296
Banim's Hill, 203
Barden, Monsignor, 262
Barrett, Dick, 269
Barrett, William, 129
Barrnadow, 109
Barron, Tom, 68, 77-8
Barron, Watt, 68, 77-8
Barronsland, 67, 141
Barry, Denis, 20, 24(n)
Barry, Kevin, 96
Barry, Tom, 245
Bateman, Harry, 105
Bateman, James, 148
Bateman, Richard, 148
Bateman, Tom, 148
Bates, Martin, 192
Baursoobe N.S., 107,
319(n)
Baynam, Insp (R.I.C.),
158-9, 162, 169
Bealin, Patrick, 255, 285-6
Beauville, Captain, 297
Belfast, 78-80, 171
Belgium, 26
Bennettsbridge, 52, 81,

- 140-2, 146
Bergin, Thomas, 285
Bessboro, 187, 190, 277,
Birchfield, 50
Black and Tans, 106-9, 131,
146, 151, 153, 168, 175,
185, 189, 196-9, 203,
220, 236, 291-2, 301
Blackbottom Hill, 203,
213-4
Blackstairs Mountains, 11
Blake, Sir William, 35
Blanchfieldspark, 294
Bloody Sunday, 130, 133,
135, 205, 298-9, 290-1,
298
Boharawarrige, 183, 234
Boland, Mr (Harry), 240
Bolger, Pack, 201
Bonnettstown, 36
Bonnybrook, 53, 57, 266
Borris, Co. Carlow, 11, 15-6
Boulea, 319(n)
Bourke, M. (Thurles), 259
Bowe, Michael, 198
Bradford, Constable Albert,
186
Bragaun, 173
Breen, Dan, 61, 83-4, 153,
244, 278
Breen, Lar, 86
Brenar, 186, 189
Brennan, Danny, 201
Brennan, John, 203, 214,
227
Brennan, Michael (Graine),
141, 203, 205, 221, 227
Brennan, Mick (Newtown),
67, 195
Brennan, Rev J. (Windgap),
237
Brennan, Rev T. (Ballyhale),
237, 241
Brennan, Robert (Wexford),
12, 14, 16-20, 43
Brennan, Thomas, 259
Brenormore, 228
Brett, Bridget, 319(n)
Brett, Jackie, 85, 94, 130,
153-4, 174-6, 179-180,
234, 245, 254-5, 277-9,
282, 298, 302
Brett, Lieutenant Pierce, 16,
20
Brett, Patrick, 319(n)
Bridge Street, Callan, 50, 301
Bridge Street, Thomastown,
297
Brien, Jim (Viper), 140-2,
145-6, 228, 245, 250
Brighton, 168
Bristol, 106, 203
British Army (troops), 3,
20-1, 83, 250, 285, 288
British authorities, 54, 56,
83, 286-7
British forces (military), 5,
11, 32, 54, 61, 81, 84,
93, 97, 119-122, 131,
142, 147, 157, 184, 194-
5, 200, 202, 233, 236,
278, 285-7, 288-9, 290,
292-4, 295, 296-7, 298-9,
300-3
British Government, 4, 5,
25-6, 39, 78, 80-1, 83,
191
British House of Commons,
3-4, 35, 37, 39, 48
British Regiments, 285
Brittas Bridge, 225
Brixton Prison, 96
Brophy, John, 275
Brownrigg, Bishop Abraham,
42, 44, 149, 262
Brownstown, 78
Bruce, Major, 115
Brúgha, Cathal, 7, 11-2, 14-5
Buckley, Paddy, 269
Buggy, P. R., Solr., 171
Burke, Kate, 109
Burke, Mick, (Glengoole),
96-7, 105-6, 259, 262
Burke, Patrick, Snr., 20
Butler, Alice, 221
Butler, Ellie, 221
Butler, Jack, 205
Butler, James, 267
Butler, Neddy, 174, 184,
205, 284
Butler, Pat, 221, 223
Butler, Sgt (R.I.C.), 244
Butlerswood, 292
Byrne, Anthony, 193
Byrne, Jimmy, 289
Byrne, John Joe, 77-9
Byrne, Neddie, 185, 205
Byrne, Nicholas, 185-6, 205
Byrne, Seán, 117
C.Y.M.S. Kilkenny, 296
Cahill, Bob, 67, 85-90, 104,
121, 133, 135-7, 266,
282
Cahill, James, 52
Cahill, Nell, 283
Cahill, T. B., 30, 63, 84, 266,
295
Cahir, 30
Callan Batt., Irish Volunteers,
58, 94, 116, 133
Callan Hospital, 131, 301
Callan, 2-3, 6-7, 41-2, 50,
81, 84-5, 87, 90, 98, 104,
111, 113-4, 121, 128,
142, 146, 153, 156-7,
172-4, 183-4, 192, 194,
228, 233, 277, 281, 290,
298, 301
Callan C.B.S., 282, 298
Callanan, Ed., 43
Callanan, Michael, 53
Campbell, Constable,
(R.I.C.), 154, 175
Campbell, Josephine, 175
Campion, John, 211, 215,
227
Campion, Robert, 105, 203,
205, 221, 227
Canavan, Rev Fr O.D.C.,
237
Cantwell, Arthur, 6-7
Cappagh, 118
Cappaghayden, 228
Cappahenry, 84-6, 129, 174,
178, 183-4
Carey, Jo, 282
Carlow, 11, 98
Carrick-on-Suir, 52
Carrickshock, 65, 68-9, 109,
186, 245
Carrigan, James, 21
Carrigan, Rev P. (Callan),
237, 275
Carroll, Jack, 77, 78
Carroll, Michael, 192
Carroll, Nicholas, 65, 68,
77-8, 186
Carroll, Paddy, 79
Carroll, Robbie, 136
Carroll, Seán, 189
Carroll, Tommy, 133, 137,
266

- Carrollshill, 127
 Carson, Sir Edward, 1
 Casement, Sir Roger, 1, 2, 18
 Cashel, 30, 86,
 Cassidy, Martin, 67, 69, 71,
 300
 Castlecomer cemetery, 286
 Castlecomer Military
 Barracks, 294, 297, 298
 Castlecomer, 114, 285,
 297-8
 Castlegrace, 205
 Castlejohn, 178, 179,
 Castlelinch, 36
 Castlemorris, 237
 Cavan, 80
 Ceannt, Éamonn, 5, 7
 Chicago, 288
 Church Street, Dublin, 285
 Clancy, Martin, 154-5
 Clancy, Paddy, 96-7, 155-6,
 174
 Clara, Co. Kilkenny, 76
 Co. Clare, 80, 84
 Clarke, Dr Josephine (nee
 Stallard), 19
 Clarke, Thomas J., 5, 12,
 14-5, 19, 300
 Clery, Arthur E., 104
 Clogga, Mooncoin, 186
 Clomantagh, 81, 105, 212
 Clonagoose, 266
 Clone, Ballyragget, 40
 Cloneen, 94, 155
 Clonmel, 128, 130, 236,
 Clonroche R.I.C. barracks,
 300
 Cloughjordan, 19
 Co. Leix (Laois), 297-8
 Coady, Bill 133, 137, 266
 Coady, Bob, 63, 67, 104,
 193-4, 236-7
 Coady, Mary, 215, 226
 Coady, Maurice, 67
 Coady, Robert, 107
 Coady, William, 266
 Coady, William,
 Knocknagress, 211-2,
 215, 217, 219, 224-5,
 Cobh, Co. Cork, 13, 262
 Cody, (Coolagh), 157-8
 Cody, James, 172
 Cody, Kieran, 192
 Cody, Paddy, 85
 Colbert, Thomas, Solr., 230
 Colleton, (Cappagh),
 118-120
 Collins, Michael, 31-2, 34,
 38, 62, 84, 98, 113-4,
 257, 265, 291
 Comerford, Edward (Ned),
 2-3, 5, 20, 24(n), 30, 52,
 82, 117, 121, 275
 Comerford's Hill, 203
 Conahy I.R.A. Company, 292
 Condon, Larry, 258-9, 261
 Condon, T. J. (Irish Party),
 49
 Conlon, Dr (Mullinahone),
 88
 Connemara, 287
 Connolly, D., 259
 Connolly, James (Dublin
 1916), 5-6, 16, 19, 41
 Connolly, Michael, 267
 Conroy, Constable, (R.I.C.),
 70-1
 Conroy, Cornelius, Cork,
 259
 Conscription Bill, 52
 Cooke, Sergt (R.I.C.), 163,
 244
 Coolagh, 69, 94, 157
 Coolbawn ambush,
 Castlecomer, 297, 298
 Coolenure, 154
 Coolmore, 77, 79
 Coolnabroone, 266
 Coologue, 104, 185
 Cooloultha, 185
 Coon, 139
 Cooper, Major Brian, 150
 Corbally Hill, 189
 Corbettstown, 81
 Corcoran, Jimmy, 223
 Corcoran, Pat, 2-3, 7, 12,
 14-6, 20, 24(n), 30,
 49, 66
 Cork, 78, 83, 116, 150, 277
 Cosgrave, Councillor William
 T., 32, 34-8, 40, 150,
 239-240, 242
 Cotterell, W., 266, 275
 Coyne, Joseph, 20
 Craddoxtown, 225
 Crofts, Tom, 269
 Crohane, 95, 154
 Croke Park, 133, 290, 302
 Croke, Denis, 154-5
 Crotty, Fr Patrick, 134, 237
 Crowley, Diarmaid, 104
 Cuddihy, Ned, 104, 153-4
 Cuddihy, Paddy, 182
 Cuddihy, Tom, 226
 Cuffesgrange, Co. Kilkenny,
 65, 111, 142
 Cullen, Seán, 148
 Cumann na mBan, 283
 Cummins, Jack, 215
 Cummins, Johnny, 186
 Cuppinagh, 136
 Curragh, Co. Kildare, 290,
 292
 Curragh, Tullaroan, 226,
 Curraghmartin, 262
 Cussane, 181
 Dagg, Richard, 30
 Dáil Éireann, 35, 37, 54,
 58-9, 61, 99, 114, 177,
 195, 277
 Dáil Éireann Self-
 Determination Fund, 53-4
Daily Mail, 37
 Dalton, Ned, 205
 Daly, Jim, 130
 Danganmore, 171, 192-4
 Danville, 36, 80
 Dardis, Leo, 30, 67
 Dartmoor Prison, 120
 Davis, Michael, 181, 254
 Davis, Mrs (Shortallstown),
 193
 Davitt, Judge Cahir, 104
 Davitt, Michael, 68
 Dawson, Willy, 121
 de Lacey, Michael, 20
 De Loughry, Larry, 5, 20,
 148, 275
 De Loughry, Peter, 2-3, 6,
 12, 14, 16, 19, 24(n), 30,
 32, 40, 51, 66, 79, 117,
 121, 139, 148, 299
 de Valera, Éamon, 31-2,
 34-5, 37-8, 177-8, 240-1,
 245, 281
 Deerpark, 267
 Defence of the Realm Act,
 26, 36
 Delahunty, Dick, 262
 Delahunty, Fr P. H., 2, 7, 40,
 42, 48, 62, 111-4, 234,
 257, 259-263, 295

- Delaney, 'King', 130
Delaney, Gus, 15, 105, 263
Delaney, James, 192
Delaney, Michael, 211
Delaney, Thomas, 263
Denn, William, 20
Dermody, Denny, 148
Dermody, Jack, 148
Dermody, Jim, 148
Dermody, Michael, 141-3,
146-8, 255, 289-290, 302
Dermody, Mrs (Threecastles),
297
Dermody, Pack, 148
Derry, 148
Desart, 186
Devlin, Joseph, M.P., 43
Devonshire Regiment,
129-130, 140, 147, 158,
184, 301
Devoy, John, 2
Dicksboro' Hurling Club, 26
Dillon, Colm, 221, 223, 227
Dillon, Jimmy, 221, 223, 227
Dillon, John M.P., 39-40, 52
Dillon, Phil, 142, 146
Dobbyn's Hill, 266
Dobbyn's Mill, 275
Dockeray, Constable,
(R.I.C.), 70, 75
Doheny, Edmund, 211, 217,
221
Doheny, District Nurse Miss,
57
Dollard, John, 67
Donnelly, Simon, 120
Donoghue, Paddy, 260
Donohill, 287
Donovan, Jack, 179, 181,
254
Donovan, Philip, 179
Donovan, Tom, 88-9, 93-4,
96-7, 154, 259
Doody, Fr E., Ballyhale, 237
Doody, Mrs (Fiddown), 188
Dooley, G. Co. C., 40
Doon, 292
Doran, Jack, 233-4
Dowling, Mick, 67
Dowling, Richard, 319(n)
Co. Down, 116
Downey, Paud, 174, 179-
180, 196, 205, 217, 243,
283
Doyle, Bob, 192
Doyle, Canon, Mooncoin,
241
Doyle, Chris, 192
Doyle, Dick, 199
Doyle, Jim, 192, 298-9
Doyle, Séamus, (Ó
Dubhghaill), 12-3, 17-20
Drakelands, 36
Drangan Barracks, 85-7, 96,
116, 131, 133-4, 154,
245, 277
Dreelingstown, 226
Drennan, Rev P., Callan, 237
Dualla, 50
Dublin Brigade I.R.A., 291-2
Dublin Corporation, 32, 37
Dublin, 15-7, 18-9, 21, 32,
38, 51, 61, 84, 98, 120-
121, 153-4, 285-6, 290-2,
298
Duggan, Jack, 186
Duggan, Johnny, 181, 254
Dullard, Thomas, 146-7,
301-2
Dundon, Dr (Borris), 11,
14-6, 44
Dungannon, 259
Dungarvan, 259
Dunlavin, 98
Dunmore, 36
Dunnamaggin 63, 104,
107, 192-3, 235-6, 295-6
Dunnamaggin, graveyard,
236-7, 296
Dunne, Denis, 69
Dunne, J. J., 3, 42, 44, 69,
97-9, 104, 234, 266, 275,
281-2
Dunne, Jack, 63
Dunne, Dr Joseph, 282
Dunne, Dr Martin, 282
Dunne, Ned, 141-3, 145,
147, 226
Dunphy, Dick, 199
Dwyer, Bill, 87
Dwyer, Jack, 67, 69, 76
Dwyer, Ned, 185, 197
East Clare, 32, 36-7
Easter Mon., 1916, 16
Easter Sun., 1916, 7, 11-5,
289, 296
Easter Thurs., 1916, 19, 22
Easter Tues., 1916, 17
Easter Wed., 1916, 17-8
Eddie, Jack, 26
Egan, Bill, 235-6
Egan, Charlie, 133, 137, 266
Egan, Jim, 133-4, 137, 266,
282
Egan, John, 193
Egan, Mrs (Dunnamaggin),
107
Egan, Ned, 107, 193, 235
Egan, Paud, 67, 71, 86,
88-9, 127, 134, 136-7,
266, 284
Egan, Peter, 133-4, 137
Egan, Tommy, 133-4, 137,
228, 233-4
Emmet, Robert, 12, 68
England, 21, 32
English Jails, 21
Ennis, Co. Clare, 80
Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford,
12, 13-5, 17-20, 300
Ennisnag, 67, 76
Enright, Constable, (R.I.C.),
84
Etchingham, Seán, 19-20
Farranrory, 223-4, 226, 228
Farrell, Joseph, 154
Farrell, Willie, 65-6, 68,
77-8, 186, 189
Fenian Rising, 2, 29
Fenians, 2, 290, 298
Fennelly, John, 58
Fermoy, 228, 235-6
Ferns, 19
Fethard, 6, 77, 94
Fianna Éireann, 4
Fiddown, 186-8
Fifth Batt., Kilkenny Brig.
I.R.A., 298
Figgis, Darrell, 35
Finn, Dick, 67, 85, 86, 133
First Batt., Kilkenny Brig.,
I.R.A., 288, 296, 299
Fitzgerald, Denis, 53, 58
Fitzgerald, Dick, 141-3
Fitzpatrick, Bill, 193
Flanders, 52
Fleming, Dick, 118, 154-5
Fleming, Éamon, 12
Fogarty, John P. 26
Fogarty, Bishop Michael,
48, 62
Foley, Capt. J., 87-8

- Foley, Edward, 84
 Forristal, Andy, 193-4, 236
 Forristal, Rev Larry, 134, 193, 236
 Forristal, William, 53-4, 58, 134, 136-7, 266, 275
 Foskin, Patrick, 44
 Foskin, Richard, 267
 Foskin, Seán, 267
 Fox, Mr (British Army), 83
 Fraher, L. (Dungarvan), 259
 France, 121
 French, Colonel, 19
 Freshford, 81
 Freyne, Ellen, 291
 Freyne, Frank, 291
 Freyne, John, 291
 Freyne, Peter, 59, 255, 291-2
 Friary St. Capuchin Church, 140, 301-2
 Friary Street, Kilkenny, ambush, 134-5, 139-141, 277, 289-290, 301-2
 Frongoch Internment Camp, 21, 30, 40
 Funcheon, Patrick, 41, 266
 Furlong, Tom, 14, 20
 Furniss, Edward, 299
 G.A.A., 19, 26, 68, 286-7, 289, 295
 G.P.O., Dublin, 16-7
 Gaelic classes, 295-6, 303(n)
 Gaelic League, 1, 6, 21, 51, 68, 117, 266, 287
 Gaffney, Tim, 142, 146
 Gaffney, Tom, 200
 Galbally, Co. Limerick, 5, 83-4
 Galligan, Vice-Comdt P.P., 19
 Gallipoli, 52
 Gardiner, Ellen, 283
 Gardiner, Jack, 85, 134, 136-7, 154, 174, 176, 228, 233-4, 250, 282
 Gardiner, Michael, 59, 319(n)
 Garnaman, 67, 140
 Garranguile, 155
 Garryricken, 153, 156, 172-3, 266, 277
 Gathabawn, 81
 Gaulstown, 199-200
 George V Military Hospital, 292
 George, Lloyd, 39
 Germany, 3, 13
 Gibbons, Seán, 20, 24(n), 40
 Gibbs, Michael, 67, 85-6, 104, 121, 174, 176, 179-181, 185, 234, 283
 Gilbert, Jeremiah, 41
 Ginnell, Laurence M.P., 35
 Gladstone, William, 68
 Gleeson's Cross, 93
 Glenbower, 130
 Glendonnell, Mullinavat, 302
 Glengoole, 97
 Glenmore cemetery, 297
 Glenmore football team, 296
 Glenmore, 81, 296-8
 Glennon, Constable (R.I.C.), 86
 Glennon, Lar, 134, 136
 Glennon, Ned, 134, 136
 Glennon, Nick, 136-7
 Gloucester, England, 56
 Goldenfield, 183
 Good Friday, 1916, 13
 Goodwingsgarden, 194
 Gooley, Ned, 67, 141-3, 145
 Goresbridge, 11
 Gorey, Co. Wexford, 300
 Gorman, Dinny, 77-9
 Gorman, Mary, 280
 Gorman, Ned, 67, 77, 79, 118, 141
 Gormanstown, 168
 Gortrush, 189
 Gowran, 11, 137, 286-7
 Grace, Dick, 200
 Grace, Mick, 66, 97
 Grace, Ned, 154
 Grace, Paddy, 200
 Grace, Tom, (Grocery and Bar), 245, 296
 Graiguenamanagh, 43-4, 117, 192, 297-8
 Graine, 105, 213, 221
 Grainger, E. (Irish Party), 43
 Grangemockler, 217, 298
 Greene, Johnny, 67, 76, 141-3
 Greene, Ned, 136
 Greene, Tom, 104
 Greensbridge, 6
 Grey, Sir Edward, 3
 Griffith, Arthur, 50-1, 96, 240
 Grogan, Edmund, 86, 89-90
 Gunn, Martin, 167
 Hackett, Patrick, 154-6
 Haggard ambush, 194
 Halley, Ned, 85, 185-6, 188, 196, 199, 201, 243-4, 253-4, 283
 Halloran, John, 66, 68, 77-8
 Halloran, Joseph Snr., 69, 108-9
 Halloran, Josie, 108-9
 Halloran, Ned, 68, 77-8
 Hanford, Major R.T.H., 49
 Hanrahan, Andrew, 118-120
 Hanrahan, Jack (Kells), 193
 Hanrahan, James (Brittas), 259
 Hanrahan, James (Cappagh), 117-120,
 Hanrahan, Jim (Garnaman, Kells), 67, 193
 Hanrahan, John (Cappagh), 119-120
 Hanrahan, Mrs (Cappagh), 119-120
 Hanrahan, Thomas, 118-120
 Hanrahan, Tim (Kilkenny), 9
 Harristown, 77
 Harte, Jack, 76
 Harte, John, 21
 Hartley, Seán, 192, 245, 296-7
 Hayden, John P. M.P., 37
 Hayes, Bill, 201
 Hayes, Seán, 96-7, 122, 130, 154, 198, 200, 202, 204-5, 215, 262
 Hayes's Hotel, Thurles, 26
 Healy, Richard, 21
 Hearn, Michael, 57
 Heffernan, Dr P., 57
 Heffernan, John, 211-2
 Heffernan, Kate, 211
 Heffernan, Mary, 211
 Heneberry, Fr T. (Dunnamaggin), 235-7, 275, 295
 Hennessy, Bill, 289
 Hennessy, Ned, 287
 Hennessy, Thomas (Tom), 76, 140-3, 146-8, 287-8, 290, 302
 Hennessy, Tim, 5, 67, 69, 76, 139-140, 147, 267, 275, 288

- Heslin and Maher, 296
Hickey, Jim, 193
Hickey, John, 67, 71, 107, 193-4, 235-7
Hickey, Mick, 193
Higgins, Maurice, 20
Highgate, 78-9
Hoban, Ellen, 302
Hoban, James Snr 302
Hoban, James, 302-3
Hobson, Bulmer, 5-7, 13
Hogan, David, 38
Hogan, Michael (Mick), 130, 133, 290, 298
Hogan, Paddy, 30, 86
Hogan, Phil, 199-200
Hogan, Seán, and his Flying Column, 61, 83-5, 97-8, 190-3, 195-8, 200-2, 204, 205, 212, 215, 217-9, 221, 223, 228, 279-80, 295
Holden, Lyda, 63, 68-9, 85-6, 193, 236, 284
Holden, Pat (Dunnamaggin), 63, 67, 71, 104, 107, 193-5, 235-6
Holden, Pat (Newtown), 141
Holland, Ned, 117-8, 119-120, 192, 267
Holohan, Bill, 200, 223
Holohan, Ned, 200
Home Rule (Act), 1, 3, 4, 39, 52
Horgan, Sergt (R.I.C.), 212
Hornibrooke, R.M. Mr, 57
Hoynes, Bridget, 183
Hoynes, Jack, 211, 217, 221, 227
Hoynes, Nicholas, 201
Hoynes, Paddy, 141
Hoynes, Rev L. (Aghaviller), 76, 237
Hoynes, Statia, 221
Hugginstown R.I.C. Barracks, 65, 67, 80, 85-6, 139, 142, 277, 295, 299
Hugginstown, 53, 78-9, 108, 116, 131, 134, 186, 190
Hughes, Hector, 104
Humphrey, Major, 105
Huntstown, 199
Hurley, Bill, 142, 146
Hurley, Dick, 133, 137, 266
I.R.B., 2, 4-6, 12-5, 20, 22
Inch, 288
Inistioge Co. I.R.A., 115, 291
Inistioge N. S., 291
Inistioge, 81, 117, 119, 121, 136
I.R.A. Headquarters, Dublin, 300
Irish Christian Brothers, 2, 68
Irish Citizen Army, 5-6, 16, 21-2
Irish Parliamentary Party, 32, 36-9, 42-4, 82
Irish Republican forces, 16, 80-1, 84, 119, 121, 277, 294, 295, 296-7, 298-9, 299-300
Irish Volunteer Headquarters, 4, 15, 288, 290
Irish Volunteers, 4-7, 12-4, 16-7, 21-2, 29-30, 52, 61-2, 178, 285-6, 288, 290-1, 295
James Stephens, 2, 68
Jameson's Distillery, 291
Jerpoint Church, 266
John Street R.I.C. Barracks, 301
John Street, Kilkenny, 6, 286-7
John's Bridge, Kilkenny, 287
Johnson, Bill, 96-7
Johnstown, 81
Johnswell, 7
Joyce, Mr W., 44
Kansas, 262-3
Kealy, David, 67
Kealy, James, 78
Kealy, John, 20-1, 255, 286-7
Kealy, Martin, 5, 21, 30, 258-9, 261, 287
Kealy, Mary, 225
Kealy, Thomas, 77
Keane, Denis, 67
Keane, Edward T. (E. T. Keane), 25-6, 28, 31-2, 34-8, 38(n), 57, 59, 150-1, 278, 287,
Keane, J. J., 259
Keane, John, 192
Keane, Michael, 141
Keane, Patrick, 30
Kearney, M. P. Solr., 49
Kearney, Mr (Coolagh), 158
Kearney, Tom, 80, 142, 146
Kearney, Tommy (Currach), 184
Kearns, Fr J. (Inistioge), 118-120
Kearns, M. (Limerick), 259
Keating, Matthew, 40, 42-4, 49, 239
Keefe, Phil, 104
Kellsgrange, 67
Kells, Co. Kilkenny, 44, 67, 140-3, 146, 148
Kells N.S., Co. Kilkenny, 319(n)
Kelly, Danny, 68, 77-8, 186
Kelly, Denis, 58
Kelly, Jimmy, 174-5, 179, 188, 199, 201, 243, 283
Kelly, Katy, 303(n)
Kelly, Mrs (Kilmanagh), 197
Kelly, P. (Callan), 41
Kenneally, Gerard, 259
Kenna E. T.C., 26
Kennedy, Dan, 280
Kennedy, Joe, 223
Kennedy, Kate, 204-5
Kennedy, Matt, 221,
Kennedy, Paddy, 185
Kennedy, Sadie, 200, 204-5
Kennedy, Tom, 200-1, 204-5, 211, 227
Kenny, Paddy, 193-4
Keogh, J. (Kells), 259
Kerry, 18, 84
Kickham, Charles J., 234-5, 253
Kilbricken, 30, 181, 183, 290
Kilbride, 104, 183, 281, 283-4
Kilcasey, 68, 77
Kilcreene, 9, 50
Kilcullan, Thomastown, 291
Kildare, 7
Kilfane, 118
Kilkenny Brigade I.R.A., 30, 62, 65-6, 90-1, 105, 116-7, 120, 139-140, 147, 157, 173-4, 185, 192, 196, 203, 266, 288, 290, 298-300

- Kilkenny City, 1-5, 17-8,
 20-2, 25-6, 28, 32, 34-8,
 56, 79-80, 106, 118, 121,
 129, 174, 226, 287-8,
 296, 299-301
 Kilkenny City, A Co. Irish
 Volunteers, 7, 11, 30, 37
 Kilkenny Corporation, 32,
 147, 301-2
 Kilkenny Irish Volunteers,
 5, 7-8, 11-22, 37, 286,
 289-290
 Kilkenny Jail (Gaol, Prison),
 2, 19-21, 78, 137, 139,
 150, 286-8, 289-290
 Kilkenny Military Barracks,
 11, 20, 56, 143, 157,
 226, 288, 289, 296
 Kilkenny Military Hospital,
 130, 147, 169, 226,
 289-290, 302
 Kilkenny Railway Station
 (MacDonagh Station
 now), 16, 19, 21, 35, 79,
 287
 Kilkennymen, 15, 21, 37, 83,
 286
 Kilkieran, Inistioge, 266
 Killahy, 221, 227
 Killaloe, Co. Clare 48, 62,
 240
 Killamery, 81, 131
 Killenaule, 94, 96
 Killinaspick, 186
 Killusty, 155
 Kilmacow, 185-6
 Kilmainham Jail, 120
 Kilmaley, Ennis, Co. Clare,
 80, 299-300
 Kilmanagh, 25, 81, 85, 94,
 114, 196-7
 Kilmichael, 277
 Kilmoganny, 81, 107, 190,
 296
 Kiltrassy, 180-1
 Kilvemnon, 93-4
 Kilworth Military Camp,
 236, 266, 296
 Kinchella, Richard, 303(n)
 Kinchella, W., 26
 King Street, Dublin, 285
 King, (Black and Tan), 86-7,
 90
 King, Dick, 20
 Kingsbridge, 21
 Kirkwood, Col. (Woodstock),
 115
 Kirwan, Michael, 259
 Kirwan, Tom, 211
 Knockacura, 154
 Knockbeg, Co. Carlow, 239
 Knockeen, 266
 Knockelly, 97
 Knocklong, Co. Tipperary,
 83, 277,
 Knocknagress, Tullaroan,
 224, 226, 228, 230, 277,
 294, 297, 295
 Knocknamuck, Tullaroan
 200-1, 227
 Knockroe, 154-5, 174
 Knocktopher, 77-8, 237
 Kylemore, 228
 Laffansbridge, 155
 Lahart, Denis, 63, 193-4
 Lalor, J., Kilkenny G.A.A., 26
 Lalor, Jimmy, 2, 5-6, 12,
 14-5, 18, 20-1, 24(n), 30,
 65-7, 69-70, 77-9, 115-6,
 117, 275
 Lalor, Joe, 141
 Lalor, John, 20
 Lamoge, 181, 254
 Land League, 25
 Larkin, Fr J., (Windgap),
 179-180, 237, 254
Last Post, 21
 Law, Bonar, 35
 Leahy, Ellie, 281
 Leahy, Jimmy, 67, 122, 153,
 156-163, 167, 170, 172-
 3, 275, 281
 Leahy, John, 225
 Leahy, Mrs (Coolmore), 76
 Leahy, Paddy, 79-80
 Leahy, Phil, 281
 Leavensworth, (Kansas),
 262-3
 Leddin, James, 18
 Lee, Paddy, 181, 254
 Lee, W., (Cappagh), 266,
 275
 Lennon, James, 26, 239, 242
 Lennon, Mr (Parnell Street), 2
 Lennon, Paddy, 140, 275
 Lennon, William, 275
 Leonard, T. (Dungannon),
 259
 Lewes Jail, 34
 Limerick, 18, 84, 98
 Lincoln Gaol, 40
 Lincoln Regiment, 56, 250
 Liss, Tullaroan, 199
 Listerlin, 266
 Litchfield, British Auxiliary
 Officer, 155, 174
 Littleton, 259
 Locke, John, 2, 233
 London and North Western
 Hotel, 291-2
 London, 78-79
 Long, Mrs (Shortallstown),
 193
 Looby, Thomas, 197-8, 205
 Loughbrack, (Callan), 81
 Loughinny, 225
 Loughlin, Patrick, 267
 Loughman, Mick, 77-9, 275
 Loughrey, Fr John,
 (Thomastown), 171, 276
 Low Street, Thomastown, 56
 Lower Dunmore, 4
 Lowry, John, 77
 Luttrell, Aly, 156, 160,
 168-9, 259
 Luttrell, Annie, 156-9, 169
 Luttrell, Jimmy, 156, 160,
 163, 168, 171,
 Luttrell, John, 156-160, 169,
 171
 Luttrell, Mary, 169
 Luttrell, Mrs (Garryricken),
 160, 168
 Luttrell, Paddy, 153, 156-7,
 160-1, 163, 168, 171,
 173, 244
 Luttrell, Tommy, 156, 168,
 171
 Lynch, Bill, 68, 78-9
 Lynch, James, 171
 Lynch, Liam, 191, 245
 Lynch, William, 77
 Macardle, Dorothy, 31, 35
 MacCarthy, Dan, 36
 MacDermott, Seán (Seán
 MacDiarmada), 2, 5-6,
 12-13
 MacDiarmada, Séamus, 300
 MacDonagh, Thomas, 1, 2,
 5, 7, 9, 13-4, 16, 19
 MacInerney, Tommy, 18
 MacNeill, Professor Eoin, 1,

- 5-7, 12-5, 70, 288-9
MacSwiney, Terence, 96, 107
Madigan, James, 20
Magellan Straits, 287
Magennis, John, (Jack), 37-8,
Maguire, Judge Conor A.,
104
Maher, 'Fox', 26
Maher, Andy, 67, 69, 76
Maher, Jack, 142, 146
Maher, Jimmy, 296, 303(n)
Maher, John, 40
Maher, Mick (Michael), 85,
86, 129, 174, 199-200,
205
Maher, Mrs, Ballylarkin,
319(n)
Maher, Ned, 181, 198, 234,
254,
Maher, Paddy, (Foxy), 26,
85-86, 90
Maher, Pat, 129
Maher, Patrick, (Knocklong),
84
Maher, Richard, 4
Maher, Statia, 284
Maher, Tom, 129
Mahoney, Gerry, 227
Mahoney, Harry, 268-9
Mallardstown, 171
Mansfield, Philip, 266
Mantingstown, 184
Market Square, Thomastown,
59
Market Street, Thomastown,
56
Markievicz, Countess, 32,
34-8, 237
Marnell, Dr (Kilmoganny),
109, 179
Martin, Mr (Callan), 48
Maryborough (Portlaoise),
13, 269-70
Matthew, Fr O.F.M. Cap., 79
Maudlin, Conahy, 285
Maxwell, General Sir John,
26
Mayo, 130
McBride, Michael, 67, 141
McCann, Francis, 50
McCann, Pierce, 49, 50
McCarrick, Thomas, 259
McCluskey, Edward, 196
McCluskey, Frank, 196
McCormack, Kathy, 319(n)
McDonald, Michael, 198
McDonald, Patrick, 43-4
McEvoy, Dick, 141-3, 145,
147
McGrath, John, 77, 89
McGrath, Martin, 267
McGrath, Maurice, 205
McGrath, Michael, 134
McGrath, Rev M.,
(Windgap), 237
McGuinness, Joseph, 32
McGuire, Mr (I.T.G.W.U.),
44
McKee, Dick, 98
McKenna, James,
(Thomastown), 53-4, 58
McKenna, Jim, 153, 156-7,
161, 163, 168, 171, 173
McMahon, Joe, 66-7, 69, 71,
76, 79-80, 299-300
McSweeney, Edward, 51
McSweeney, Michael Jnr., 67,
192
McSweeney, Michael Snr.
T.C., 2, 49, 79
Meagher, H. J. Co. C., 26
Meagher, Lory, 26, 200
Meagher, Michael, 40
Meagher, Willie, 199, 226
Meath, 168
Mellowes, Liam, 20
Meredith, Judge James
Creed, 104-5
Milroy, Seán, 34
Minogue, John, 171
Minogue, Mr R., 48
Minogue, Pat, 205
Mitchell, John, 146
Mitchelstown, 236
Moher, Dave, 200
Molloy, J. (Callan), 41
Moloney, Mr, 44
Monavrogue, 211, 214
Mong, 118
Moolum, 186
Moonarch ambush, 183,
185, 277
Mooncoin, 2, 185, 282-3,
289
Mooney, Fr P.,
(Graiguenamanagh), 43
Mooney, T. J., B.L., 171
Moore, Rev Philip,
(Kilkenny), 3
Moore, Ted, 185
Moran, Sergt (R.I.C.), 168,
184
Moriarty, Nuala, 280
Moroney, Nicholas, 86
Morrissey, Seán, 198, 205,
215, 217
Mountjoy Jail, 52, 105, 120
Moyglass, 96, 155
Muckalee, 7
Mulcahy, Richard, 115, 172,
198
Muldowney, Richard, 51
Mulhall, Bill, 225
Mulhall, John, 267
Mulhall, Martin,
67,70,76,80, 139, 140,
143
Mullally, Anthony, 20
Mullan, Frank, 148, 289
Mullaney, Tom, 205
Mullinahone Co. I.R.A., 30,
62, 85, 133, 245, 290,
294, 298
Mullinahone graveyard, 234,
278, 290, 298
Mullinahone N. S., 250, 290
Mullinahone, 30, 69, 85-6,
93-4, 104, 127-8, 136,
153-5, 174, 176, 234,
277, 282, 290, 294, 298
Mullinavat Co. I.R.A., 303
Mullinavat R.I.C. Barracks,
302
Mullinavat, Co. Kilkenny,
190, 302-3
Mullingar, 319(n)
Mullins, Anne, 297
Mullins, Laurence, 297
Mullins, Nicholas (Nick), 59,
192, 245, 297-9
Mullins, Tom, 298
Mulrooney, Bill, 193
Mulrooney, Pat, 67, 104,
107, 193-4
Munster River, 223
Murphy, Canon Nicholas, 25
Murphy, Danny, 67, 76, 141-
3, 145
Murphy, Denis, 53, 59
Murphy, Dr P. J., 57
Murphy, Fr W. (Callan), 237,
262

- Murphy, Jim, 268
 Murphy, Johnny, 266
 Murphy, Michael, 68, 77-8
 Murphy, Paddy, 141-3
 Murphy, Timothy, 259
 Murphy, Tommy, 67, 69, 71
 Myles, Jack, 67
 Naas, 98,
 Nagle, Jack, 198-9, 205, 215
 Nagle, Tom, 205, 215, 217
 National Volunteers, 1-4, 289
 Neary, Thomas, 20, 24(n)
 Nebraska, U.S.A., 262
 Neill, John, 57
 Neilon, Sergt (R.I.C.), 65-6,
 69-70, 75-6
 Nenagh, 104
 New Bermingham, 97
 New England, Tullaroan,
 211-2, 221, 223-4, 227
 New Ross, 13
 New York, 283
 Newcastle, Co. Tipperary,
 228
 Newmarket, Co. Kilkenny,
 319(n)
 Newport, Hugh, 120
 Newport, Mrs (Cappagh),
 120
 Newtown, Kells, 195
 Ninemilehouse ambush, 63,
 122, 127, 130, 133-4,
 153, 228, 277, 301
 Nolan, Tommy, 67, 76-8,
 139, 275
 Noonan, Tom, 203, 214, 227
 North Kilkenny Flying
 Column, 245, 297-8
 North King Street, Dublin,
 286
 North Roscommon, 31,
 North Wall, Dublin, 21, 287,
 291
 Nowlan, Ald James, 2, 19,
 22(n), 150-1
 O'Brien, Dr (Stoneyford),
 69, 76
 O'Brien, Lena, 284
 O'Brien, Paitsín, 319(n)
 O'Brien, Pat M.P., 32, 37
 O'Brien, William Smith, 68,
 223
 O'Briens, Viper, Kells, 67
 O'Carroll, Thomas, 154
 O'Connell, Capt J. J.
 (Ginger), 4-5, 7, 11-19,
 21-2
 O'Connell, Dan, 26
 O'Connor, William, 319(n)
 O'Dempsey, M. J., 49
 O'Donnell, Mary, 284
 O'Donoghue, Constable,
 (R.I.C.), 70-1, 75
 O'Dwyer, George Brigadier,
 79, 121, 139, 172-3, 192,
 196, 245, 275, 297-8
 O'Dwyer, Michael, 20
 O'Dwyer, Stephen, 20
 O'Flanagan, Fr Michael
 (Flanagan), 36, 44, 48
 O'Flynn, Rev Fr O.S.A., 237
 O'Gorman, John Jnr., 245,
 256
 O'Gorman, John Snr., 245
 O'Hanrahan, Eileen, 13
 O'Hanrahan, Michael
 (Ó h-Anracháin, Mícheál)
 13, 51, 59(n), 192
 O'Keefe, Pat, 77,
 O'Kelly, Lieutenant Ted, 7
 O'Leary, William, 259
 O'Mahoney, John, (Seán),
 51-2, 59(n)
 O'Malley, Ernie, 84, 88-90,
 115-21, 173, 191, 267
 O'Mara, Canon,
 (Mullinahone), 62, 235
 O'Mara, James, 40-4, 48-9,
 53, 113-4, 152, 239-242,
 279
 O'Mara, W. (Carrick-on-
 Suir), 259
 O'Meara, Mr (Smithwick's
 Brewery), 253
 O'Neill, Frank, 180-1, 254
 O'Neill, John, 171
 O'Neill, Kieran, 193-4
 O'Neill, Larry, 180-1, 254
 O'Neill, Mary, 319(n)
 O'Neill, Michael, 26, 52, 82
 O'Neill, Mrs (Kiltrassy), 180
 O'Neill, Nora, 283
 O'Neill, Nurse Kitty, 181
 O'Neill, Tommy, 186
 Ó Riain, Séamus, 52
 O'Rourke's Licensed
 Premises, Mrs, 285-6
 O'Shea, John, 21
 O'Shea, Phil, 193-4
 O'Sheil, Judge Kevin, 104
 O'Sullivan, Prof Gerard, 44,
 239, 242
 Oakes, Billy, 2, 6, 14, 16, 18,
 66
 Oakes, Mick, 67, 69, 71
 Old Gate (Coolbawn
 ambush), 298
 Oldtown Bridge, 198
 Oldtown, Ballyragget, 292
 Oldtown, Cavan. 300
 Oliver, Constable (R.I.C.),
 184
 Ossory, 44, 262
 Outrath, Kilkenny, 275
 Owing, Co. Kilkenny, 186
 Panama Canal, 279
 Parliament Street, Kilkenny,
 3, 19, 36, 296, 299
 Parnell, Charles Stewart, 37
 Parsons, Patrick, 20
 Parsonshill, 85-6
 Partition Bill, 239
 Patrick, Fr O.F.M.Cap., 142,
 146
 Paulstown, Co. Kilkenny, 81
 Pearse, Pádraig, 2, 4-5, 7, 12-
 3, 15-6, 19, 288
 Pentonville Prison, 105
 Peters, Ellie, 237
 Phelan, Catherine, 85
 Phelan, Dr Patrick (Callan),
 63, 275, 281
 Phelan, Dr William, 281
 Phelan, John, 292
 Phelan, Margaret, 292
 Phelan, Pat, 67, 85
 Phelan, Thomas, 292-4
 Physicianstown, 67, 86
 Piltown, 53, 186, 188-9, 193
 Pine T., Mayo, 259
 Plunkett, Count George
 Noble, 31
 Plunkett, Joseph Mary, 5. 31
 Poland, 26.
 Pollard, Patrick, 42
 Pollock, Jim, (Cork), 259
 Portnascully, 185
 Portsmouth Jail, 120
 Poulacapple, 176, 245, 281-2
 Poulacapple N.S., 282
 Power, Jail Warden, 259
 Power, Jane, 50

- Power, Master Johnny, 147, 288
Power, Matty, 260-1
Power, P. J. M.P., 50
Power, Paddy, 186, 188, 190, 201, 204-5, 219-220, 224, 226, 259
Power, Seán, 259
Powers, Braenar, 186
Preston, Sergt (R.I.C.), 97
Priestown, 154
Prospect, Co. Tipperary, 94
Punch, Edward, (Limerick), 259, 261
Purcell, Ald Joseph, 26, 32, 35
Purcell, Frank, 227
Purcell, Jack, 203, 214, 227
Purcell, James, 192
Purcell, Matt, 227
Purcell, Michael, Kilkenny, 20, 24 (n)
Purcell, Michael, Graine, 203, 213-4, 225-7, 230
Purcell, Rev E. (Kilmoganny), 237
Queenstown (Cobh), 13-4
Quigley, May, 98
Quilter, Seán, 259
Quinn, Patrick, 192
Quinn, Seán, 94, 153, 156-163, 167, 170-2, 180, 184, 201, 204-5, 219-220, 224, 226, 228, 233-5, 253, 255, 279-81, 282, 294, 297
Quirke, Bill, 268-9
R.I.C. barracks in Kilkenny, 19-20, 28, 53, 56-8, 61, 70, 79-81, 83-6, 90, 93, 104-6, 121, 227
R.I.C. (Royal Irish Constabulary), 19-20, 28, 53-4, 56-8, 61, 70, 79-81, 83-6, 90, 93, 104-6, 121, 227, 286-7, 293, 294, 298-9, 300, 301-2
Rafter, Séamus, 20
Raftis, Edward, 77-9
Railyard, 81
Raleigh, Jimmy, 85, 133, 137, 266
Raleigh, Michael, 266
Ramsbottom, Patrick, 13
Rathbeagh cemetery, 294
Rathealy, Tullaroan, 205, 213, 224
Rathkenny, 154
Readsbarn, 190
Redmond, John, 2-4, 39, 52, 82, 289
Redmondite Volunteers, 3, 7, 29
Reilly, Christy, 243
Reilly, Paddy, 255
Reimeen, Tullaroan, 199, 200
Reviewfield, 36
Rhimeshaun, 214
Rice, Joseph, 275
Rice, Rev Edmund Ignatius, 2
Richmond Barracks, Dublin, 21, 287
Riley, Constable, (Black and Tan), 168-170
Ring, Christy, 199
Robinson, Michael, 105
Robinson, Séamus, 61, 83-4, 86, 88-90
Robinson, Sergt (R.I.C.), 86-7
Roche, Patrick, 300
Roche's Point, 265
Rochestown, 267
Rochford, Jack, 199
Rochford, Rev T. (P.P., Aghaviller), 237
Rockwell College, Co. Tipperary, 290
Ronan, Tod, 229
Rosbercon, 40
Rosegreen, 191, 244
Rosslare, 19
Rothe House, (Gaelic League Rooms), 6, 116
Rotunda, Dublin, 1, 51
Roughan, James (Jim), 3, 7, 58, 62, 66-7, 85-9, 94-6, 99, 104, 115-6, 121-2, 173, 185, 234, 275, 280-1
Rowe, Rev Fr, (Kilkenny), 3
Rowles, Lieut (British Army), 250
Ruth, Mick, 136, 148, 192
Ryan, 'Pony', (Coolagh), 130
Ryan, Andrew, 57
Ryan, Constable, (R.I.C.), 71, 75-7
Ryan, Gerry, 259, 268
Ryan, James, 44, 53-4, 266
Ryan, Michael, 20, 67, 69, 71, 105-6, 203
Ryan, Mr (Mullinavat), 302
Ryan, Mrs Michael, 131, 301
Ryan, Paddy, Ahenure, 67, 85-8, 96-7, 104, 122, 129, 133, 135, 153, 156, 160-3, 167, 170, 198, 250, 281
Ryan, R.M. Mr, 57-8
Ryan, Thomas, 53-4, 57
Ryan, Tommy, 205, 217, 275
Sadlier, Denis, 94, 96-7, 122, 130, 154
Salthill (Galway), 240
Saunders, Bill, 184
Scolloge Gap, 11-2, 15
Serbia, 26, 52
Seventh Batt. and West Kilkenny Flying Column, 84, 94, 97, 99, 107, 111, 115, 120-2, 127, 131, 153-5, 157, 160, 172, 190-2, 245, 253-4, 266, 277, 290, 291-2, 294-5, 298
Shannon, Sergt (R.I.C.), 130
Shea, Martin, 67
Sheehan, Michael, 78
Sheepstown, 68
Shelley, Michael, 3, 7, 42, 99, 104, 234, 266, 275, 281
Shellumsrath, 142
Shipton, 195-6
Shortall, Greta, 211-2, 223
Shortall, Joanne, 211-2, 223
Shortall, Margaret, 211-2, 223
Shortallstown, 194
Shrewsbury, England, 180
Sinn Féin Clubs, (Cumainn), 30, 40, 43, 48, 51-2, 57, 150, 299, 301
Sinn Féin Club, Kilkenny, 32
Sinn Féin Courts, 99
Sinn Féin Executive, 30, 32, 44, 51
Sinn Féin Party, 2, 31-2, 34-40, 51-2, 54, 82, 277, 290, 295

- Sinn Féiners, 2, 4, 16-7, 32, 37-8, 52-4, 56, 122, 136
- Sinn Féiners, Thomastown, 51, 53-4, 59, 82, 114, 135
- Sinnott, Commandant Seán, 13, 16-7
- Sinnott, Mick, 300
- Sinnott's Cross, 186
- Skeough, 291
- Skinner, Lieut (British Army), 109
- Slattery, Mick, 86
- Sliabh-na-mBan, 127, 134, 182, 278
- Slievardagh, 223
- Sligo, 88, 259
- Smithwick, Dan, 50, 254
- Smithwick, James, 254
- Smithwick, Mrs Danny, 50
- Smyth, Charles, 20
- Smyth, Mr (Kells), 63
- Soloheadbeg, 61, 83
- Somers of the Lots, 297
- Somers, Jimmy, 243
- South Kilkenny constituency, 41-2
- South Kilkenny Volunteers, 53
- South Kilkenny, 30, 40, 42-3, 295
- South Longford, 31
- Spike Island, 137, 265-6, 281-2
- Spindler, (Captain of the Aud), 13
- Springfield, 89
- Squib, Private Reginald, 129-30
- St. Enda's All-Irish School, 2, 9
- St. John, Michael, 154
- St. Kieran's College, 1, 6, 99, 114
- St. Patrick's Burial Ground, Patrick St, Kilkenny, 147, 302
- St. Vincent's Private Hospital, 32
- Stack, Austin, 80, 99
- Staines, Michael, 35, 38
- Stallard, John, 16
- Stallard, Josephine, 12
- Stallard, Peter, 51
- Stallard, Thomas (Tom), 12, 20
- Stapleton, Dan, 66
- Stephens, James, 2, 11, 68
- Stephens, William, 20
- Stoneyford, 43, 69
- Strickland, Lt.-General Peter, 302
- Stuart, John, 186
- Studdert, District Insp, (R.I.C.), 56
- Sullivan, 'Jinx', 66
- Sullivan, Sergt (R.I.C.), 87, 90
- Sunday Independent*, 14
- Sutton, Ned, 118
- Sweeney, Jack, 68
- Sweeney, Joe, 66, 288
- Talbot, Paddy, 105, 267
- Talbot's Inch, 105, 226
- Taylor, Tom, 86
- Tecunseh, U.S.A., 262
- Teehan, Bridie, 215, 226
- Teehan, Dick, 215
- Teehan, Kitty, 195
- Teehan, Margaret, 215
- Teehan, Molly, 195
- Teehan, Ned, 215, 226
- Teehan, Paddy, 215
- Teehan, Tod, 215
- Teeling, Frank, 120
- Templeorum, 53, 186, 189
- The Castle, Kilmanagh, 198
- The Church, Tullaroan, 198
- The Four Glorious Years*, 38
- The Irish People*, 2
- The Irish Republic* (book), 31, 35
- The Islands, 104, 153
- The Kilkenny Journal*, 40-1, 150-2
- The Kilkenny People*, 25-6, 28, 31-2, 34-6, 38, 57, 150, 261, 278, 287
- The O'Rahilly, 5
- The Pollocks, 228
- The Racecourse, 80, 142
- The Rower, 81
- The Swan, Co. Leix, 12
- The Wood ambush, 297
- Third Tipperary Brigade, 30, 78, 84-6, 127, 154, 298
- Thomastown Band, 59
- Thomastown Courthouse, 53-4, 57
- Thomastown N. S., 297
- Thomastown Police Barracks, 53
- Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny, 43, 51, 56-7, 59, 106, 297-9
- Thomastown, Co. Tipperary, 277
- Thomastown's old graveyard, Co. Kilkenny, 292, 299
- Thornback, Kilkenny, 105
- Thornton, Frank, 300
- Three Mountains, 203
- Threecastles Co. I.R.A., 288
- Threecastles Irish Volunteers, 196, 288-9,
- Threecastles Nat. Volunteers, 289
- Threecastles, 134-5, 140-3, 147-8, 275, 287-8, 289-290, 296
- Thurles, 26, 83
- Tipperary, 2, 77, 83-5, 98, 154, 277, 280, 288, 290, 294, 298
- Tipperary East, 85
- Tobin, Kieran, 192
- Tobin, Liam, 300, 303(n)
- Torpey, Jim, 141
- Torpey, Paddy, 174, 266
- Tovey, Jimmy, 69
- Town Hall, Kilkenny, 32, 35
- Townsend, Dr T. H. D., 130
- Tralee Bay, 13
- Travers, Michael, 58
- Treacy, Denis, 63, 67, 104, 107, 193-4, 236-7, 260
- Treacy, Seán, 61, 83, 85, 87-90, 97-8, 153
- Treacy, Thomas, 2-5, 7, 11-12, 14-7, 20, 23(n), 24(n), 28, 30, 66-7, 69-71, 75-79, 115-7, 275
- Trenchardstown, Tullaroan, 221, 223
- Trenchmore, 121, 128
- Troyswood, 36, 66
- Tubrid, 213, 221, 225
- Tulla Church graveyard, 288, 290, 298
- Tullahought, 173, 181
- Tullamaine, 86
- Tullamore, 259

- Tullaroan, 26, 40, 65, 81,
196, 295
Tullogher, 147
Tullow, Co. Carlow, 147-8
Twomey, Moss, 269
Twomey, Seán, 267-8
Tynan, William, 200
Ulster Unionist Party, 3
Ulster Volunteers, 1, 3
Upr. John Street, Kilkenny,
21
Upr. Walkin Street, Kilkenny,
301
Upton, James W., 40, 42-4,
48-9, 79, 152
Urlingford R.I.C. barracks,
108, 196, 295, 198
Urlingford, 108
Vaughan, Peter, 133
Vaughan, Tommy, 133
Viper, Kells, 67, 143, 145
Volunteer H.Q., Dublin, 7,
12, 15, 298
Wakefield Prison, England,
21, 30, 40, 150
Wales, 169
Wall, Jack, 134-7, 140-1, 192
Wall, P. T.C., Kilkenny, 49
Wallace, Robert, 43
Wallace, Sergt (R.I.C.), 84
Walsh, Bill, 68, 77-8, 118,
186, 261
Walsh, Bridget, 296
Walsh, Buddy, 186
Walsh, Dick, 221
Walsh, 'Drug', 199
Walsh, Fr J., (Callan), 48,
113, 185
Walsh, Frank P., 241
Walsh, Jack (na Cullagh), 185
Walsh, James, 40, 68, 77-8
Walsh, John,
(Dunnamaggin), 193
Walsh, John, (Rathduff), 193
Walsh, Joseph, 43, 266
Walsh, Larry, 198-9
Walsh, Laurence, 20
Walsh, Matthew, 235, 237-8,
Walsh, Maurice (Limerick),
259
Walsh, Maurice (Moyglass),
155
Walsh, Michael (Rathduff),
193
Walsh, Mrs Tom, 198
Walsh, Ned, 68, 185-6
Walsh, Pat, (Clogga), 186
Walsh, Pat, Dunnamaggin,
63, 67, 107, 194, 235-7,
255, 295-6
Walsh, Pat, (Trenchmore), 67
Walsh, Seán, 97, 130, 154-5,
192
Walsh, Sergt Thomas,
(R.I.C.), 130-1, 301
Walsh, Thomas, Newtown,
Kells, 141
Walsh, Tom, The Castle,
Kilmanagh, 198
Walton, 'Little Sim',
Reimeen, 26, 199, 201
Warrington, 36
Waterfield, 185
Waterford 17, 105-6, 111,
120, 152, 171, 283, 288
Waterford City Infirmery 302
Waterford Gaol, 54, 56, 114,
120, 129, 137, 259,
Waterford Irish Volunteers,
15, 17
Welsh Jails, 21
West Kilkenny, 84, 140, 297
Westmeath, 279
Wexford Irish Volunteers,
11-9, 21
Wexford North, 19
Wexford North Brig. I.R.A.,
300
Wexford Railway Station, 17
Wexford County, 11-17, 80,
300
Wexfordmen, 15, 17-8
Whelan, 'Feg', Kilkenny, 67
Whelan, Mick, 67-8, 77-8
Whelan, Pack, Kilmacow, 186
Whelan, Seán, 300
Whelan, Tom, 255
White P., Inistioge, 266, 275
White, Fr, (Galmoy), 185
Whyte, District Insp,
(R.I.C.), 56-7, 129
Wilford Cross ambush, 94-5,
97
Wilson, Dist. Insp Lea,
(R.I.C.), 300
Wilson, Woodrow, President,
58, 112
Windgap, 178, 192, 241,
254, 284, 290
Wolfhill Coal Mines, 12,
297-8
Woodenbridge, 3
Woodsgift, 227
Woodstock, 107, 115-121,
133-7, 148, 188, 201
Woollengrange, 67, 118, 141
Worcester, England, 106
World War 1 (The Great
War), 4-5, 37, 289
World War 2, 278
Wormwood Scrubs Prison,
21, 78-9, 105-6, 108
Youghal. Co. Cork, 259